



Introduction

Acronyms:

SSCC: Salesian Cooperators

PVA: Project of Apostolic Life

[ASSCC: Association of Salesian Cooperators](#)

Good morning, everyone, a pleasure to share with you through these technological means that we have today at our disposal, which do not replace the personal experience and sharing face to face. I wish that each one of you and your families are in very good health, in these different moments that we have had to live, but always with the hope in God who does not abandon us, and who always has something good for us, his children.

We come together today in this formative encounter as part of the journey that as an Inter-American Region we have been carrying out. You might remember that in 2017 we met in Guadalajara, in 2019 we met again in Puebla, and last year it was planned to hold a formation encounter in the North Central America Province, specifically in Honduras, however, the pandemic did not allow it.

I would like to give meaning to this meeting, to know about the origin of the topics, and to what we are responding.

When I asked the Regional Consulta what topics they would like to address in this formation encounter that would responded to the needs of the Provinces, the provincial coordinators told me to look at the work done last year as part of the formative reality of the Region: the SWOT analysis (Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Threats) that each Province carried out and the summary that I made at the Regional level which was sent to the world formator, Mr. Raúl Fernández, who is with us today.

That is why it is important to make a very brief summary of the conclusions of this SWOT analysis, to better understand the objectives of these meetings and topics and their origin, since it was you with your contributions who gave a light about the weaknesses and needs in our Region regarding formation.

You will remember that last year was the first virtual presentation we made during the pandemic, where the world formator, Raúl Fernández, shared some ideas about the work plan to be carried out worldwide regarding formation and the contributions it required from each of the Regions and their Provinces. He mentioned five important formation documents that guide our Association in this area.

These five documents are:

1. Guidelines and indications for the formation of Salesian cooperators.
2. Criteria for animation and governance.
3. Project of Apostolic Life (PVA).
4. Commentary to the PVA.
5. Animating economic solidarity.



And about these, we were asked ***what is the knowledge, development and implementation of the formation materials that we have in the Association in our Region?*** The way to answer this question was to make a SWOT analysis on each Province. Raul indicated, "This *SWOT will give us a vision and an analysis of reality that will help us to continue advancing and strengthening the conviction that a well-formed Salesian cooperator has the tools to be able to make Don Bosco's dreams come true, without losing the perspective of "good Christians and upright citizens". "*

With this preamble, I would like to summarize the results of our Region regarding the weaknesses and needs identified, which are the basis for this meeting, and the future topics that we will be providing in the next formation meetings to be held in the following months, starting in October. I do not intend to cover everything received from the provinces, but I do intend to cover some comments that will allow us to better understand the weaknesses or needs indicated.

I would like to emphasize, as I have already tried to do, that what I will show below comes from the contributions received from each of the Provinces, that is, from yourselves. What I simply did was to identify coincidences and write them in a way that integrated into a single idea what was externalized in several contributions from the different Provinces.

In this way we will start by knowing some of the weaknesses noted, then we will see the needs.

Weaknesses:

- 1. There is no deepening of the documents of the Association, nor are they used for formations. The means available for the formation are not currently being used.**
 - The documents are only read and known by SSCC holding Local or Provincial roles of animation, they are not always included during formation.
 - Motivations for the study, reflection, and continuous reading of the PVA are not offered to the SSCC and aspirants.
- 2. Lack of attendance to formation meetings, lack of commitment from SSCC and delegates.**
 - Co-responsibility in the educational and evangelizing mission is not shared in the Association.
 - There are Local Councils whose members do not bear witness of their faith and maturity. They are neglecting their own formation and are not being responsible to the service for which they were elected.
- 3. Lack of conscience and awareness of the vocation of the SSCC, the need for formation, spiritual encounters and his/her self-formation.**
 - There is no clear understanding of the formative process: where it goes, what is expected after the Promise is made. It is necessary to better understand the vocation and identity of the Cooperator.
 - The formation of aspirants is not always adequate and taken seriously, thus, there are desertions of Cooperators after having made the promise.
- 4. Lack of qualified formators. There are no formal formation structures. Weak spiritual accompaniment during formation.**
 - There are no qualified formators to carry out the position.
 - Not all centers have someone designated as a formator.



5. **Lack of a sense of community and welcome, little openness, gaps because of age difference and geographical distance are created.**
 - The ability to adapt to different circumstances and times is lacking, especially with older SSCC.
 - Lack of a sense of belonging and co-responsibility in the mission from the Cooperators of the local center.
6. **Weak response to the Salesian mission.**
 - Lack of response to the challenges and needs of the poorest youth.
7. **Lack of programming, planning and evaluation of formation.**
 - There is no evaluation of local centers in terms of formation and implementation of programs so that progress can be made according to particular needs. We must create ways to ensure the dimensions to be evaluated.
 - There is no continuity in the distribution and continuity of content, between one Provincial Council and the next.

Needs

Let's now look at the needs, and some of the ideas embodied.

It is necessary to have:

1. **Orientations on organizational aspects and vocational discernment (to be vs. to do) to invite aspirants and accept a request for the Promise. That the organization favors ecclesial and associative synergy.**
 - Strengthen the organization of animation and governance of the Association at all levels and work in harmony and synergy to bear witness to unity in the Church and in society.
 - Need for criteria to discern if someone is ready to make their Promise.
2. **Formation of formators in the Association with clearly defined roles.**
 - Need to train and implement a School of Formators.
 - Train cooperators with leadership skills for future roles of animation in the Association.
3. **Knowledge and application of new formation methodologies: improve communication, share meetings outside of the local center, get to know new technologies**
 - Creative use of available technology (WhatsApp, PowerPoint, videos, documentaries, MS Teams, Zoom, contests, teaching materials, etc.)
 - Formative exchanges between centers to encourage people to study and live the PVA.
4. **Delve into the PVA and participation on formation sessions.**
 - Extend access to the Commentary of the PVA to all SSCC.
 - That the topics proposed in the formation sheets facilitate the incorporation of reflections about the PVA.
 - Continue to encourage the study of the PVA.



5. Standardized documents in the different languages spoken throughout the Region.

- Standardized resources in different languages (English, Spanish, French, and Mandarin / Chinese).
- Creation of formative materials adapted to the particular needs and realities of the Provinces.

6. Create formation structures, i.e. school for aspirants, formation of formators.

- Hold periodic meetings with formators, to train them and define the contents needed.
- Understand and deepen the meaning of the formation of aspirants.

As you can see and considering that I have only mentioned some of the contributions that presented coincidences, the weaknesses and needs are great and profound. Quite possibly some Provinces identify more with some of them than with others, but in general it is part of our regional reality. It is worth asking yourself personally, which of these weaknesses and needs are presented in your local center?

So what was the process to get to the topics for this meeting and the next ones that will come? Basically, all the weaknesses and needs were considered, and a brainstorming session was carried out on possible topics and objectives that can give at least a small answer to what was indicated. In this sense, 40 topics emerged with their objectives, and those considered most relevant were chosen, either for the content and objective presented, or for their coverage, that is, if the same topic could respond to more than one weakness or need.

Now, this whole situation must be reviewed in a particular way within each Province, responding to its own weaknesses and needs within a particular reality; however, within our journey as a Region, we are also invited to form together, and learn from the good experiences of other Provinces. That is why an extension of this encounter will be held so that in the coming months each Province can share with us a monthly theme that also responds to these needs and weaknesses.

Finally, I would like to make a quick mention of the theme of this encounter, "Called to be the salt and light of the young"

"Jesus said to his disciples, 'You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.'" (Mt 5:13-16)

If we have lost our flavor, how can we regain it? If we are not a light for young people, how to shine again? Lest they say about our mission: *"it is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot."*

So these topics and future meetings seek to aid in this, to confirm the mission to which we are called to do, with an adequate formation: "To be salt and light of the young"



Additionally, a consideration about the logistics of these meetings. We wanted to facilitate the follow-up of them through channels according to the different languages. So that we can listen to the topics continuously, in our own language. We hope that this effort will be of good for all, but please let us know through your provincial coordinators, any recommendations that will allow us to improve.

May God be our light, and our salt, so that we can bring Him to the young.

Thank you!

Martín Calderón, the regional councillor for formation



Closing

The contributions we have received this morning have been important, from our world coordinator Antonio Boccia, continuing with the global head of training, Raúl Fernández, and ending with our regional delegate Sister Aracelly Mayorga; however, this is only the beginning of a series of meetings and monthly themes that we will be developing from Sunday, October 17, with a theme that will be presented by the brothers of the Mexico Norte Province, an important theme in these times of change, of thrust, of new spring and strength. This theme is "*Leadership in the association of Salesian cooperators*", a fundamental theme from the mission we carry out, in which we require leaders willing to lead many young people towards Christ, just like Don Bosco in the leadership exercised; but also recognizing that additionally within our Association we require leaders to carry forward each of the Centers, responding with commitment and responsibility to the particular needs of the territory, but also the leadership to, with the continuous and indispensable presence of Jesus and our Mother Help of Christians, lead the Association along the new paths that the current youth challenges present us.

So from now on I invite you, I encourage you to begin this new stage of regional formation; seeking that this is an engine to continue in their centers and provinces, with the formative work that allows to respond to the weaknesses and needs; but also to maintain the efforts, to seize opportunities, to confront and channel threats; and in all this, to grow in the will of God in this mission to be salt and light of young people in today's world.