La Federación Africana de Acción Familiar

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Origin

Dr. Claude Lanctot and others founded the International Federation for Family Life Promotion (IFFLP) in 1974, with the Africa Zone as one of the four Zones into which its world was divided. About 1980 it began a 20 year development programme for Africa, headed by Drs. Francois and Michele Guy (France). The Federation was dissolved for administrative reasons in 1994, when the Africa Zone had Members from 33 countries. A group of the Federation leaders formed the Link Committee to maintain the connection between what had been and what they confidently hoped would yet be achieved in the future. In 2001 this Committee called a meeting of former members of the Africa Zone at Coutonou, Benin, which decided to set up the Africa Family Life Federation (AFLF: Federation Africaine d’Action Familiale: FAAF) to carry on the work done by IFFLP in Africa. AFLF divides the Continent into four Zones. In April, 2004 the new Federation held its first Pan African (bi-lingual) meeting in Johannesburg. As of 2006 AFLF is in contact with 12 French-speaking and 8 Anglophone Associations in 16 countries. A Congress in Malawi (the second, including Jo’burg) gathering of members from English-speaking Africa took place this year and who was attended by delegates from 12 African countries, besides visitors from France and the United States.

Activities

Natural Family Planning

A choice is to be made between visits at home, couple to couple teaching, and teaching of NFP in medical centres. This choice depends on the settings and will be made on a case-by-case basis. However, the program should be structured and the
activities should be recorded and supervised so as to insure the program success. Natural family planning has proved to be a way of life calling for respect toward the spouse, communication between man (husband) and woman (wife), self-mastery being able to favour a climate strengthening the family and mutual respect. This is of main importance in fighting against HIV/AIDS.

**Youth and HIV/AIDS**

AFLF undertakes to get more generously involved in developing specific and integrated teaching programmes for prevention and fight against HIV/AIDS. Those programmes are aimed at changing the attitude and integrating values based on solid anthropologic foundations, sustained by strong programmes like Love matters, Teen Star, Education for Life ad Youth Alive groups, True Love Waits). AFLF organises an action plan to train specialised trainers and insure the follow-up and evaluation of prevention programmes and campaign against HIV/AIDS specifically aimed at young people.

- Develop appropriate tools in the context of prevention and fight against HIV/AIDS
- Propose concrete actions for young people with young people, and the help of governments and various social groups.

These programs include training of trainers for street young people (peer teaching), follow-up and supervision of groups of young people and technical assistance in training activities and program evaluation.

**The role of the family today**

The Coordination Committee of the AFLF believes that strengthening the family makes of it the main asset in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The Family has been dramatically shaken by the present situation in Africa and it is necessary to strengthen it. Family “constitutes, much more than a mere juridical, social, and economic unit; it is a community of love and solidarity, which is uniquely suited to teach and transmit cultural, ethical, social, spiritual, and religious values, essential for the development and wellbeing of its own members and of society” (Charter of the Rights of the Family). In Africa, Faith-based organisations are recognized as reliable, efficient, and open to partnership with the public sector for active participation to build a society based on values. Efforts are needed to work together helping everyone to succeed in the service of today's African society.
Members and structure

The AFLF has structured itself for action and has established an action plan for the 5 coming years. Structuration: Since its launch in November 2001, the IFLF has been established on the basis of geographical and language zones. These zones will be at the root of its representation in the Coordination Committee. During the General Assembly in Johannesburg, April 2004, the AFLF has structured its decision-making process into Units (Couple and Family, Youth, Research-media and publicity); these Units being coordinated by an Executive Board in charge of the follow-up of the activities and the support of the action plans (training of educators). The Executive Board will also supervise the activity of the Consultation Service, the latter calling for competent Consultants in specific domains of activity (Couples and Family, Youth Education, HIV/AIDS...) in charge of follow-up and evaluation across the geographical and linguistic areas.

Voting members:

1. Action Familiale de Gitega – Burundi
2. Centre médical Sainte Famille – Burkina Faso
3. Association FTK (Fivondronon’ry Tokantrano Kristionina) – Madagascar
4 Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria – Family Human Life – Nigeria
5 Organisation pour l’éducation à la vie familiale et à la PFN – Bénin
6 Departement of Family Apostolate a woman promotion – Sudan
7 Action Familiale de Kananga – RD Congo
8 Secrétariat National de PFN de la CENCO – RD Congo
9 Conduite de la Fécondité – RD Congo
10 Centre d’entre aide au développement et d’Action pour la famille et la femme (CEDAFF) – RD Congo
11 Service Central Education à la vie – RD Congo
12 Programme d’Action Familiale / Archidiocèse de Bukavu – RD Congo
13 The Fertility Mastery Association of South Africa (FERMASA)
14 Reproductive Health / Family life Education Programme – Uganda
15 Action Familiale Rwandaise - Rwanda
16 Action Familiale de Lomé – Togo
17 PROVIFA (Mouvement pour la promotion de la famille) – Côte d’Ivoire
18 FAMLI – Malawi
19 Action Familiale du Tchad
20 Action Familiale de l’Ile Maurice
21 Association sénégalaise pour la Promotion Familiale - Sénégal
Values and principles

The values and principles are those of the International Federation for Family Life Promotion (IFFLP).

The recent years have permitted to identify the new challenges.

To illustrate the climate of the AFLF, let us present an opening session talk of Dany Sauvage, president of the AFLF, in Johannesburg, 2004:

“On behalf of the Africa Family Life Federation, launched in 2001 at Cotonou, I have the honour and pleasure to welcome you today to our first Conference and to the fourth Congress of FERMASA on the subject “New strengths for the family: Hope to combat HIV/AIDS” What is important on the opening of our congress is to ask ourselves: Why are we here today? What made us take up so many challenges and overcome so many barriers to be here? The answer to these questions is a very simple one: we are here because we believe from the bottom of our hearts that the most precious thing on earth is human life; and we are here because we know that human life is based on family life and that the family cell is essential for life to thrive.

I would really like to see what is deep inside each of us when we think about family. Let us express our deep feelings and thoughts. What would be more wonderful that this love relationship that generates/that engenders life?

We are here today to defend the cause of family life, which is so threatened today.

Let’s pay attention not to be misled by those international organization that keep on using the word ‘family’ to refer to any kind of consensual union. Family is the place where a man and a woman engage in building a new community, stable and opened to life. It is only within the family that perfect complementarity resides and that real human relationships interweave and consolidate. Family is the core of the civilisation of love.

We may also say that we are here to develop our capacities in building such a relationship and to learn how to extend it.

However, looking at our programme, we see that we will be rather discussing about Natural Family Planning, sex education of the youth, and HIV/AIDS.

The link between these fields can be found in the very essence of the human nature; made man and woman, with sexual identities and deep desires to communicate and give / and exchange) love.

Human sexuality is an outstanding way to undertake such a relationship.

Men and women are destined to experience love through the union of their bodies as well as their souls.

"Sexuality should be guided, sublimated, and integrated through love; and love alone makes it really human".

Such a love comes to reality within marriage, through total giving. Then, love becomes a force that strengthens the civilisation of love. On the contrary, when sexual life is lacking the sense of giving, that civilisation becomes a civilization of ‘objects’, a civilization in which human beings are considered as means and not as ends.

In such a hedonistic civilisation, women become objects and children burdens.

Natural Family Planning comes within the scope of this attention towards respecting human nature, accepting the other person as a whole, sharing tenderness and giving life. Over these two-day Conference and five-day training courses, we will develop NFP and sex education topics with the belief that through this education, men and women will find their dignity. This is the one and only solution to down AIDS.
Finally, we would like to acknowledge all the persons who helped us with our project. We are especially grateful to Cardinal Margéot, to Dr François and Dr Michèle Guy, and to Dr Lancot. We also think of Dr F. Adotevi (Senegal) who apologises for his absence because of illness. We thank all those who have contributed to the organisation of this Conference, especially Christine du Coudray, on behalf of l'Eglise en Détresse, for her confidence and support.”

Another illustration of the present way of working of the AFLF:

Conference Resolutions, Malawi 2006 :

We, the Delegates to the Africa Family Life Federation’s Second Pan African Anglophone Congress held at Kambiri Lodge, Salima, Malawi, from the 20th to the 27th September 2006 come from Cameroon, DR Congo, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania, South Africa, Mauritius, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and the host country Malawi. We met together with the representative of SECAM and experts from France and the USA on the theme of “Integrating HIV and AIDS Awareness and Behavior Change into Family Life Programmes”. We first want to pay tribute to and thank most sincerely the donors whose generous contribution allowed the Congress to take place: AID to The Church in Need and the Pontifical Missionary Society. And we acknowledge with gratitude the inspiration received from Dr. Claude Lancot and Drs. Francois and Michele Guy. We also thank the Link Committee for bringing the Federation into being, the AFLF Board Members, and the members of FAMLI, Malawi for hosting the Congress. We propose that the Africa Family Life Federation be declared a faith-based organization which is open to individuals and groups of all Faiths who believe in God and whose values and principles are in line with those of the Federation.

Having had time during the Congress to reflect and share together as a family we now resolve to:

1 rededicate ourselves and our programmes to the values and principles of the Federation and fostering the quality of family life in Africa. In doing this we reaffirm the dignity of human life from conception to a natural death and we promote the concept of marriage as a union of a man and a woman.

2 uphold and promote scientific Natural Family Planning (NFP)

3 build the capacity of the members of the Federation in order to ensure the professional practice of NFP;

4 network with individuals, groups, institutions, governments and international organizations to foster the practice of the values and principles of the Federation;

5 call on international agencies to collaborate with us in making NFP a recognized and available method of family planning;

6 carry out effective programmes for the growth and development of youth and their avoidance of HIV infection and AIDS through emphasis on abstinence and being faithful (AB) as the only sure way of avoiding infection; and to provide care and support for the families of those infected or affected by the virus;

7 work with informed parents and guardians in advocating for appropriate human and sexuality education programs in schools;

8 create a forum for the exchange of information, expertise, and resources that will enhance the work of members of the Federation; special attention will be given to work on a “Catechism of Family Life”;

9 promote the equal availability of quality education for both the boy and the girl child.

We ask God’s help in carrying these resolutions forward.
Approved by the Delegates on 27 September 2006