

FINAL DECLARATION OF OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONSULTATION ON THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE MENNONITE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The international consultation on the enhancement of the Mennonite educational system in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was held from May 19 to 21, 2009 at the Methodist Presbyterian Hostel, on 2687 Avenue des Ecuries, District of Ngaliema, in the City of Kinshasa.

The organization of this consultation convened on the initiative of the three mennonite church conferences of Congo: Mennonite Brethren Conference of Congo (CEFMC), the Mennonite Evangelical Confernece(CEM), and the Mennonite Conference of Congo (CMCo), and sponsored by the Mennonite World Conference, and the International Community of the Brother Mennoniteses (ICOMB) is justified by a great need to reflect on ways and means to set in order to enhance the mennonite educational system in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

In fact, the experience resulting from the careful observation of the last years reveals that the educational system of mennonite churches of Congolese is undergoing a deep crisis. The main causes of this crisis are the confiscation of church-owned schools by the Congolese government during the periode from 1973 to 1974, the growing deterioration of basic infrastructures, the precariousness of working conditions, the bad management of some leaders, the unhealthy environment, the immoral behavior of school personnel, etc. All these facts have had bad consequences on the mennonite educational system and have devalued its former high level.

The following themes were developped during the consultation:

1. "Exchange in the Educational System", by Mr. François Badibanga, Sub-regional Coordinator of Catholic Schools
2. "Crisis in the Educational System in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: the Case of Primary, Secondary, and Vocational Education", by the Professor André Masiala ma Solo.
3. "Vision and Expectations of the Church of Christ in Congo (ECC) for the Education of Congolese Youth", by the Reverend Lala Unsi Libay, National Coordinator of Protestant Schools.

4. "What Strategies to make for a model Mennonite school", by Mr. Wilson Mahenzi Masema, member of the CEFMC.
5. "Exchange in the Educational System", by Mr. Justin Lubaki Ndosimau, Kinshasa City Coordinator of Protestant Schools; Doctor Dalton Reimer, ICOMB Education Coordinator; Mrs. Rose Bushman, Mr. Maurice Matsitsa N'singa, and the Reverend Mwaku Kinana.

The activities of the first day of the consultation (May 19, 2009) were focussed around the theme "Exchange in the Education System". The following topics were developed:

- "How to Integrate the Mennonite History and Doctrine in the curriculum", topic developed in a workshop (discussion group) by Mrs. Bernadette Many of the Cmco
- "What Staff for a Model Mennonite School?", topic developed in a workshop by the Reverend Mubenga of the CEM
- "How to interiorize the Anabaptist Ethics in the Educational System", topic developed in a workshop by the Reverend Dr Komuesa of the CMCo.

After discussions, exchanges and amendments in plenary session, the following resolutions were adopted:

A) regarding ways to integrate the mennonite history and doctrine in the curriculum:

1. the creation of a technical commission responsible for determining specific subjects on mennonite history and doctrine to integrate in the curriculum.
2. this commission will also be responsible for the publication of materials related to mennonite history and doctrine, and the production of didactic aids that will facilitate the assimilation of the subjects selected.
3. the technical commission should comprise theologians, historians, competent mennonite personalities. It will also be necessary to include schools administrators, and staff in charge of pedagogical services in the commission.
4. the technical commission should suggest some qualified and committed Christians having a thorough knowledge of the mennonite doctrine.

5. the organization of awareness and popularization on selected subject as well as on means to use for their assimilation in order to train the staff responsible for teaching.

B) with regard to the profile of staff to recruit for a model mennonite school

1. At the primary school level, the staff must:

- have the knowledge of anabaptist values
- be qualified
- be selected after a test among mennonite christians
- receive a constant training (retraining) organized by the church
- have the knowledge, the know-how, and good manners
- show consciousness

2. At the secondary level:

In addition to qualities required from primary schools candidates, it would also be advisable to consider the recruitment or the possibility to make recourse to the expertise non mennonite staff if necessary.

C) regarding the way of interiorizing anabaptist ethics in mennonite schools

1. the affirmation of the commitment of the consultation participants to following values mennonite:

- honesty
- loyalty
- simplicity
- peaceful coexistence

2. the introduction of the teaching of the religion in mennonite schools by dedicating some chapters to anabaptist ethics.

3. the organization of cultural activities such short plays, recitations, and others in mennonite schools.

4. the obligation to hire mennonite teachers and chaplains who should organize conference, and related to anabaptist values.
5. the obligation for every school to have a chaplain who should promote anabaptist ethics.
6. encouraging the creation of choirs in mennonite schools.
7. the compulsory participation of pupils and teachers to school worship services, and the selection or appointment of chaplains capable of conducting these worship services.

The activities of the second day of the consultation (May 20) were focussed around the themes: "Crisis in the Educational System in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: the Case of Primary, Secondary, and Vocational Education", and "The Vision and Expectations of the Church of Christ in Congo (ECC) for the Education of Congolese Youth". The following sub-topics were developed:

- "The Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education's National Curriculum and the Requirements of the Government", topic developed in a workshop by the Reverend Fumunguya, School Inspector of the CMCo.
- "The School Chaplaincy: Role and Goals", topic developed in a workshop by the Main Chaplain of the ECC, the Reverend Pastor Mulumba.
- "New Technologies in the Mennonite Educational System", topic developed in a workshop by Mr. Kulefwa Kudivila of the CEFMC.

The following resolutions were made after discussions, and amendments in plenary session:

A) Regarding the National Curriculum and the Requirements of the Government

1. administrators should make national curriculum available in subjects that are open to the incorporation of anabaptist values.
2. to make a technical commission that will review the curriculum in order to integrate mennonite values.
3. to create pedagogical units and make them operational.
4. to enhance the value of all disciplines: gymnastics, music, drawing, and to avoid the cheating.
5. to respect the number of hours assigned to every subject.

6. to use good educators and good manuals adapted to the national curriculum.
7. to ensure regular monitoring of teachers.

B) Regarding the role and goal of the school chaplaincy

1. to upgrade the mission of the chaplaincy in the schools by retraining, compulsory worship service, pastoral dialogue, spiritual retreats, conferences, seminars and bible camps.
2. to equip school chaplaincies.
3. to suggest the creation of a framework for dialogue and exchange in school chaplaincies.

C) Regarding new technologies

1. providing training in new technologies to teachers and school principals.
2. the creation of some pilot schools, equipped with new technologies in each church conference, that is three primary schools and three secondary schools per conference.
3. the managers of three mennonite conferences are asked to equip the schools located in rural areas with solar panels in order to facilitate the use of all these new technologies.

The activities of the third and last day of the consultation (May 21) focussed on the following themes:

- "What Strategies to Make for a Model Mennonite School?"
- "Exchange in the Educational System"

The topics below developed in workshops:

- "How to Finance Model Mennonite Schools?", by the Reverend Pastor Mitambo of the CMCo.
- "How to Create a Mennonite Network for Education in the DRC with External Partners?", by the Reverend Pelende Tshinyam of the CEFMC.

After discussions, exchange and amendments in plenary session, the following resolutions were adopted:

A) With regard to the financing of Model Mennonite Schools

1. the creation of an inter-mennonite finance commission which do a feasibility study on the rehabilitation of existing schools or the creation of new model schools.
2. the raising of local contributions for this purpose.
3. the managers of church conferences seek financial contribution from the government.
4. the managers of the three church conferences should aslo solicit external contributions their long-time partners.

B) Regarding the creation on an inter-mennonite network for education in RDC

1. the creation of a network named "Inter-Mennonite Network for Educational Cooperation" (RI CME).
2. the urgent creation of a technical commission by the Legal Representatives of the three church conferences that will undertake a detailed study in order to define the mission, the functioning, the goals, and to design the bylaws of this network.

Prepared and adopted in Kinshasa, on May 21, 2009.

For the office of moderation of the international
consultation,

the Secretary and Vice-secretary