

GMA Medium Term Plan on Mission Ad Gentes (2007-2011)

Background

The Greater Mekong Area consists of five countries in Southeast Asia that have borders located within the catchment area of the Mekong River. It has a total population of 224 million, of which only 6.6 million are Catholic or a mere 2.9% of the total population, distributed as follows:

Country	Population (thousands)	Catholics (thousands)	Percent %
Cambodia	12, 571	21	0.17
Lao PDR	6,524	39	0.60
Myanmar	58,304	603	1.03
Thailand	63,922	292	0.46
Vietnam	82,312	5,658	6.87

Source: Data as of 20 Nov 2005 from <<http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org>>

The community of Couples for Christ was established in Thailand in 1989, followed by Vietnam in 1993, Cambodia in 2000, Myanmar in 2002 and Lao PDR in 2005. In December 2005, the CFC community had a total membership of around 5,500 persons.

In 2002 the First Southeast Asian Conference on Mission Ad Gentes was held in Bangkok, Thailand, which adopted the *Bangkok Resolution on Couples for Christ's Mission Ad Gentes*. The Bangkok Resolution:

(a) affirms the prophetic message resounding throughout the conference that God is now calling Couples for Christ and its ministries to mission *ad gentes*;

(b) calls upon all members of the community to pray for discernment and ask the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Lady of Guadalupe and the Star of Evangelization;

(c) urges the worldwide community of Couples for Christ to reach out to our non-Christian brothers and sisters so that by the community's "living witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus – the witness of poverty and detachment, of freedom in the face of the power of the world, in short, the witness of sanctity," they may be drawn to Christ; and

(d) requests the CFC International Council in Manila to establish a Study Group on Mission Ad Gentes to prepare a comprehensive plan and a set of guidelines on how the community could best respond to God's call to mission *ad gentes*.

Two years later in 2004, the First CFC CMTV Regional Conference was held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, which adopted the *Phnom Penh Framework Plan of Action on Couples for Christ's Mission Ad Gentes*. The Phnom Penh Framework states that:

(a) Our approach to evangelization will comprise dialogue with religions (inter- and intra-religious dialogue), dialogue with culture (inculturation), and dialogue with the poor (socio-economic involvement).

(b) Our evangelization will focus on the young, on the work with the poor, including indigenous communities, and on couples in mixed marriages.

(c) Teaching materials and songs will be translated into local languages and, to the extent possible, adapted to local cultures.

(d) Missionary workers will learn the languages and cultures of their countries of assignment, as well as, relevant Church documents

(e.g., Ecclesia in Asia, FABC 8th conference report, etc.) on mission *ad gentes*.

(e) The CMTV communities will work together to establish a CFC community in Laos within the next six months.

(f) The CMTV communities will support Gawad Kalinga in Cambodia, in addition to their own GK programs.

(g) The CMTV communities will support the training in the Philippines of selected local leaders.

A number of concrete actions have been accomplished since these two conferences. A CFC community was established in Vientiane, Lao PDR in 2004 within six months from the Phnom Penh conference through the efforts of missionaries from CFC Thailand. A Gawad Kalinga site was established in Cambodia from funds raised by CFC Cambodia and contributed by CFC Thailand. Selected local CFC leaders from the northeast of Thailand were sent to the Philippines for training and attachment in various CFC communities and translation of teaching materials and songs into Burmese, Thai and Vietnamese has been accelerated.

Activity Areas for 2007-2011

In line with the outcomes of the two CFC regional conferences and consistent with the messages of the First Asian Mission Congress held in Chiangmai, Thailand from 18 to 22 October 2006, the CFC communities in the five GMA countries, during the next five years, will formally commence mission *ad gentes* by incorporating in their annual evangelization plans specific actions directly related to the following seven areas of activities:

Activity Area 1:

Develop and conduct special entry programs to CFC and its family ministries designed for non-Christians, in close consultation with the International Mission Director and the

GMA Regional Coordinator, that would enable non-Christian participants to more easily understand the Christian teachings.

Activity Area 2:

Conduct YFC Youth Camps and KFC Kids Camps in schools, in parishes and in communities, specifically for participants coming from different faiths, e.g., participants could be Catholic, Buddhist or belonging to other religions, in accordance with the programs developed in Activity Area 1.

Activity Area 3:

Translate and adapt all teaching CFC materials and songs into local languages and cultures (Burmese, Khmer, Lao, Thai and Vietnamese) and set a deadline for completion by the end of 2011.

Activity Area 4:

Implement a training program for missionary workers from the GMA areas for immersion in CFC Manila and for those coming from the CFC Centre in Manila to learn the local language, culture and religion.

Activity Area 5:

Identify and send selected local leaders for immersion training in the Philippines primarily in the life and mission of Couples for Christ, including the family and social ministries, seven pillars and Gawad Kalinga.

Activity Area 6:

Implement social programs – selecting the program most appropriate to prevailing local conditions from among the various social ministries of Couples for Christ – specifically targeting three sectors: (a) the aboriginal, indigenous and tribal people; (b) the poor living in slums, shanties and other marginal settlements, including refugees; and (c) the street, out-of-school and exploited children. Ensure that such social programs

remain a work of love and a way of witnessing the love of Christ for the poor and marginalized.

Activity Area 7:

Develop and implement guidelines and support structure to fully integrate non-Christian members into the community and empower them to take part in CFC's *Missio Ad Gentes*.

The detailed list of activities and actions to be taken by each CFC community under these seven areas will be prepared during the annual planning sessions of each community taking into consideration the stage of growth and maturity of the community and the specific conditions in each country. The Country Coordinators will assist their respective communities in the planning and implementation of these activities and actions and provide the GMA Regional Coordinator and the International Mission Director periodic reports and assessment of the progress of implementation.

Adopted unanimously during the GMA Regional Conference 2006 held at Bangkok, Thailand, 10 December 2006.