



Catechists formed as Holy Childhood Animators

Supported by Missio München, the Diocese of Yambio in South Sudan successfully conducted an intensive eight-day formation program from May 2 to 9, 2026, training 69 catechists from 21 parishes for Catechists as Holy Childhood (Missionary Childhood Association – MCA) Animators. Facilitated by Fr. Christy John CMF and officially opened by the Vicar General, Fr. Thomas Bagbiowia, the workshop provided comprehensive training on essential topics including the biblical foundations of mission, child development, safeguarding, peace-building, and practical pastoral planning to nurture the spiritual and missionary growth of children. The deep impact of the training is powerfully captured by the full testimonies of the participants who expressed their renewed commitment to their parishes. Reflecting on the spiritual awakening of the youth, one catechist shared: "This training has opened my eyes to the missionary vocation of children. I now understand how to guide children not only in prayer but also in becoming missionaries of peace and hope in our communities." Another animator emphasized the vital importance of protection and care: "The sessions on safeguarding and child development were very important. They have helped me understand how to work responsibly and respectfully with children in our parish."



Ready to implement these new skills, a third participant added: "I am returning to my parish with practical tools, games, prayer activities, and a clear plan to organize MCA groups. This formation has strengthened my commitment to serve the children of the Church."

The pastoral vision for this initiative was set forth during the opening ceremony by Fr. Thomas Bagbiowia, Vicar General of the Diocese of Yambio, who expressed his gratitude to the donors and formally declared: "The Church grows when children are formed in faith, mission, and Christian values. By training catechists as Holy Childhood Animators, we are investing in the future missionary disciples of our Diocese. I encourage all participants to become faithful witnesses and committed mentors to our children." Concluding the event, the Diocesan MCA Coordinator, Sr. Helen, thanked the participants for their active involvement, noting with great hope that this formation marks a significant step toward empowering more children to become active missionaries among their peers under the guidance of loving and patient mentors.

Parish Pastoral Council formation Archdiocese of Juba

With the generous support of Missio München, the Solidarity Pastoral Service Team successfully conducted two Parish Pastoral Council Formation Workshops in the Archdiocese of Juba during May 2026. Organized at the request of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Office, the workshops were centered around the theme, "The Nature and the Role of the Parish Pastoral Council." They were facilitated by Fr. Emmanuel Tredou M.Afr, Director of the Solidarity Pastoral Service Team, alongside members of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Team, with the goal of strengthening the identity, collaboration, and co-responsibility of parish leadership.

The initiative was split into two distinct events to serve different regions of the archdiocese. The first workshop took place from May 4 to 6 at the Central Deanery, gathering 32 council members for three days of intensive reflection. Through presentations and case studies, attendees analyzed the composition, primary functions, and specific executive responsibilities within a council.



This session deeply reshaped how members viewed their roles, as one participant shared: "Before this workshop, I thought the Parish Pastoral Council existed mainly to organize parish activities. Now I understand that we are called to work closely with our parish priest in planning, discerning, and guiding the pastoral life of the parish. This formation has given me a clearer sense of responsibility."

Building on this success, the second workshop was held from May 11 to 13 at the Eastern Deanery, bringing together 37 council members. This event focused closely on the dynamic relationship between councils and parish priests, fostering a spirit of communion and accountability in pastoral planning. The practical approach resonated with experienced leaders, prompting one long-serving member to

comment: "I have served on the Parish Pastoral Council for several years, but this is the first time I have received formal formation on our role. I now understand the importance of consultation, planning, and listening to the needs of the people." Reflecting on the overall impact, the Archdiocesan Pastoral Coordinator expressed immense gratitude for the initiative, noting that while many members serve generously, they often do so without adequate training. Facilitators were equally encouraged by the extraordinary enthusiasm of the attendees, who demonstrated a strong desire to return to their respective parishes to put their new skills into practice, marking a vital step forward in promoting synodality and vibrant leadership across the Archdiocese of Juba.

Trauma Healing and Empowerment for Girls in Kapoeta

With the generous financial support of Mercy Beyond Borders and facilitated by the Solidarity Pastoral Team, a three-day trauma healing and empowerment workshop was conducted from 9th to 11th May 2026 at St. Bakhita Primary School in Narus, Kapoeta. The workshop brought together 109 girls aged between 13 and 17 years who had been rescued from early marriage within the Toposa community. The workshop was guided by the theme, “What I Think Influences What I Feel and What I Do: I Can Learn to Think Differently and Change What I Feel and What I Do,” with the subtitle “My Body, My Story, My Strength.” Through the use of Capacitar healing exercises, participants explored the relationship between thoughts, emotions, memories, and behaviour, while learning practical tools for self-awareness, emotional regulation, and personal growth.



On the first day, participants reflected on the theme “The Body: A Wonderful Gift,” recognizing that the body carries memories and emotions. The second day focused on understanding memories and emotions and how they influence life choices. The final day encouraged participants to discover their inner strength, identify their possibilities, and make positive choices for their future. The facilitation team consisted of Sr. Karina Ubillús SSND, Ms. Jackeline, Ms. Florence, and Sr. Guille ACJ from the Solidarity Pastoral Team. Despite the challenges of working with a large number of participants, the team successfully created a safe and supportive environment where the girls could share their stories, express their emotions, and learn from one another. Throughout the workshop, participants demonstrated

remarkable openness, courage, and resilience. Many girls initially felt shy and fearful because they did not know one another. However, through small-group sharing, singing, dancing, and interactive activities, they gradually developed trust, friendship, and a sense of belonging. The facilitators observed that younger participants integrated more easily, while older participants required more time to build confidence and trust.

The final evaluation revealed the profound impact of the workshop. Participants reported learning how to manage their emotions, develop positive thinking, respect the opinions of others, and forgive in order to experience inner peace. Many expressed greater self-confidence and hope for the future. One participant shared, “This workshop has changed my life,” while another stated, “My thoughts towards life have changed. Now I know that life is precious.” Others affirmed that fear no longer controlled them and that they had learned to accept themselves as God created them. The facilitators also reflected on their own learning experience. They deepened their understanding of how trauma affects both the mind and body and recognized the importance of empathy, listening, and creating safe spaces for healing. The team was particularly moved by the stories of young girls affected by early marriage and inspired by their courage and determination.

The workshop concluded with a strong request from participants for more opportunities to continue sharing their life experiences in a trusting environment. The program demonstrated that healing is possible and that young girls possess tremendous strength and potential when given the opportunity to be heard, supported, and empowered. Through this initiative, Mercy Beyond Borders and the Solidarity Pastoral Service Team have contributed significantly to restoring hope, dignity, and resilience among vulnerable young girls in Kapoeta.

Bringing Hope to Displaced Communities in Old Fangak

In a remarkable sign of resilience, faith, and hope amid the challenges of displacement, a series of Pastoral Formation Programs were successfully conducted in the Old Fangak Pastoral Region of the Diocese of Malakal from 15th to 26th May 2026. The programs were organized by the Solidarity Pastoral Service Team with the generous support of Missio München and hosted by the Comboni Missionaries at Holy Trinity Mission, Paguir.

A Community Rebuilding After Conflict

The pastoral formation took place against the backdrop of the tribal conflict that erupted in the region last year. The violence forced thousands of people to flee their homes and led to the evacuation of the Comboni Missionaries from their former mission station. After a period of uncertainty, the missionaries returned to accompany the displaced population and established a new mission centre at Holy Trinity, Paguir, one of the substations where many displaced families had settled in temporary shelters.

Despite the difficult living conditions, the faith of the people remained strong. The formation programs became an important opportunity for spiritual renewal, leadership development, and rebuilding community life.

The formation team consisted of Dn. Michael Thilyang Gatkek, Diocesan Pastoral Coordinator of Malakal Diocese, Fr. Pedro Salvador, Comboni Missionary, Mr. Peter Gutor, and Fr. Christy John CMF from the Solidarity Pastoral Service Team.



Catechists Formation (15–19 May 2026)

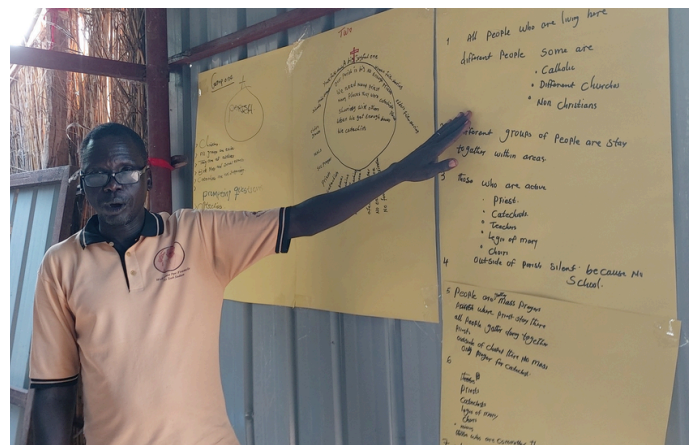
The first program brought together 40 catechists from various communities across the pastoral region. The training focused on strengthening the identity and mission of catechists through sessions on Catholic Identity and the Creed, the vocation of catechists, Salvation History, Moral Teachings of the Catholic Church, Introduction to the Liturgy, Introduction to the Bible, and the role of the Biblical Prophets.

Participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the Catholic faith. Many shared that the training renewed their commitment to serving communities that continue to face the challenges of displacement and uncertainty. They particularly appreciated the sessions on Scripture and Catholic identity, which they felt would help them become more effective evangelizers and teachers of the faith.

Small Christian Communities Formation (20–21 May 2026)

The second program gathered 40 participants for the formation of Small Christian Communities (SCCs). Under the theme of the SCCs as a "New Way of Being Church," participants reflected on Parish Mapping, building vibrant faith communities, and the Seven-Step Method of Gospel Sharing.

The participants recognized the importance of SCCs in strengthening unity among displaced families. They noted that small faith communities provide spaces for prayer, mutual support, reconciliation, and healing. Many expressed enthusiasm about implementing Gospel-sharing groups within their villages and temporary settlements.



Youth Formation (22–24 May 2026)

A total of 33 young people participated in the Youth Formation Program under the theme "Catholic Youth: Rooted in Christ, Serving with Purpose."

The sessions explored the identity of young people, the unique qualities of Catholic youth, God's personal call, the role of youth in parish life, and practical leadership skills including communication, planning, teamwork, time management, and resource management. The youth actively participated in discussions and group activities. They shared their desire to become agents of peace and



reconciliation within their communities. Many stated that the program gave them confidence to take leadership roles in the Church and society despite the challenges caused by conflict and displacement. Participants emphasized that the training inspired them to remain rooted in Christ while serving their communities with hope and purpose.

Parish Pastoral Council Formation (25–26 May 2026)

The final formation program brought together 15 members of Parish Pastoral Councils under the theme "Called to Serve: Parish Council in the Life and Mission of the Church."

The formation focused on the vocation, role, duties, and responsibilities of Parish Pastoral Councils. Participants reflected on servant leadership and the importance of collaborative pastoral planning.

Council members expressed appreciation for the clarity gained regarding their responsibilities within the parish. They committed themselves to fostering greater participation, transparency, and shared responsibility in parish leadership. Several participants noted that the formation helped them better understand how to accompany communities recovering from conflict and displacement.



Reflections from Church Leaders

The profound impact of this initiative on the resilient local population is best captured through the reflections of their spiritual leaders:

Dn. Michael Thilyang Gatkek, Diocesan Pastoral Coordinator of Malakal Diocese, highlighted how the training empowers the community during this critical phase of reconstruction:

"The people of Old Fangak have experienced displacement, insecurity, and loss. Yet their faith remains strong. These formation programs have strengthened local Church leadership and empowered catechists, youth, SCCs leaders, and parish council members to become instruments of hope, reconciliation, and evangelization."

Fr. Pedro Salvador, a Comboni Missionary serving the displaced communities in Paguir, further emphasized how the physical presence of the Church serves as a vital spiritual anchor:

"Although many families continue to live in temporary conditions, the faith of the people is alive. The formation programs have renewed the confidence of community leaders and encouraged active participation in the life of the Church. The presence of the Church among displaced people is a sign that God continues to walk with His people even in times of suffering."

Ultimately, as these displaced communities journey toward stability and long-term recovery, this collaborative effort has planted lasting seeds of unity, hope, and a renewed missionary commitment.