

INTERNATIONAL REFORMED PERSPECTIVES IN CAR
Perspectives Reformees Internationales
Report #C13

SURVEY

A total of 61 survey respondents in CAR identified *Perspectives Reformees* as the Christian organization having the most positive impact in the CAR, giving it a rank of #7 overall, with only six other organizations listed more frequently. While it was rated moderately low for women participating in leadership, it was rated fairly high for having a good reputation locally, and was rated neither unusually high nor low on other criteria.

ABSTRACT

As an affiliate of the Christian Reformed Church in North America's "Back to God Hour," the French language ministry of *Perspectives Reformees Internationales* features a ministry of radio (and other media) in a variety of French-speaking countries under the international director Dr. Paul Mpindi. Reformed Perspectives in the CAR functions under the National Director William Mbuluku, and the Deputy Director Ferdinand Gregonda – both graduates of FATEB. The ministry of Reformed Perspectives within CAR features a variety of radio programs, conferences and symposia, evangelistic crusades, and discipleship programs.

HISTORY

The "Back to God Hour" is the media ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, which gave birth to a French-speaking department called International Reformed Perspectives. The "Back to God Hour" announces the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the media (radio, television, Internet and Literature), using the most widely spoken world languages: English, Chinese, French, Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, Russian, Japanese and Indonesian. International Reformed Perspectives uses a variety of media platforms to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all Third World French speaking countries. However, in the Central African Republic Reformed Perspectives (IPRCAR), is a branch of the media ministry of International Reformed Perspectives, whose head office is based in the USA (6555 West College Drive, Palos Heights, IL 60463).

Perspectives Reformees in the Central African Republic is one of the follow-up centres of *Perspectives Reformees Internationales* in Africa. It is important to note that similar follow-up centres also exist in other places like Benin and Kinshasa. This organisation started timidly in the Central African Republic around 2002, and official recognition of IPRCAR only took place in October 2007 under reference number 298/MICSP/CAB/DGAT/DAPA/SESE. In the very same year, International Reformed Perspectives in the Central African Republic started to establish its offices and maintain a certain structure.

This organisation was indeed born in the Central African Republic through the inputs of Dr. Paul Mpindi, who is in charge of the French-speaking branch of International Reformed Perspectives. He started this work by taking on former students that were taught by him in BEST (Bangui Evangelical School of Theology). This is how International Reformed Perspectives organizes its activities in the Central African Republic by broadcasting programs.

MISSION/VISION

International Reformed Perspectives in the Central African Republic is an evangelism-fortifying and training Christian organisation serving all churches in the Central African Republic. Its mission remains the one Christ is entrusted to His Church, as stipulated in Mathews 28.18-20: “*Go, make all nations disciples, baptizing them in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all I prescribed you.*” Therefore, the mission of International Reformed Perspectives in the Central African Republic is to evangelise, train and fortify disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ in the French-speaking Third World.

The main vision of International Reformed Perspectives in the Central African Republic is to help man and women to be true Disciples of Christ, actively engaged in their local churches and able to influence their social environment positively.

International Perspectives Reformed in the Central African Republic wants to equip Christian men and women with the Word of God so that they will know and serve Christ and become efficient in their social surroundings.

Faith Confession

International Perspectives Reformed is indeed part of the bigger Evangelical Christian family, and their Faith Confession is as follows:

- We believe in a Trinitarian God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Creator of heaven and earth;
- We believe in the Bible as the inspired and unfailing Word of God, authoritative in faith matter and conduct;
- We believe in the fall of humanity and their free salvation through Christ. Salvation through Christ is only possible by the Saints’ Scriptures, faith and grace;
- We believe in the Universal Church, the body of Christ, messenger of the salvation Good News in Christ;
- We believe in the imminent second coming of Christ, in the felicity of Saints and the judgement of the wicked.

In a particular manner, International Reformed Perspectives in the Central African Republic is investing themselves in the following activities:

Biblical Study (Open Distance Learning)

International Reformed Perspectives in the Central African Republic, through their Bible Study Department, offers biblical training through open distance learning with three sets of courses helping Christians to fortify their faith and becoming engaged Disciples of Christ in a crisis-ridden world. The training is free and approved with a certificate for each level completed. The courses relating to the Sermon on the Mount indeed deal with the Christian’s behaviour as a Kingdom citizen and citizen in his/her country. This set numbers five lessons, to be completed by seminar. However, the course set on prayer invites Christians to keep their relationship with God strong by means of prayer. This set has ten lessons.

Discipleship

International Reformed Perspectives in the Central African Republic trains Disciples of Christ to be actively engaged in their churches and able to influence their social environment

positively. They become Disciples of Jesus Christ under the mentorship of their team leaders with a theological education, and most of them are former students of Bangui Evangelical School of Theology.

Spiritual Fight

International Reformed Perspectives in the Central African Republic organise the training sets for people on intercession with the purpose of equipping men and women to engage in the Lord's mission. This will enable them to take up the spiritual fight, do battle and practice exorcism as well, because Satan, the enemy of God, blinds many people. The Apostle Paul affirms this in 2 Cor. 4:4 *"For unbelievers, the god of this century has blinded their thoughts so that they cannot see the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the mirror image of God"* and he holds them captive with satanic ties like witchcraft, prostitution, incest, magic, fetishism, drugs, and so on. With specific teaching, International Reformed Perspectives in the Central African Republic is teaching Christians the importance of spiritual warfare against the powers of darkness, thereby achieving a stairway step as one of the aspects of Jesus Christ's mission. This consists of destroying the devil's works according to the text in 1 John 3:8: *"The one who is sinning belongs to the Devil because the Devil sins from the beginning. The Son of God appeared to destroy the devil's works."*

Evangelism

On top of biblical training and discipleship, International Reformed Perspectives in the Central African Republic organises public evangelism campaigns like the one that took place during March 2010 in the "20,000 seat Stadium" in Bangui which resulted in the conversion of many souls to Jesus Christ. Outside of evangelism campaigns, Christians are trained in particular to be soul winners through one-to-one evangelism, which is the most efficient because of the personal approach and contact from a person bringing him/her the Good News of the Gospel.

Conferences and seminars

International Reformed Perspectives in the Central African Republic also organises conferences and training sessions for faith edification in Christ, to equip pastors and spiritual team leaders for soul salvation work. Furthermore, the training of women is organised as well by International Perspectives Reformed in the Central African Republic because women have long been neglected, especially in African cultures, and merely relegated to housewife roles.

Broadcasting programs

Through their broadcasting department, International Reformed Perspectives in the Central African Republic transmits programs via different stations and places. IPRCAR is also engaged in the distribution of audiotapes to taxis, bus drivers, hair salons, libraries and discotheques, etc. to give everyone the chance to hear the Word of God, especially those who cannot or do not go to church.

Missionary Field

To accomplish its mission efficiently, International Reformed Perspectives concentrates their efforts on the evangelism of Third World French-speaking countries. In spite of cultural diversities, French-speaking Third World countries have their linguistic legacy (French) in common and a precarious socio-economic and political situation. International Reformed Perspectives is committed to present Christ to all people of French-speaking Third World countries regarding experiences applying particularly to them and, in this way, bring the

Gospel in an accurate context to the French-speaking Third World, which includes Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific.

Strategies

International Reformed Perspectives in the Central African Republic allocated to themselves a double strategy, which consists of:

- a) Presenting Jesus Christ's Gospel through the media: radio, television, Internet and Literature.
- b) Follow-up work by establishing follow-up centres in strategic towns where local listeners can easily get access to edification Literature.

OTHER ORGANISATIONS WITH SIMILAR FOCUS/MISSION

For quite some time the Voice of the Gospel (from France), Voice of Hope of the 7th Day Adventist Church, and Emmaus (from Germany) worked on similar objectives to that of International Reformed Perspectives in the Central African Republic, especially in the distribution of Christian Literature.

CURRENT LEADER

William Mbuluku is the National Director of Reformed Perspectives International (RPICAR). Ferdinand Gregonda as Deputy Director. Mr. Mbuluku, after his studies as a librarian, came to Bangui to study at FATEB where he is currently a Ph.D. candidate. Apart from that, Mr. Mbuluku has knowledge on management and computers. For what concerns the ministry of Perspectives Reformed, he has been working for quite a long time with this ministry with the International Director Rev. Dr. Paul Mpindi before becoming the National Director in 2004. Concerning his strength, he is a wise and clever man with strategies and initiatives for the ministry.

BOARD STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION

International Perspectives Reformed in the Central African Republic does not have an appropriate Administration Council. However, this organisation is managed by a leadership team that was created by the founder of the institution in the Central African Republic, Dr. Paul Mpindi, who appointed former students of Bangui Evangelical School of Theology.

It must be noted that the leadership team of International Reformed Perspectives in the Central African Republic is composed of a National Director (ND), a Deputy National Director (DND) and a Responsible of Biblical Study (RBS) who works under direct supervision of a Regional Director in Kinshasa. The three members forming the Governing Body of International Reformed Perspectives in the Central African Republic are all former students of Bangui Evangelical School of Theology, and two have a Master's Degree in Theology. This team is in charge of recruitment for the service.

BOARD AND STAFF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

According to the Deputy National Director, to work for Reformed Perspectives in Central African Republic firstly requires one to be Student of an Institution who has followed the first and second sets of biblical studies successfully and who mastered the training. Secondly, the

marital position of the person is a necessary condition for recruitment, and finally the testimony of the candidate and his/her basic community. It is important to mention that staff members of International Reformed Perspectives in the Central African Republic comprise of three categories (correctors, trainers, mobile broadcasting team and pool facilitators).

SHAREHOLDERS

International Reformed Perspectives in the Central African Republic is working in synergy with a certain category of people called volunteers or intermediaries. It is through their service that International Perspectives Reformed activities are disclosed. They are also in charge of intercession and other tasks into the organisation.

FINANCES AND OTHER RESOURCES

Being a French-speaking branch of International Perspectives Reformed, the follow-up centre of Central African Republic (IPRCAR) receives its financial resources from the Head office in the USA. However, besides this support coming from the outside, initiatives have been taken by Bangui's local leadership to encourage donations and raising funds for the organisation to move forward. International Reformed Perspectives in Central African Republic resources comes from the USA as well as men and women concerned with propagating God's Word in the Central African Republic. Regarding managing funds received by the organisation, the annual budget is financed monthly by financial backers according to monthly needs. International Perspectives Reformed in the Central African Republic has an accountant who is in charge of the organisation's financial management, and he reports regularly to the Head Office in the USA.

PARTNERSHIP/LINKS

The Deputy National Director acknowledges that International Reformed Perspectives works in partnership with many Christian organisations worldwide, but especially in the USA. It is nevertheless difficult for him to know all these organisations, as that is the International Director, Dr. Paul Mpindi's responsibility. Concerning the local plan, International Reformed Perspectives in CAR works in direct partnership with local churches, and at times, they use certain church halls for conferences, seminars, meetings, etc. International Reformed Perspectives in CAR yearns for a technical and financial partnership, which could help achieve mission efficiency in the Central African Republic.

SWOT: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

International Reformed Perspectives in CAR has huge strengths, the Deputy National Director, Mr. Gregonda Ferdinand declared, because "only at the BEST training centre, there are at least 20,000 registered students in the biblical studies. Also, adding those of the five stations offices in Boy-rabe, Combatant, Petevo, PK 12 and Zongo, there are more than 30,000 registered students..." International Reformed Perspectives in CAR's strength resides in its capacity to mobilise all Bangui churches to participate in organised conferences, seminars and evangelism. However, despite these strengths, the organisation faces some weaknesses linked to inefficient finances to realise their vision and translate training material into the desired Sango language. This lack of sufficient financial resources as well as the country's current circumstances does not allow IPRCAR to function normally; these constitute the challenges and constraints the organisation face. Finally, International

Reformed Perspectives in CAR is working towards opportunities that would collaborate with their purpose to help to diversify the organisation's activities nationwide.

IMPACT/SUCCESS/EVALUATION

In general, the seminars, conferences, broadcasting programs, training sessions and evangelism held during March 2010 in Bangui's "20 000 seat Stadium" in particular permitted a positive environmental impact. International Reformed Perspectives in CAR does indeed have trained students, which are the tangible results of the work done by the organization. It must be added as well that all the training material of International Reformed Perspectives in CAR is locally produced. As indicated by the Deputy National Director and presidents of different Christian denominations in the Central African Republic, it confirms the impact of the organisation to anyone who needs verification of his declarations regarding the organisation.

TRAINING/LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

International Reformed Perspectives in CAR already has experience in the training of disciples, intercessors and others. Being a training, fortification and evangelism centre, International Perspectives Reformed in CAR keeps a strong relation with former students through conferences, seminars and other sessions enlivened by Dr. Paul Mpindi when he visits Bangui. On one way or another, monitoring of International Perspectives Reformed in CAR is done through the contact they keep with the volunteers and especially those who work towards popularising the activities. For instance, for Emmaus, Voice of Gospel and others, International Reformed Perspectives in CAR offers biblical studies training through open distance learning. However, they mostly train intercessors, disciples and other teachings, for example on homiletics, organising conferences, seminars and public evangelism campaigns. What the difference is between International Reformed Perspectives in CAR and other organisations is that they not only train people to use them in local church implantation programs, but students are trained and planted in the local churches where their skills are applied to that specific church's needs. Those who assume leadership in Reformed Perspectives in CAR received their theological education at BEST and have, on top of that, certificates in accounting and others. Concerning the remaining staff, in most cases, they are students trained by the organisation and delivering a positive performance.

PRINT AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Beside its web site www.perspectives.org, where one can find almost all publications, the Bangui follow-up centre delivers publications, Christian literature, audiotapes, CD's with quality biblical teachings for edification, fortification, training and personal meditation to the Christian public in the Central African Republic.

As follow-up and edification of listeners, International Reformed Perspectives in CAR provides listeners biblical literature for free or at low prices, such as:

- Sermons of broadcasting (free);
- Reader "Bread of life" for Word of God meditation;
- Theological books and spiritual edification (more than fifteen titles);
- Biblical studies by open distance learning;
- Written answers to the listeners questions.

FUTURE

In spite of its overseas dependence, International Perspectives Reformed in CAR allocated itself certain objectives to achieve the following in the next two years:

- Developing/spreading the work of International Perspectives Reformed in CAR nationwide;
- Create training centres such as schools (primary and secondary) for the work to blossom;
- Have a well-equipped Cyber Cafe available for typing, connection to the Internet, photocopy machines, binding, etc.;
- Set up a Library that could serve an exposition of publications, books, audiotapes and CDs for readers and students of International Perspectives Reformed in CAR.

In order to allow the organisation to achieve its mission and realise its objectives, International Reformed Perspectives in CAR uses two strategies: Presentation of the Gospel by media (radio, television, Internet, Literature) and the follow-up work by the satellite offices in Boy-rabe, Combattant, Petevo, PK 12 and Zongo in the Democratic Republic of Congo).

According to the Deputy National Director of International Reformed Perspectives in CAR, the opportunity given to him by African Leadership Studies (ALS), in terms of this interview, allowed him not only to talk about the organisation but also to inform people everywhere about this organisation especially. According to him, it was a time to think and reflect on how to disclose International Reformed Perspectives in CAR to the world and get on board more partners.

REPORT PREPARATION INFORMATION

Names: Max José Koyadibert and Kalembe Mwambazambi

Person Interviewed: Ferdinand Gregonda (Deputy Director)

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POST-CONFLICT INTERVIEW REPORT

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This organization has many staff members located throughout Bangui. Many of them took refuge with family, at sites for displaced people, or at other locations during the conflict. Four of the voluntary staff were killed.

The organization's offices were closed, and activities were discontinued throughout CAR at that time. Salary payments were maintained. All the organization's materials were brought to FATEB because of security concerns.

In the future, the organization hopes to continue missions in CAR by partnering with churches and broadcasting on the radio to reach out to the population with the word of God.