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Understanding and Evaluating the Participation of Francophone Africans in World Mission: Congolesse working in Burundi

Fohle Lygunda li-M

I Introduction

Based on statistical reports in the *Atlas of Global Christianity*, the missionaries that churches in Africa have sent in 2010 represent 5 per cent of all missionaries deployed by the churches of the world.¹ During the same period, the French-speaking African missionaries numbered 3,188, or 15.4 per cent of all African missionaries and 0.7 per cent of all missionaries in the world.²

If, as indicated by Dana L. Robert, the different contexts of the world have shaped the particularities of the missionaries, their identity and tasks

throughout the world,³ it is reasonable to ask some questions about the true nature and the real challenges of the contribution of the French-speaking African missionaries to the worldwide mission. For example, questions may arise about the process of the mobilization of French-speaking African missionaries, their identification, selection, training, their commissioning, deployment, support and evaluation.

The purpose of this paper is to understand and evaluate such a process in a context where churches desire objective information about their involve-

1 Todd Johnson and Kenneth Ross (eds.), *Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 261.

2 Johnson and Ross, *Atlas*, 261.

3 Dana L. Robert, 'Missionaries Sent and Received, Worldwide, 1910-2010' in Todd Johnson and Kenneth Ross, *ATLAS of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 258.

Fohle Lygunda li-M (DMin, Asbury Seminary) is Academic Dean at the International Leadership University, Burundi, and also lectures with the North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa. An ordained evangelical minister in the Democratic Republic of Congo, he is a former mission mobiliser in the Central African Republic and has published *A model of missional leadership training in a context of brokenness: A case study of the Restoration Missionary Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo (2010)*, and *Mission aujourd'hui: tendances théologiques et enjeux stratégiques dans le contexte africain (2011)*.

ment in global mission. What is meant by 'African missionaries'? What was the process of their engagement, their identification, selection, training, their commissioning, their deployment, support and evaluation? Where and why are they at work now? In what sense and for what purpose are they presented as 'African missionaries'?

This article demonstrates that emigration, voluntary or involuntary, has played and is still playing an important role in the missionary commitment of Africans, and that many more steps should be taken to make this missionary commitment more responsible and transparent. The article highlights some key historical precedents and the current situation of the participation of Africans in global mission before depicting that of Francophone Africans. A case study of Congolese working in Burundi is used to shed light on the discussion. Some concluding recommendations are considered as a way to enhance the missionary engagement of Africa's churches.

II Global Mission by Africans: Historical Precedents and Current Situation

1 Reasons for the presence of African missionaries around the world

The presence of African Christians around the world is caused by several factors, including the pursuit of happiness through studies and business, seeking of safety and political asylum after unwanted wars in several African

nations, and participation in international bodies such as the diplomatic corps and humanitarian workers, to mention a few.⁴ These differing reasons have caused sons and daughters of the continent to scatter throughout the world. They are commonly known under the label of *African diaspora*.

For some, this diaspora is voluntary and planned, for others it is unplanned. It is voluntary because many of these people have personally agreed to emigrate from the continent to other lands. However, while there are those among them who planned the emigration project with specific objectives, many would simply decide to leave the continent with the expectation of accommodating to the new realities of the foreign land where milk and honey would flow.

For others, life in the diaspora has not been a voluntary decision. In the history of Africa, there have been at least two significant periods involving deportation of Africans. First, the painful experience of the slave trade which occurred in the fifteenth century and continued until the nineteenth century. Then even in the twentieth century, there have been cases where Africans leave their countries under different guises—for example, the phenomenon

4 Tiffany R. Patterson and Robin D. G. Kelly, 'Unfinished migrations: Reflections on the African diaspora and the making of the modern world' in *African Studies Review*, 43:1, (April 2000), 11-45; Patrick Manning, 'Africa and the African diaspora: New directions of study', in *Journal of Africa History*, 44 (Cambridge: University Press, 2003), 488; Isidore Okpe-who, Carole Boyce Davies and Ali A. Mazrui (eds.), *The African diaspora: African origins and new world identities* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001).

of *ngulu* (pigs) (as it is called in DR Congo) where people pay to join a musical group or sports team travelling abroad but fail to return home; or trafficking of children and young women; then there are so-called charitable organisations and NGOs which prey on orphans, such as the infamous Ark of Zoe case in Chad in 2007.⁵

The second factor that facilitated the movement of Africans, willingly or unwillingly, to other continents, was a number of civil wars. Under the control of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), many individuals and families were sometimes forcibly, and often without choice, moved from one country to another within the continent before crossing the oceans and seas, by air, boat, or canoe. Many Africans have even paid with their lives. Both in the experience of the slave trade or during the hard time of wars, many Africans died before reaching their destination.

In these different experiences of emigration, voluntary or involuntary, certain realities have been experienced. For some, their families have been disrupted; for others, the hope of a return to Africa has faded; for many others, the link with the continent is simply broken. However, it is true that many Africans in the diaspora continue to maintain contact with the continent through financial assistance and return visits. Through cash remittances, many from the diaspora invest either in their own countries or in other African countries. Some studies evaluate Afri-

can remittances as hundreds of billions of US dollars.⁶

In reference to the 'Francophone African missionaries' presently at work in Europe, America, Asia and Oceania, even across Africa, it is noted that their presence may be connected with either of the experiences described above. Some have left Africa on a voluntary basis with or without a missionary objective, the latter being a goal that would have developed as they found themselves in the diaspora. Others have left the continent unwillingly and without any missionary goal, but this goal has been triggered by the opportunities of the new environment. For some, the contact with the church in Africa is maintained. For many others, there is no thought of contact with the mother church in Africa. For others, it is only after starting a church or ministry in a foreign country that contacts are developed with the churches of those left behind in Africa.

In such a context, the concerns raised at the beginning of this article about the meaning of 'African missionaries' and the process of their deployment and follow up become relevant. Let us see first what research has already discovered about the missionary activity of Africans, before moving to other considerations.

5 K. J. S. Bergquist, 'Operation Babylift or Babyabduction? Implications of the Hague Convention on the humanitarian evacuation and "rescue" of children', in *International Social Work*, (September 2009), 52:5, 621-633.

6 Sanjeev Gupta, Catherine Pattillo, and Smita Wagh, 'Impact of Remittances on Poverty and Financial Development in Sub-Saharan Africa', in *International Monetary Fund Working Paper*, WP/07/38, (February 2007), 3; Claire Mercer, Ben Page and Martin Evans, *Development and the African diaspora* (e-book: Zed Books, 2008). ISBN 9781842779019. Website: www.zedbooks.co.uk.

2 The current situation of the missionary commitment by Africans

In the history of mission, the missionary commitment has often been expressed in the crossing of cultural and/or geographical barriers with the purpose of preaching the gospel with the goal of church-planting or simply to provide social services. Sometimes it has been in the form of an itinerant ministry, while in other cases it might be only a mission trip from one to three weeks; the question remains whether the itinerant ministry and mission trips constitute missionary work in the full sense.⁷

While acknowledging that the Christian faith is spreading in Africa and Asia through indigenous missionaries who are crossing cultural barriers within their own countries, the editors of *Atlas* provide data mainly related to foreign missionaries who leave their home countries to serve in other countries within or outside their continent of origin.⁸ For example, a Congolese who serves God in Burundi or in another country outside of Africa is classified as a missionary. On that basis, *Atlas* makes the comparison between the number of missionaries sent in 1910 and those sent in 2010 at the world level, while also specifying how many were deployed by each continent.⁹ Unfortunately, this document does not state how many African missionaries serve in one or another category from those reported above (evangelism, church planting, social services, etc.).

One fact is undeniable—that today the vast majority of those who could be called ‘African missionaries’ work in various countries within the continent. According to some reports,¹⁰ there are many Nigerian missionaries working in at least forty African countries. Missionaries from the DR Congo serve God in many places in Africa. My family and I have served as a missionary family from the DR Congo to Burundi since 2011 after having served in the Central African Republic from 2003 to 2004. One can find similar cases across and out of the continent. Unfortunately, for lack of administrative organization, the ratio of these various missionary movements is not objectively and formally made known to the world through conventional channels.

The last observation relates to the distribution of African missionaries by region. Responding to the concern to know where exactly these missionaries are from and how many they are, *Atlas* reports as follows. The southern part of Africa has always been the region which sends more African missionaries, with the Republic of South Africa sending the most (8,000 missionaries in 2010). The western side of Africa comes second, with Nigeria in the lead (3,700 missionaries in 2010). The eastern region of Africa ranks third with Kenya as a leader (1,000 missionaries sent in 2010). The central part of Africa, despite its position in terms of number of Christians, ranks fourth, with the DR Congo at the top (1,200 missionaries sent in 2010). North Afri-

⁷ Johnson and Ross, *Atlas*, 259.

⁸ Johnson and Ross, *Atlas*, 290.

⁹ Johnson and Ross, *Atlas*, 260.

¹⁰ Patrick Johnston, *The Future of the Global Church: History, trends and possibilities* (Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica, 2011).

ca closes the list.¹¹ As one can observe, Africa consists of different regions and such a reality also affects the missionary movement.

3 A missionary movement in a pluralistic Africa

Without doubt, any observer can still recognize that Africa is not uniform or homogenous. The continent includes within itself several races (black, white and coloured) and several mixed cultures influenced by the diversity of colonial powers (British, French, Belgian, Portuguese, Spanish, Arabic, Italian, German, etc.). The socio-cultural and economic realities in the western part of Africa are not necessarily like those of the central part. The two regions mentioned above are not identical to the part known as the Maghreb, or the one known as the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia, and Eritrea), nor to the Swahili-land (Kenya, Tanzania, and the Northern part of Mozambique), etc.¹² It is therefore appropriate to say with McNulty that Africa is a continent of contrasts and diversity.¹³

This is true also for the contemporary missionary movement in Francophone Africa. The term *Francophonie* appeared in the late nineteenth century when French geographer Onésime Reclus (1837-1916) used it in the 1880s to designate the geographi-

cal areas where French was spoken as an official language.¹⁴ To this end, *Francophonie* means the gathering of populations spread over the world who use the French language partially or totally in their daily life and communication. Therefore, it is also referred to as *francosphere*.¹⁵ Some authors categorize *Francophonie* in three groups: the *Francophonie* of the North which comprises France, Quebec, Acadia, Belgium and Switzerland; the *Francophonie* of the Arab world consisting of Lebanon, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt; and the *Francophonie* of Africa south of the Sahara.¹⁶

However, as far as the reality is concerned, Francophone Africa could normally be divided into three categories. The first consists of countries which have French as their first official, governmental and educational language. Burundi and Rwanda, once Francophone of Central Africa, have switched to the East Africa Community by adopting English as the official language among others (French and Kinyarwanda in Rwanda, and French and Kirundi in Burundi). The second category includes countries that choose French as a second official language (Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Mauritius, and Tunisia). The third category includes countries that acceded to the International Organization of Franco-

11 Johnson and Ross, *Atlas*, 261.

12 Y. Richmond and P. Gestrin, *Into African Inter-cultural Insights* (Yarmouth, Maine: Inter-cultural Press, 1998), 75-213.

13 L. M. McNulty, 'The Contemporary Map of Africa', in P.M. Martin & P. O'Meara (eds.), *Africa*: 10-48, (London: Indiana University Press, 1995), 13.

14 Dennis Ager, *Francophonie in the 1990s: Problems and opportunities* (Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 1996), 1.

15 Ager, *Francophonie*, 1.

16 Chaibou Elhadji Oumarou, 'Francophonie in Africa South of Sahara : Specificity, challenges and perspectives', in *Revue Internationale de Langues, Littératures et Cultures*, no 11, (Janvier 2012), 17-36.

phonie although they are essentially non-francophone (Cape Verde, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe).

While focusing on Francophone Africa, this article retains only the first two categories of countries where French is spoken either as the first or the second language. Nevertheless, the use of 'first' or 'second' language is even questionable in most African countries where several other languages exist. For instance, though I am a citizen of the Democratic Republic of Congo which belongs to the above first category, French is not my first or second language because *Topoke* (my mother tongue) and *Lingala* (the trade language in the region where I grew up) deserve these first two places.

The Francophone part of Africa includes the countries from French and Belgian colonization, divided between Central Africa, Western Africa, Northern Africa (known under the label of the Maghreb), and the extreme Northeast, including the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean islands.¹⁷ While acknowledging some similarities in the challenges and opportunities of missionary movement in these different francophone areas, it should also be noted that these challenges and opportunities will differ from one region to another.

With specific regard to the missionary movement in Francophone Africa, such diversity relates to whether it refers to Central Africa, West Africa, North Africa, Africa East, or the Africa of the islands of the Indian Ocean. A

straightforward way to evaluate the missionary movement from one country could be to compare statistical information relating to the Christian population and that of the country, gain and loss in the Christian population, the number of outgoing missionaries and that of missionaries incoming. From these numerical reports, challenges of missionary commitment in Francophone Africa can be broadly understood.

III The Missionary Movement of Francophone Africans

Due to lack of locally-generated data in Africa and data collected by Africans themselves, this article relies on statistical records published in some reference documents outside of Africa. For this there are three major sources: *Atlas of Global Christianity*, *Operation World*, and *The Future of the Global Church*. While *Atlas* reports on statistical data in terms of missionaries sent and received,¹⁸ *Operation World* comments on the main trends per country.¹⁹ In his recent, *The Future of the Global Church*, Patrick Johnstone provides summaries of the contributions of the different streams of Christianity as they occurred in the past and as they take place in the present era with extrapolations for the future. Speaking of the 20th century, Johnstone observes that 'many churches still regard the Great Commission as an optional extra, a fad, an inconvenient relic of the colonial era and not as their core

¹⁷ Francophonie, <<http://www.francophonie.org/-80-Etats-et-gouvernements-.html>> accessed on December 14, 2014.

¹⁸ Johnson and Ross, *Atlas*, 267.

¹⁹ Jason Mandryk, *Operation World, Professional Edition DVD-ROM*, 2010.

reason for existence'.²⁰ This observation by Johnstone is very relevant at this point in the discussion.

Thus in Francophone Africa, the historical legacy of colonialism leads some scholars to identify Christian mission with the attempt to colonize people of other cultures. Therefore, many churches in Francophone Africa find it difficult to perceive world mission activities as something which could be carried out by African churches. Consequently, the tendency is for many churches to conceive of 'mission' as any activity associated either with white and rich people from the West, or with something which occurs without clever planning.

Available statistical data depict the above situation more clearly than could be seen in a lengthy survey of literature. The following data are excerpted from *Atlas*²¹ and provide the overall picture of the degree to which Francophone Africa has been involved in world mission.

1 Missionary movement in Francophone Central Africa

Francophone Central Africa includes Cameroon, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, and Chad. According to *Atlas*, the Christian population (87,863,000) represents 8.6 per cent of the entire Francophone Central Africa (106,280,000). While missionaries received in Francophone Central Africa were 21,860, this region has sent out 1,920 missionaries. The im-

plication is that it takes 45,761 Christians to send one missionary.

2 Missionary movement in Francophone West Africa

Francophone West Africa includes Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Guinea Conakry, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo. According to *Atlas*, the Christian population (19,112,700) represents 17.5 per cent of the entire Francophone West Africa (109,465,000). While missionaries received in the Francophone West Africa were 6,610, this region has sent out 647 missionaries. The implication is that it takes 29,541 Christians to send one missionary.

3 Missionary movement in Francophone North Africa

Francophone North Africa includes Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. According to *Atlas*, the Christian population (142,600) represents 0.1 per cent of the entire Francophone North Africa (78,354,000). While missionaries received in the Francophone North Africa were 1,780, this region has sent out 39 missionaries. The implication is that it takes 3,656 Christians to send one missionary.

4 Missionary movement in Francophone East Africa

Francophone East Africa includes Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Madagascar, Rwanda, and Seychelles. According to *Atlas*, Christian population (28,401,200) represents 0.1 per cent of the entire Francophone East Africa (43,086,600). While missionaries received in the Francophone East Africa

²⁰ Patrick Johnstone, *The Future of the Global Church*, 63.

²¹ Johnson and Ross, *Atlas*, 267.

were 4,795, this region has sent out 672 missionaries. The implication is that it takes 42,263 Christians to send one missionary.

5 Summary: Missionary movement in Francophone Africa

The data displayed above certainly raise questions about any claim that Francophone Africa is a proactive force for the mission. From about 20,700 African missionaries sent in 2010,²² only 3,835 have been sent by French-speaking Africa. That makes 18.5 per cent. If for a total of 135,522,500 Christians in

Francophone Africa, 3835 missionaries were sent, the implication could be that it takes 35,339 Christians to send one missionary (Table 1 and 2 below).

These figures show that Francophone Africa is a geographical area where the gospel is preached (41.1 per cent of the population are Christian), but in general this gospel would be rarely received (4.1% growth in Christian population), only superficially (2,943,350 would abandon their faith), and be passed on to the other unreached people by only a small number of church members (135,522,500 Christians to send only four missionaries). The above figures would also constitute proof that the churches of Francophone Africa seem less likely

²² Johnson and Ross, *Atlas*, 267.

Table 1 : Entire population and Christian population

Francophone African Regions	Population (2010)	Christian Population (2010)
Central Africa	106,280,000	87,863,000
East Africa	43,086,600	28,401,200
North Africa	78,354,000	142,600
West Africa	109,465,000	19,112,700
Total	337,185,600	135,522,500
%		40.1%

Source : Generated and adapted from *ATLAS of Global Christianity*.

Table 2 : Missionaries sent and missionaries received

Francophone African Regions	Missionaries sent (2010)	It takes how many Christians to send one Missionary (2010)
Central Africa	1,920	45,761
East Africa	672	42,263
North Africa	39	3,656
West Africa	647	29,541
Total	3,835	121,221

Source : Generated and adapted from *ATLAS of Global Christianity*.

to be active in cross-cultural mission both locally and far off, outside French-speaking Africa as well as outside the continent. Only a detailed research on a case-by-case basis could prove otherwise.

The orientation for such research would focus on the analysis of each of the above statistical tables to indicate the different places where the missionaries from Francophone Africa are deployed, how many were sent out, what they are exactly doing in terms of missionary activities, how they were selected, trained, supported and sent out, etc. While these data are yet to be found, the case study of Congolese working in Burundi can shed some light.

IV Case Study: Congolese Missionaries in Burundi

The aim of this case study was to discover how Congolese working in Burundi in church and para-church ministries have been mobilized before getting involved in cross-cultural mission, how they were identified as missionary candidates by their respective churches, and how they were selected, trained, commissioned, deployed, supported, monitored and evaluated. This case study then provides some insights into the participation of African missionaries in world mission.

The study used the descriptive survey method because it was seen to be the most appropriate approach in obtaining views from a wide range of participants who had been working in Burundi before, during and after 1993. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from all selected participants, some of whom were interviewed.

Interviews were chosen in order to reveal the experiences of participants and the meaning they made of their experiences.²³ They were interviewed also to clarify issues that respondents had raised in their responses to questionnaires.

The following questionnaire (Table 3) was submitted to 100 Congolese among those working in the city of Bujumbura as pastors and evangelists within local churches. The main criteria were: to be a Congolese by nationality, born outside of Burundi and coming from one of the cities in the DR Congo, to serve whether as pastor or evangelist in the context of Protestantism (non-Catholic) with a local church or a para-church ministry, and to have a leadership position as an initiator or a new member of a local church, a denomination or a para-church ministry.

After several meetings (including some key leaders) explaining the reason for the research in the hope of overcoming the initial reluctance of many to participate, sixty responses were received. Unfortunately, as far as their ecclesiastical affiliation was concerned, only a few identified themselves with mainline churches (including Free Methodist, United Methodist, Norwegian Baptist, and Pentecostal Assemblies of God). These people happened not to be included in any of official statistical reports mentioned earlier in this article. However, in light of the result of our research, their contribution to the global mission cannot be ignored.

23 I. E. Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences* (2nd ed.), (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988).

Burundi has gone through difficult times with civil and army conflicts, resulting in killing, destruction and displacement of populations throughout the country. These conflicts, their root causes and their impact on different societal sectors have been well documented by both local²⁴ and international²⁵ researchers and scholars. From the literature, it is clear that these conflicts occurred in sequence, 1965, 1972, 1988, and from 1993 to 2005. Many observers have regarded the recent crisis, 1993-2008, as the most devastating human conflict in the history of Burundi. For instance, René Lemarchand notes the following about

the 1993 Burundi conflict: 'Seldom have human rights been violated on a more massive scale, and with more brutal consistency, anywhere else on the continent.'²⁶

Congolese 'missionaries' who participated in the present research settled in Burundi in different times, before, during or after 1993. More research needs to be carried out to identify the motivation of each group of Congolese working in Burundi and the nature of their contribution in response to the problems Burundians faced before, during, and after the period of conflict. Another research project could be done to identify to what extent churches and other Christian ministries led by Congolese are really cross-cultural, stating how many citizens from DR Congo attend those churches and how many are from other countries.

Meanwhile, as already mentioned above, the research questionnaire (Table 3) and the findings displayed below shed some light on how African missionaries identify themselves, how they understand their ministries, how they are selected for mission abroad, and how they are supported and monitored.

24 Frederick Bamvuginyumvira, 'The Influence of the African Public Radio in the Burundi Democratization Process', Unpublished Master's Thesis in Science of Governance (Bujumbura, Burundi: ILU Burundi, 2013); Jocelyne Bazahica, 'Analysis of Leadership Behaviors in Burundi Vis-à-Vis the National Unity Charter: 1988 to 1993', Unpublished Master's Thesis in Organizational Leadership (Bujumbura, Burundi: ILU Burundi, 2013).

25 René Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi* (London, Pall Mall Press: Library of African Affairs, 1970); *Burundi: Ethnic conflict and genocide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Jean Ghislain, *Le Burundi entre la peur et la cruauté* (Tournai: Imprimerie Saint-Luc-Ramegines-Chin, 1995) ; F. Reyntjens, *Burundi: Breaking the cycle of violence* (London: Minority Rights Publications, 1995).

26 Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic conflict and genocide*, xxv.

Table 3: Research Questionnaire related to the participation of Congolese in world mission

		Yes	No	Why
01	I consider myself as a missionary from my church of origin (in the DR Congo) here in Burundi	0	N	
02	I have received the missionary vocation due to the mission mobilization event organized by my church in my home country	0	N	
03	As I left the country, I did not think of coming to work as a missionary. The idea came to me as I was here.	0	N	
04	Before leaving my country, I had received an appropriate missionary training specific to the mission (cross-cultural ministry)	0	N	
05	Prior to leaving my country, I knew what I had to do here in Burundi as a missionary	0	N	
06	Before leaving my country, my church had organised a special service of dedication for the mission in my favour	0	N	
07	While I am here, I keep in touch with my home church through the formal and regular administrative reports	0	N	
08	My home church considers me as a missionary and supports me in prayer in an organized and regular manner	0	N	
09	My home church considers me as a missionary and supports me financially in an organized way	0	N	
10	My church (or ministry) here in Burundi considers me as a missionary even though I am not a white person from Europe, USA or Asia	0	N	
11	I know the duration of my mission here in Burundi	0	N	
12	I think my ministry here brings benefits to the global mission	0	N	example
13	My activities as a missionary here in Burundi are:	Your home church: Your church in Burundi:		

Source: Fohle Lygunda li-M, October 2012.

The result reveals the following factual realities:

1 How Congolese missionaries in Burundi were identified and mobilized (Q. 1-3)

Though some respondents consider themselves as 'missionaries' (56.6 per cent), most of them (65 per cent)

recognize that their missionary calling was not caused by their churches back in the DR Congo. While some of them have come to faith while in Burundi, others have lost formal and administrative contact with the churches they attended before leaving DR Congo. Half of the respondents (50 per cent) attest that their missionary commitment was

not made and planned from their country of origin. The most important question is: are they 'missionaries' who are sent or are they better described as 'auto-proclaimed missionaries'?

2 How they were selected and trained for the mission (Q. 4, 5)

The majority of respondents (58.4 per cent) were not formally trained for cross-cultural ministries for several reasons, including lack of mission schools within their respective home churches. Other respondents (41.6 per cent) received formal pastoral training through a biblical or theological school, but not especially for cross-cultural mission. The question is: are they comfortable and knowledgeable in what they do?

3 How they were commissioned and deployed to the mission (Q. 6)

The majority of respondents (58.4 per cent) were not formally or officially commissioned by their home churches for cross-cultural mission in Burundi. Other respondents (41.6 per cent) were instead ordained as pastors for their pastoral ministry in the DR Congo. The question is: in what sense do they identify themselves as 'missionaries' and 'being in mission'?

4 How they are supported, monitored and evaluated (Q. 7-11)

Findings on support, monitoring and evaluation seem contradictory. According to respondents, they are prayed for (51.6 per cent), they have some casual administrative contacts (46.6

per cent), and they receive non-regular financial support (8.3 per cent). After having checked the respondents' explanation of their answers, it is clear that Congolese working in Burundi are not really assessed by any church back home in the DR Congo. For instance, the majority (90 per cent) state that they don't know the duration of their mission in Burundi. Some would even love to move to another country if they had opportunity and means. The question is: what would they do and become if they were forced to return to their country, the DR Congo?

5 What is their contribution to world mission (Q. 12,13)

All respondents are convinced that their ministries bring benefits to the global mission as they get involved in different ministries, such as pastoral, evangelization, preaching, Christian education, Bible and theological school, church planting, discipleship, family ministry, education (primary, secondary and tertiary). The question is: how do they evaluate their contribution to world mission in comparison to God's holistic mission of saving the whole person?

From the above findings, it becomes clear that though missionaries from French-speaking countries may be found in several parts of the world, there is still more to do in terms of their mobilization, training, commissioning, deployment, support, monitoring, and evaluation.

V Challenges and Opportunities to Francophone African Churches

Merely claiming to be 'mission-minded' does not make a church or people a 'missionary movement', nor can it be a simple confession of faith. It is something to be done, an experience to live out, and its fruits should be obvious. In general, and also in light of the foregoing data, it is clear that Francophone Africa still needs to be better mobilized for a responsible commitment to God's global and holistic mission. The eloquent comment from Daniel Bourdanne depicts the current situation:

Because of its colonial past characterized by a low vitality of Protestantism in France and Belgium (the colonizing countries), French-speaking Africa was often regarded as the 'poor man' of the evangelical world. Missiologically, because this part of the world is culturally different and little known by the evangelical world (which is dominated by the American and Anglo-Saxon culture), French-speaking Africa has often been neglected.²⁷

This serious warning from Bourdanne should not, however, force anyone to continue to pity the 'poor man' of Africa. After more than a century of Christian presence, Bourdanne's challenge would be appreciated better if it became a trumpet call to awaken a worthwhile response. In seeking to engage Francophone Africa in mission,

one should consider the following challenges and opportunities:

1 Initiate structures of mobilizing for mission, training for mission and sending for mission

Initiating appropriate structures for mission should be taken up in every church, every country and every region (Central, North, West, and East). These structures can operate within a Christian community (denominational mission) or through an association of Christian communities (interdenominational mission).

For instance, missionary conferences and consultations should be held regularly. A prime example comes from the Movement for African National Initiatives (MANI) which has already held three consultations at the international level: 2001 in Jerusalem, 2006 in Nairobi, Kenya, and 2011 in Abuja, Nigeria. Nevertheless, these forums will need participants willing to popularize and apply the results of their decisions and resolutions. Schools, institutes, colleges and universities of mission studies must multiply.

However, these different training institutions would do well to prepare students for an applied missiology which would include a contextualized biblical reflection and proper missionary practice.²⁸ Mission involvement would mean also that missionaries from Francophone Africa be sent according to Jesus' itinerary. They should go from their Jerusalem to their Judea, their Samaria up to the rest of the earth (Acts 1:8).

²⁷ Daniel Bourdanne, 'The Rising mission force in French-speaking Africa', in *Lausanne Movement Newsletter*, 2011.

²⁸ Fohle Lygunda, *Missiologie: identité, formation et recherche dans le contexte africain* (Bruxelles/Kinshasa: Mabiki, 2011), 86-105.

2 Initiate missionary programs to bring the whole Gospel to the entire person

In the light of biblical history, God has led to involvement in Africa in all three areas of human need: physical need (body), spiritual need (spirit) and psychic need (soul). The contemporary missionary movement in Francophone Africa will play its full role only when it follows the missionary path of Jesus who took care of the whole person: body, soul and spirit (Lk 4:17-21; Mt 9:35-39).

To ensure a responsible and successful missionary movement, missionaries from Francophone Africa will need to be recruited from a wide range of people and professions, including laity, pastors, evangelists, prophets, teachers, business men and women, nurses, medical doctors, lawyers, agronomists, veterinarians, engineers of different specialties, journalists, socio-cultural workers, etc. One of the challenges at this level is to mobilize, identify, select, train, deploy, support and evaluate these potential missionaries for cross-cultural mission.

3 Initiate missionary programs within the Francophone area of Africa

Africa can be depicted as a sphere where more than half of its residents are still without Christ.²⁹ Special emphasis should be put on West Africa and North Africa where the growth of Christianity faces the hegemony of Islam. Major cities across regions of Francophone Africa must also be

of concern to the African missionary movement because of the rate of urbanization which continues to grow.

Similarly, special attention should focus on the mission among children and young people whose presence becomes increasingly greater. Thousands of pygmies, created in the image of God but often overlooked in the jungles of eight countries in Francophone Africa, represent a great harvest.³⁰ Effort should be combined in their favour through a holistic mission.

4 Initiate missionary programs within Africa, but in non-Francophone regions.

In a continent where non-Christians represent 52.1 per cent of the population,³¹ the French-speaking African churches should deploy more missionaries than would be the case with churches from other continents. Due to threats of terrorism and other economic and political considerations, it is obvious that missionaries from the West no longer enjoy the same openness as was the case in past centuries.

Non-Francophone regions are likely to be considered as the 'Judea and Samaria' of Francophone missionaries. Therefore, they will need to overcome language barriers by seeking to learn Arabic, English, Portuguese, Spanish, Swahili, etc. Missionaries from Francophone Africa should be prepared to testify in the context of Islam, animism, secularism, and occultism.

³⁰ These countries are, Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Gabon, Central Africa Republic, Cameroon, and Equatorial Guinea.

³¹ Johnson and Ross, *Atlas*, 112.

²⁹ Johnson and Ross, *Atlas*, 112.

5 Initiate missionary programs towards other continents

Other continents like America, Europe, Asia, and Oceania should also be part of the preoccupation for mission involvement by Francophone Africans due to secularism, materialism and Eastern religions which keep people in bondage. Therefore, several barriers must be overcome by the Francophone African missionaries: geographical, economic, cultural, linguistic, and spiritual barriers. To overcome these various barriers, partnership in mission, resource management and planning activities are needed at local, national, continental and international levels.

Francophone African churches need to be proactive in this regard. Since the French-speaking countries are united by language and by the institutional organization at worldwide level,³² Francophone African countries could also take the opportunity of the common language to become involved in world mission in Francophone countries beyond the continent. Since the 10th Francophonie Summit held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso on November 26-24, 2004, many non-Francophone states have joined the Francophonie. Therefore, some cultural adaptations might be easily undertaken.

VI Conclusion

The current African missionary commitment can be compared to that of the early church which resulted from

the persecution that the Christians endured. The sending of Barnabas to Antioch (Acts 11: 20,21) or Peter and John to Samaria (Acts 8: 14) by the Jerusalem church was only to check what the Holy Spirit had already done via some disciples dispersed following the murder of Stephen. It is therefore clear that mission can be accomplished through well-planned intentional missionary programs, but also through informal ministries independently facilitated by the sovereign action of God. The case of Congolese working in Burundi undoubtedly falls into the latter category.

Given this ongoing informal missionary movement, the churches, especially in Francophone Africa, should act in the manner of the Jerusalem church. They should organize themselves to identify, support, coordinate and direct informal mission activities initiated here and there by Africans. Such an effort needs to be structured from different entities within the same country, at regional, continental and international levels.

Rather than being 'dependent' or 'independent', African missionaries would be better to work as 'interdependent missionaries' who can integrate into the global mission of God by working in synergy with the rest of the body of Christ. They should identify themselves in conventional terms of being 'denominational missionaries', 'interdenominational missionaries' or 'non-denominational missionaries'.³³ Such an effort will allow them to focus

32 Ager, *Francophonie*, 3; Peter Brown, 'The geopolitics of French language and culture and la Francophonie', in *Review*, no 33 (May 2005), 42-57.

33 Dotsey Welliver and Minnette Northcutt (eds.), *Mission Handbook, US and Canadian Protestant Ministries Overseas 2004-2006* (Wheaton: EMS, 2004), 16.

their missionary activities effectively, and humbly to demonstrate what God is doing through their cross-cultural faith adventures.

Training institutions which include missiology as a department could organize and mobilize teachers and students to produce a database aimed at clarifying the contribution of African missionaries to world mission. Teams of researchers by church, country, and region could be set up to initiate and coordinate research.

With such a task force, answers to the following questions could be provided and updated regularly: What is meant by 'African missionaries'? What

was the process of their engagement, their identification, selection, training, their commissioning, their deployment, support and evaluation? Where and why are they at work now? In what sense and for what purpose do they present themselves as 'African missionaries'?

This article has attempted to explain and suggest answers to these questions, but the true nature and the real challenges of the contribution of African missionaries to the world mission remain to be elucidated, from one missionary to another, from one country to another, from one mission field to another.