

# Conductors Without Borders, Africa Activity Report 2017-2019

*Thierry Thiébaud, IFCM Board Member, representing IFCM  
Founding Member A Cœur Joie International*

In the past three years, the program Conductors Without Borders has expanded in 10 countries on the African continent.

Twenty-eight week training sessions were held including ACDA's invitation to young Kenyan choral conductors.

The map here below outlines the interventions that were conducted during this period.



For all these countries, there are about sixteen choral conductors who have been able to obtain the position of instructors so that they are able to train future choral conductors personally.

It is now important that these newly-trained leaders should be able to move to regions in their respective countries, especially in RD Congo, Togo, Cameroon and Gabon. Financial resources for travel are often a difficult issue to resolve.

A teaching manual was developed in 2018 and has now been translated into English, French and Spanish as a guide to the training provided.

The lack of local music education structures in most of these countries hampers the assimilation of the various components of skills. It is often necessary to return to fundamental

theoretical notions of solfeggio to acquire deciphering abilities.

On the other hand, the pedagogical aspects of repetition and gestural technique are assimilated quite quickly and are efficiently passed on.

In most countries where the program has been developed, choirs depend on their parishes. Government cultural structures do not provide the necessary financial support.

The program for training children's choirs in Cameroon can currently be developed thanks to the important support of the Vivendi Foundation (\$ 15,000 per year). Togo, Ivory Coast and Senegal were supported by the cultural departments of the French Embassy. The Ministry of Education in Morocco supported a teacher training program and the Hungarian Embassy taught the Kodaly method.

In all the other countries, it is the local associations or federations, the individual donations supplemented by the funds of the CWB program and À Coeur Joie International for the French-speaking African countries which make it possible to hold training sessions.

Choir groups from Kenya, DR Congo and Gabon, together with the African Youth Choir, have been invited to meetings and festivals outside Africa. The problem of granting travel visas remains a concern for all African countries. Visas are often given at the last minute, and sometimes not for all members of choirs who thus find themselves traveling with an incomplete staff. Added to this is of course the cost of the journey, especially since the tickets cannot be bought long in advance due to the late granting of visas.

The CWB program is to be expanded to Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa (Angola and Mozambique).

Due to the Covid-19 virus, the program has been put on hold

since March 2020.

**<https://www.ifcm.net/projects/conductors-without-borders-in-Africa>**

*Edited by Gillian Forlivesi Heywood, Italy/UK*