

The National Council of Churches in India

Annual Report for the period September 2018 – August 2019

Bishop President, Office-Bearers of the NCCI, honorable members of the General Body/ Executive Committee, Invitees and Colleagues,

I present the report of the life and work of the National Council of Churches in India for the period September 2018 to August 2019.

The National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) is registered under the Societies Registration Act, XXI of 1860 (Reg. No. 13 of 1933-34) and under the Bombay Public Trusts Act, 1950 [Reg. No. F/715(N)].

Let me at the outset place on record our sincere appreciation and gratitude for the services rendered by the Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad who provided leadership and stability to the Council as its General Secretary from December 2010 to December 2018. The new General Secretary took charge on 3rd January 2019. The installation service and ceremony was presided by the President and the officers bearers of the Council as well as the members of the working committee. The leaders of churches and Christian/ ecumenical organizations, friends and well-wishers of the NCCI from all walks of life and different faith communities were present. Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad was bid farewell amidst rich tributes paid to his work and ministry both to the NCCI and to the community in Nagpur.

Programs

The programs of the NCCI are planned and executed on the basis of the aims and objectives for which the Council is formed. It is also planned within the purview of the Strategic Plan (2014 - 2020). The activities are also guided by the Quadrennial Theme (2016 - 2020): Building Just and Inclusive Communities expressed in five specific contexts - Mission & Ecumenism, Peace Building, Migration, Human Trafficking and Human Rights. The National Program Commission guides the program activities of the Council. The Executive Secretaries gave leadership to several projects during the year based on their area of work. A brief overview of the programs of the year is presented hereunder. Details are available in the reports of the respective Secretaries/ Coordinators

Policy, Governance and Public Witness (Rev. Dr. Abraham Mathew)

1. Joint Civil Society Action for Strengthening Plurality
NCCI joins the NCCI-URM, India Peace Centre, the Interfaith Coalition on Peace and the Centre for Study on Secularism in this initiative led by the Christian Service Agency. Among other things the Joint Civil Society Action aims at running a School of Peace, Developing Peace Laboratories, Training FoRB monitors, and documenting good practices and violations.

2. NCC Review

This tool of public witness is published 11 times a year and focuses on different themes through each of the 11 issues. Many guest editors undertake to compile and edit the contributions pertaining to each issue. The publication is in English language, and thus has limited leadership. During the reporting period NCC Review was published continually.

3. Liaison with the Government

The National Education Policy of the Government of India (GOI) was released immediately after the formation of the new Government. The NCCI with all its members working for many years in the field of Education provided the feedback as requested by the GOI. The same was presented to the Ministry of Human Resources through proper channel.

4. Policy making

The NCCI has over the years passed several policies for itself- Youth Policy, Ecumenical Document on Human Sexuality, Social Security Policy, HIV/ AIDS Policy guidelines for the Churches, No one can serve Christ and caste, Ecumenical Tribal Policy, Mission guidelines, Disability Inclusion guidelines, NCCI Education Policy, etc. While some are recent others are at least eight to ten years old. A process to revise older policies is underway.

5. Proposed Academy of Governance, Politics and Education (AGAPE)

This Academy (with an empaneled international faculty) is proposed to be set up in Nagpur campus like the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland, to conduct ongoing training programs for the church functionaries and lay persons on Governance including in Transparency, Accountability and Responsibility, as also on citizenship and democracy. Some courses will be attempted in the current financial year in partnership with Constituents of the NCCI.

6. Unity Octave & NCCI Sunday

The constituents of the NCCI and their counterparts in the Roman Catholic church and those in the fellowship of the Evangelical churches join Christians worldwide for a week of Prayer for Christian Unity. During the reporting period this Week of Prayer was conducted between 18th and 25th January 2019. The General Secretary and the Executive Secretaries joined this observance in different locations. Sunday in the Week of Prayer was observed as NCCI Sunday in different churches as usual.

7. NCCI -Urban Rural Mission

NCCI-URM is an autonomous body of the council. Its activities were grouped with this cluster to provide for networking with different stakeholders in the society. The church in this way became richer by relating to the Social Action Movements that affirm life

8. Public Witness

During the reporting period the nation went to polls. Taking advantage of this opportunity the NCCI engaged in conscientising and encouraging the members of its member churches

to exercise their civic rights to vote and thereby participate in the democratic tradition of the country.

Dalit and Adivasi Concerns (Mr. Pradip Bansrior)

1. Dalit Christian Solidarity

The concerns surrounding the discrimination of Christians and Muslims of dalit origin is being pursued with great vigour. This was addressed in coordination with the CBCI and the NCDC. August 10th continues to be a day when we rally around on this issue. The litigation is also pursued. We need to build a volunteer force who will mobilize the grassroots communities on this and build networks. It is planned to set up a One Crore Dalit Christian Support Fund through this volunteer force to address this and related issues. A full-time program assistant is required for this endeavour and the working committee has permitted to recruit a person who is well versed in the matter and in building the movement.

2. Addressing Caste

Dalit Liberation Sunday is an annual occasion in which the NCCI motivates churches to make an appraisal of itself as a casteless community, and to enable the church to work to the annihilation of caste in Society. The DLS was observed this year. A new enthusiasm is required in addressing this. The Indian Kairos affirmation, 'No one can serve Christ and caste: practice of caste is sin and untouchability crime' needs to become real. Meetings with Church leaders and with theological students were arranged in different locations.

3. Tribal Concerns

Tribal/ Adivasi Sunday was observed this year focusing on issues relating to land. This was observed in many locations - in the local churches, theological colleges and as ecumenical observances

4. Peace-building

This program is located in the North East India. The program is now located here with DATA Concerns for effective accompaniment and coordinated intervention. A link with the North East India Christian Council is also initiated now.

5. Kairos Partnerships India

A learning platform is sought to be built between peoples of different contexts and countries. It is hoped that this will give strategies to build resilience in our context

Youth Concerns (Mr. Jianthaolung Gonmei)

1. Ecumenical Formation

Internships: During the period under review, we have had the following interns. They have been trained on different concerns to which they were attached. Two of them were absorbed in the Student Christian Movement of India. One person was absorbed in the Christian Service Agency as Program Executive for Dalit Concerns.

1. Mr. Saurabh Khobragade, Tribal/ Adivasi Concerns (till March 2019)
2. Dn. Basil Paul, Youth Concerns (till March 2019)
3. Ms. Megha Naik, Women Concerns Ministry (till March 2019)
4. Ms. S. Jenifa Rani, Unity and Mission (till March 2019)
5. Ms. Catherine Christopher Nair, Policy Governance Public Witness (till March 2019)
6. Dn. Yeshudas Pandit, deputed by World Vision for Unity and Mission and IDEA (till February 2019)
7. Mr. Anant P. Soren (NELC; from 1st July 2019)
8. Mr. B. Asher (STBC; from 1st July 2019)
9. Ms. Smriti Priyansha Sikka (MCI; from 1st August 2019)

2. Strengthening Capacities

School of Ecumenical Leadership For Indian Youth (SELIY) is an annual feature. The latest SELIY was conducted in October 2018. Youth from different Churches in the NCCI benefitted through the SELIY. It is hoped that the participants will give good leadership to Church and Christian/ Ecumenical organizations in the future.

Capacity Strengthening programs are also planned for youth in specific churches based on requests received. The one for Mennonite Church in India is due

3. Movement Building

With a view to build the Ecumenical Youth Movement in India, the Directors/ Convenors/ Secretaries/ Directors of the respective NCCI Member church is meeting together every three months. Capacity on one or more issue/ concerns is strengthened during these meetings with the hope that this will be passed down to the Youth movement of the NCCI. The National Ecumenical Youth Assembly should be an outcome of this building up.

4. Addressing Migration - Futsal

A Futsal tournament is planned to address Migration inviting two entries from each Regional Council. This will conclude early next year.

Women's Concerns (Vacant)

The following programs were conducted directly from the General Secretary's office with the help of an intern:

1. Fellowship of the Least coin
2. World Day of Prayer
3. Coordinating with the Women's Programs of the NCCI Member churches
4. Mainstreaming Gender in the activities of the NCCI

Communication (Rev. Caesar David/ Ms. Neelam Gaikwad)

The Communication department was involved in the following activities

1. Updating the Website and social media platforms (WhatsApp, twitter and facebook) of the NCCI

2. Designing, Publishing and distributing the E-Newsletter
3. Conducting Communicators workshops as and when required
4. Most brochures and related material are designed in-house

Unity & Mission (Rev. Christopher Rajkumar)

“During the reporting period, the NCCI - Unity and Mission has employed to the best of its ability and resources, its mandate, through various activities, programmes and consultations. The issues addressed through programmes are: Responsible Christian Witness, Mission and Evangelism• Intra-faith and Interfaith relations in marriage and family• Prophetic Ecumenism and Transformative Diaconia• Affirming the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities and Sexually Diverse Communities. • Legal Literacy Initiatives for the Mission Workers• Climate Justice, Life Giving Agriculture, Food, Migration and Displacement• Peace and Human Security• Green Church and Green Sunday School•

Unity and Mission has also involved in research and documentation on the mentioned issues and in creating social justice consciousness among the member churches, by developing reflections through seminars, consultations, discussions, workshops, campaigns and public meetings, and has sought to protect, promote and ensure the rights and dignity of human beings and the remaining earth communities”

Special Projects on INCLUSION/ Standing Fora

1. National Ecumenical Forum for Gender and Sexual Diversities

Regular meetings of the National Ecumenical Forum for Gender and Sexual Diversities are being conducted every three months.

EHSA program is linked here for coordinated intervention. It is a herculean task of helping churches address the issue/ concern relating to understanding one’s own sexuality and also understanding the issues and concerns of persons relating to different sexual orientations and gender identities.

This year too ESHA successfully completed the following:

- a) Finalization and Release of Church Module
- b) Review of the Senate of Serampore Course on Human Sexuality
- c) Sensitization programs on LGBTQI concerns in Churches and Seminaries

This year ESHA tries to locate the learning and experiences in the setting up of an Advanced Institute on Religion, Gender and Sexualities. ESHA will also build its capacities to serve as a consultancy for churches and Christian/ ecumenical organization and others on human sexuality. It will also serve as a platform for Asian and Global interface on human sexualities

Among other things, the forum hopes to take on the sensitization of churches and theological colleges, addressing issues relating to peoples of gender and sexual minority communities who are ostracized by the faith communities as well as the society at large.

2. IDEA

The Disability Christmas, a unique annual event facilitated by the NCCI-IDEA was held last December in Nagpur.

Institute on disability was organized by the NCCI-IDEA in the month of November 2018. The deliberations are captured in a publication edited by Rev. Christopher Rajkumar to help Churches grow in inclusivity.

NCCI-IDEA networks with different partners working on Disability including the Engage Disability (ED) movement. NCCI -IDEA hosted the ED Hub coordinators training in the month of August 2019.

The Core group of the NCCI -IDEA reconvened and have made many plans to culture inclusion in and among NCCI constituents

Administration

Staff Position

Secretaries

For the period under review the following served as Executive Secretaries in the NCCI:

1. Rev. Christopher Rajkumar, Exec. Secretary: Unity and Mission (until 31st March 2019)
2. Rev. Caesar J. David, Exec. Secretary: Communication and Relations (until 31st October 2018)
3. Mr. Pradip Bansrior, Exec. Secretary: Dalit and Tribal/Adivasi Concerns
4. Mr. Jianthaolung Gonmei, Exec. Secretary: Youth Concerns
5. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mathew, Exec. Secretary: Policy, Governance and Public Witness (from 1st October 2018)

Secretariat Staff

The following are the Office and Support Staff of NCCI:

1. Mr. M.T. Thomas, Dak cum Circulation Assistant
2. Mrs. Ushakiran Herold, Administrative Assistant
3. Mr. Bhimsingh Soni, Mali
4. Mr. Rajendra Motghare, Head Mali
5. Mr. Ashish Mane, Finance Officer
6. Mrs. Namita Korkanti, P.A. to General Secretary
7. Mr. Dinesh Patel, Cook
8. Mr. Prakash Deomanji Meshram, Electrician

We also have had the following persons helping on contract:

1. Ms. Ann Carneiro (upto December 2018)
2. Mrs. Aarti Jhazote , Sanitation and helping in Azariah House
3. Mr. Santosh, Assistant in Azariah House
4. Mr. Dada Rao, Lawn maintenance
5. Mrs. Sunita Ravte Sanitation and Garden Help

6. Mrs. Lalita Kore, Garden Help
7. Mrs. Neelam Gaikwad, Communications
8. Ms. Preeti Waghchoure, Library
9. Mr. Peter Michael Sebastian, Finance Section
10. Mr. Nikhil Chauhan, Peon, NCCI Office in Delhi

Statutory Obligation

An annual return of the NCCI is filed with the Deputy Charity Commissioner in the prescribed format within the due date.

Finance & Property

While details of financial matters are available in the report of the Treasurer, Rev. Dr. Augustine Jeyakumar, I place the following report for the sake of a general overview and the need for filing reports with government bodies.

An amount of Rs. 1,54,85,754.00 was received during the FY 2018 -19, and payments for the corresponding period amounted to Rs. 1,59,16,243.54

Membership fees, Donations, NCC Review subscriptions, and Project Grant from Christian Service Agency and other organisations form part of the receipts of the NCCI. Income from Membership Fees has not been forthcoming as required. A few of those who send the membership fees are making payments at the old rate prior to the 2016 Quadrennial Assembly. The contribution from CSA has come down drastically. Income from property i.e., rental from the ground floor, first floor and terrace of Jubilee House and Oliver House, from Blessing Lawn, Joy Garden and Shristi Lawn and from Azariah House supplement the receipts of NCCI.

Expenses include Salaries and Allowances of staff and General Secretary, and Salaries and Allowances of Executive Secretaries represented as project expenditure of different ministries of the NCCI, expenditures of other projects and networking, renovation of Azariah House, hospitality expenses for occupants of Azariah House, developing lawns, repairs and maintenance of premises in Nagpur, office expenses of both Nagpur and Delhi offices, and NCC Review printing and circulation costs.

From the Donation-Contribution received from Dr. Adeline Samuel for N.C.C.I Centenary Celebration (a Scholarship Fund in the memory of Mrs. Milka and Mr. Kodu Samuel) NCCI has been giving Scholarships to deserving students of Leonard Theological College as Book Grant, as desired by Dr. Adeline Samuel.

Statutory Audit FY 2018 - 19

The statutory audit for the FY 2018 - 19 is concluded. The report in the prescribed format as required under the Bombay Public Charitable Trust Act is prepared and is available to the members for review and passing.

Provident Fund

Provident Fund contributions of all staff are being regularly deposited in the EPFO account.

Income Tax

Income Tax Returns for the F.Y 2017 - 18 have been complied with. Matters relating to FY 2018-19 will be processed after the passing of Accounts in the Annual General Body Meeting. TDS with regard to staff and suppliers are in compliance.

Professional Tax

Professional Tax is deducted and remitted as required. Professional Tax Return is filed regularly.

Goods and Services Tax (GST).

The NCCI is GST compliant. Deductions, Remittance and Returns are in order

Property tax

Municipal tax is paid to the Nagpur Municipal Corporation as and when it falls due. There is no due in the filing of Municipal Tax. Nazul fees has been paid upto 2016 only.

Church House Property and Secretariat Property***Lawns***

NCCI-Lawn facilities which includes Blessing Garden at Church House Property, Shristi Lawn and Joy Garden at NCCI Campus, are receiving good response.

Jubilee House Building

The Ground Floor of Jubilee House continues to be rented by State Bank of India. The First Floor and Terrace of Jubilee House have been rented until recently by Maharashtra Metro Rail on a leave and license agreement. They have since vacated. Maharashtra State Electricity Transmission Corporation Limited is desirous of leasing the property. They may hire the property from the 15th of October 2019.

Oliver House

The Mid India Board of Education of C.M.A.I. is occupying the ground floor of Oliver House building on rent.

Azariah House

Azariah House continues to serve as an accommodation facility for our programmes and guests. Since Azariah House is located at a low level in the campus it is prone to being flooded. The rooms and the facilities need repairs and renovation. The Occupancy rate is picking up. We have decided to hold all our programs in the Guest house so that some income is generated.

Secretariat Building

The Secretariat Building is a heritage structure. It also gets affected by the heavy rains. The entire rear portion of the roof of the building will need our attention in due course.

Compound Wall

230 ft length of the nine feet high compound wall of the Secretariat Building also collapsed in the heavy downpour of 6th July 2018. It had been rebuilt with generous contribution from our President, CASA and other well-wishers

NCCI Office in CNI Bhavan, New Delhi

NCCI had its office in CNI Bhavan with an area of 426 sq.ft. on the 3rd floor of CNI Bhavan. The NCCI Executive Secretary in charge of Policy Governance and Public Witness concerns used to operate from this place. In keeping with our general longstanding desire to make our presence in the National Capital felt, a larger space in the fourth floor CNI Bhavan overlooking the Central hall of the Parliament has been taken on rent. Since 1st June 2019 the National Office of the NCCI functions from this space that is approximately 2,400 square feet. The General Secretary also works from here. All new Executive Secretaries are asked to join in and work from Delhi. Nagpur office continues to be the Registered Office and the nerve centre of all programs. Part of interior designing cost to the extent of Rs. 3.5 lakhs was sponsored by our President.

Constituents and Associates of the NCCI

1. Regional Councils of Churches/ Regional Christian Council

We are happy to report that during the reporting period the Maharashtra Council of Churches has once again become lively. They will be co-hosting the Engage Disability Regional Conference in Mumbai in October 2019. The Utkal Council of Churches hosted the IPC- NCCI program on Human Trafficking along with the International Justice Mission (IJM) in June this year. The Tamilnad Christian Council and ESHA did a Church Leaders meeting in Chennai during the Pride month to acquaint leaders in the Churches in Chennai about the concerns relating to LGBTQI communities. The Councils in Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal and Odisha were informed about a meeting of the IJM on Human Trafficking. Representatives of these councils attended the meeting. The NCCI Youth concern is planning a futsal tournament to address migration involving the 18 Regional Councils. A meeting of secretaries of RCCs was held after a long time in Hyderabad earlier this year. This provided the platform greater interaction between the NCCI Secretaries and the RCC Secretaries.

2. 100 years of GELC Autonomy

The Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chotanagpur is celebrating 100 years of its decision to be an autonomous indigenous church later in October 2019. This is a unique moment for the Church. We do hope that the talks with NWGELC will be fruitful and so they will have one Gossner Church.

3. CNI Golden Jubilee

The Church of North India is planning the inauguration of its Golden Jubilee year celebrations in Nagpur during the month of November 2019. Many programs are planned throughout the year to engage the church in visioning forward.

4. Change of Leadership

During the period change of leadership was seen in the North West India Council of Churches, Arcot Lutheran Church, Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Christian Medical Association of India, Church's Auxiliary for Social Action, the Henry Martyn Institute, and the Bible Society of India

5. Related Agencies

During the first half of 2019 we had the first ever meeting of the Chief Executives of the Related Agencies of the NCCI. It was a useful meeting to understand the scope of the Related Agencies accompaniment to the NCCI secretariat and programs. The leaders of the Related Agencies expressed their happiness to help in the programs of the NCCI. It was decided to meet once in six months.

6. Autonomous Bodies of the Council

The India Peace Centre continues to function effectively with impacting programs in different parts of the Country. The NCCI URM is also back on its wheels. Recently these two bodies conducted a program on Reinvigorating civil society. Several follow actions have been drawn from both ends.

7. Christian Service Agency

The Christian Service Agency, the service wing of the NCCI continues to support and accompany the activities of the NCCI

8. The National United Christian Forum

The National United Christian Forum has for some time remained dormant due to different factors. Consultations with the CBCI and the EFI are on to take it forward. T-It is needless to say that the united voice of the Christian community is crucial in present times.

XXIX NCCI Quadrennial Assembly 2020

The highlight of the year ahead is the meeting of the XXIX Quadrennial Assembly of the NCCI. We look forward to it in great earnest. It is an opportune moment to review and renew our commitment to live and work together. We pray God that the days ahead will help us to bring to a focus all that we have gained in 'Building Just and Inclusive Communities' and to prepare ourselves to give the Council a fresh mandate on which we rally together and strive on.

Bishop President, I urge this august body to receive this report and advise.

Asir Ebenezer
General Secretary, NCCI