

SIGNIS India

National Annual General Body Meeting

On 31.01.2020 at Alpha Pastoral Centre, Edakochi, Kerala

1. Prayer:

The meeting began with a bhajan led by Vice-President Fr Nobert Herman SVD, invoking the Holy Spirit on the Assembly.

2. Roll Call:

The Roll Call was taken and out of 81 members, 37 members with voting rights were present. The total number of proxies for voting members was 7. So, the total votes at the AGM were 43.

3. Accreditation of News Members:

From Agra region, Fr Sagayadas.

From Karnataka region, Mr Louis Rodrigues, Mr Benedict Jayakumar, Mr Verghese V Joseph, M/S Kristu Jayanthi College.

From the MP region, Sr Ganga SSPS and Mr Akash Jingra.

From the Tamilnadu region, Fr Irudaya Raj.

These new members were welcomed to the fraternity of SIGNIS India. Western region informed that 4 New members have joined.

4. Welcome and Presidential Address: SIGNIS India President Fr Stanley Kozhichira extended a warm welcome to all the members to the AGM 2021 of SIGNIS India. In his address, he requested the members to keep silent for a minute to give homage to the departed soul of Fr Jude Botelho who was a member of SIGNIS for many years.

Later he drew the attention of every member to his three concerns. 1. Brand building - making SIGNIS India known. But he said that we have not been able to actualise. 2. Lay participation in SIGNIS India. 3. Consolidated work of SIGNIS India by Sharing resources.

He requested every member to send their activity reports to the SIGNIS India National office to publish on the SIGNIS India website to give visibility to their activities.

5. The Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Fr Victor Vijay Lobo, Secretary/Treasurer, read the minutes of the previous meeting. Corrections were pointed out to the Secretary and he edited the minutes accordingly. The corrections were as follows:

Dr Magimai Pragasam said, at the end of the study days a statement is prepared, and not a white paper and to include the reading of the letter from SIGNIS world President.

Sr Joeyanna D'Souza pointed out that wherever statements were made with regard to the accounts, instead of only Secretary, Secretary/Treasurer should be mentioned. Also, instead of putting Fr Franklyn from Kalyan got the award for a short film competition

organized by SIGNIS- Rome, it is better to put his full name, Fr Franklyn Joseph Pottanackal from the Kalyan, Syro-Malabar Diocese (Western Region) won the award.

With regard to the Screening Committee Report, in the minutes, it was suggested that the names of all the members present for the screening be mentioned right at the beginning of the report.

Fr. Udumala Balashowry requested that full names be mentioned in the minutes.

With that, the minutes were passed, being proposed by Fr Richard D'Souza and seconded by Fr John Edappilly. The Assembly unanimously approved the minutes.

6. Audited Statement of Accounts:

The Secretary/Treasurer, Fr Victor Vijay Lobo presented the Audited statement of accounts for the year ending 31 March 2019.

Fr Nigel Barrett suggested not to keep more than Rs 5000/- in the SB account at the end of the year, instead to make it a short term FD (7days)

With no other corrections, Fr Stanley requested that someone propose to approve the accounts. Fr Innocent Sabastian proposed and Fr John Paul SVD seconded the approval of financial statements. When it was put to vote, all the 43 members voted for accepting the Audited statement. With that, the accounts were unanimously approved.

7. Budget proposal for the year 2020 – 2021:

Fr Victor Vijay Lobo then presented the Budget for the year 2020 -2021. The Chairperson Fr Stanley asked the members if they need any clarifications or suggestions for the budget proposal.

Sr Joeyanna D'Souza put forward the request of the women in SIGNIS India. The request was for subsidy for the travelling expenses if SIGNIS could help out.

Fr Anand Joby offered the possibility of reducing the expenses by reducing the number of days. Fr Jose Murickan said it is necessary to conscientize the Provincials to send their members and if subsidy must be given it is to the laity and not to the religious members. Fr David said that we should do our best to help the laity. Fr John Edappilly said we could give subsidies, if possible, but conscientization of the Provincials is very important. Fr Udumala Balashowry also supported the suggestion to reduce the number of days of the National Assembly to 3 and encourage the laity. Sr Pushpanjali SSPS intervened and said that subsidies should be given to laywomen. Fr Innocent said that a decision was made in the previous meetings not to reduce the study days. He said that the members come here once a year to study something. Therefore, the study days should not be reduced. He further said the subsidy could also be given to the religious women for their travelling.

Fr Victor Vijay Lobo, explained to the members, that the subsidy that we receive from PSPF is not only for the Signis India National Assembly (SINA) but also for two Governing board meetings and other programmes. From this, around Rs 4000/- is given to each member as a Subsidy/concession for participating in the SINA. The other Income that SIGNIS India gets is from the 3% contribution from the members, who have received the subsidy for their projects. He said, from this, we have to reserve 50% for the corpus

fund every year until the corpus reaches ONE CRORE. So far what we have is around 20 lakhs. As there are a lack of funds with SIGNIS India, the additional subsidy/concession, could be given by the hosting region.

At this juncture, Dr Magimai pointed out saying that in the budget 90 per cent of the amount goes for the activities of the National executives, but nothing concrete is being done as activities from SIGNIS National office. He asked for an explanation on the budget allocation of Rs 150000/- for the visit to regions.

Replying Dr Magimai's query Fr Victor Vijay Lobo said, in the previous meetings there was a proposal that the National executives have to visit the regions at least during their regional annual assembly. Therefore, this amount of Rs 1,50,000/- is kept for visiting the various regions by the National executives.

Sr Joeyanna D'Souza explained why subsidy was needed for the religious, as the permissions depended a lot on the expenses incurred for the meetings, and religious were not allowed to administer money without the permission of the superiors. Fr Nobert Herman also supported the proposal that only lay faithful should be given subsidies. Mr M. D Vincent said that for the improvement of the budget we need to start a pool fund. Fr Sagaya endorsed that lay women could be given subsidies.

Fr P. J. Thomas said instead of the National office making provisions for more subsidy, at the local regions, provisions could be made for the subsidy to attend the National assembly.

Fr Victor Vijay Lobo explained that when we apply for the subsidy, we request the subsidy for the four days of Study. If we reduce the study days, that many funds will be reduced. He further presented how the expenditure of SINA from 2014 has been increasing every year. He said previously only Rs 1,50,000 to Rs 2,50,000/- was given as the subsidy to the hosting region. Since last year Rs 3 Lakh is given as the subsidy to the hosting region. He further said we can increase the subsidy if we have more funds. But in the present situation, the source of income for SIGNIS India National office is 3% Contribution and the Interest from FD. From the 3% contribution, 50% has to be set aside for corpus. Last year what is collected from 3% was Rs 150000/- from this Rs 75000/- is available and from Interest around Rs 1,00,000/- so altogether the annual income would be nearly Rs 200000/- With this money we have to manage National office, the Screening committee meetings, Postage, Salary to the Staff, website maintenance etc. He concluded by saying, we can provide the subsidy, provided we have sufficient funds.

Mr Nirmal said that whoever is given a subsidy from PSPF must convert their presence at SIGNIS into valuable services to society.

Ms Jeralene said that there is a need for brainstorming on how to reduce the cost and bring more youth inside because youth know how to raise funds.

In conclusion, the Fr Stanley Kozhichira said, we can try the method of reducing the days. Further he said, when everyone has an equal share in the subsidy, why there should be a specific allocation of funds to anyone at all. So, it was concluded to keep the subsidy as it is and for an additional subsidy, the regional offices explore for the sources.

Fr Norbert Herman proposed that the budget for the year 2021 – 2022 could be accepted. Fr Udumala Balashowry seconded. When it was put to vote, out of 43, 41 voted for, one negative vote (Sr Joeyanna) and one abstained (Mr Nirmal).

8. Sharing by SIGNIS Asia Vice President:

Dr Magimai Pragasam, Vice President Signis Asia was invited to share about SIGNIS Asia deliberations. He conveyed the greetings from SIGNIS World President, Ms Helen Osman and the SIGNIS Asia board. According to its report, SIGNIS India seems to be a vibrant organization, but there is a need to focus on the younger generations.

He shared about the programmes planned by SIGNIS World Board and SIGNIS Asia Board. He said more information would be shared later.

He also shared details of the SIGNIS Service Rome projects where they select one project from a country and support up to \$30000.

He informed that SIGNIS Asia Assembly will be held in Vietnam.

Fr Stanley then informed that the Delhi International Film Festival is going to be held in March 2020. Those interested in getting a subsidy for their participation can do so through the Delhi Media Commission. He also informed that Fr C R Justy of the Agra region has been asked to attend the workshop in Louvain. SIGNIS India will be sponsoring his one-way flight. With regard to the SSR project, he informed that Fr Anand had sent the project and his project has been selected.

9. Presentation of the finalised SIGNIS India Constitution by the review committee:

Fr Jose Murickan informed the members that in the past four years, we have been amending SIGNIS India Constitution. In the last AGM, it was decided to stop the amendments and to finalise the constitution. A committee consisting of Fr Jose Murickan, Mr Austine Crasta, Mr CA Sunil Gonsalves and Fr Victor Vijay Lobo was formed to check the consistency and any grammatical errors and to finalise it. He said Mr Austine Crasta had withdrawn from this committee after a year. The other three members have done the work. It has been circulated to all the members. And now the final draft is ready.

One point to be finalised today is about the Proxy and quorum. In any meeting, technically, the Proxies are not counted for the quorum. Therefore, the following modification is proposed.

The quorum for a Regional/ National Assembly shall be one-third of the total Active Members personally present.

***Previously:** 11.4. The quorum for a Regional Assembly shall be the representation personally or through proxy (as per Articles 10.2., 10.3. &10.4) of one-third of the total Active Members. However, the total number of proxy votes cannot be more than one third of the Active Members present.*

After amendment: 11.4 The quorum for a Regional Assembly shall be one-third of the total Active Members personally present.

Previously: 15.3 The quorum for the National General Assembly shall be the representation personally or through proxy (as per Articles 10.2., 10.3., and 10.4) of one third of the total Active Members with vote at the National General Assembly. However, the total number of proxy votes cannot be more than one-third of the Members present with voting right.

After amendment: 15.3 The quorum for a National Assembly shall be one-third of the total Active Members personally present.

After clarifications, this proposal was put to vote, All the 43 members approved the proposal.

Further, Fr Richard D'Souza asked for clarification regarding the executive members. He wanted to know who are the National executive members. President clarified, that as per the SIGNIS India constitution Article 15.1.1 the National executive members are President, the Vice-President, the Secretary and Treasurer. Along with the two screening committee members constitute National office bearers.

Later the draft of the finalised amended SIGNIS India constitution was put to vote for the approval of the house. Out of 43 Votes, 41 voted for and 2 against. So, with 41 votes, the Amended SIGNIS India Constitution was approved by the house.

Consequently, it was resolved to accept the amended SIGNIS India Constitution and follow it with immediate effect.

President thanked Fr Jose Murickan, Mr Austine Crasta, Mr CA Sunil Gonsalves and Fr Victor Vijay Lobo, who worked to finalise the amended SIGNIS India Constitution.

10. Presentation of reports from the Regions and National members:

Vice-President, Fr Norbert Herman SVD took charge of the Report presentation. All the regions and national members presented the reports.

Fr P.J Thomas invited the assembly for the 16th Film Festival to be held in March in Kolkata. Fr David Arokiam informed the members that Madha TV has planned to produce a 90 minutes movie on the Message of Holy Father for World Communications Day 2020. He offered to share with those who are interested to dub it into their Language.

11. Presentation of the Statement of SINA 2020:

The Statement which was prepared by the Draft Committee consisting of Sr Joeyanna D'Souza, Dr Magimai and Ms Jeralene was read. A few corrections were proposed and then it was passed. The president thanked the Draft Committee. Sr Joeyanna said that the corrected version would be shared with all the members through the National office.

Later, President thanked and honoured the organising team members and others who were responsible for organising the SINA 2020.

12. Presentation of SIGNIS Asia allocation (2019 for 2020)

Secretary presented the allocation done by SIGNIS Asia board for the projects submitted from India in 2019 for 2020. He said, the SIGNIS India National Screening committee consisting of Fr Victor Vijay Lobo, Mr Nirmal Raj and Sr Joeyanna D'Souza along with the Secretary of CBCI OSC Fr Vara Prasad and PMO India National Director, Fr Ambrose

Pitchaimuttu and SIGNIS India President Fr Stanley Kozhichira had screened the project applications and had allocated the full amount requested by the Individual applicants. But the SIGNIS Asia has drastically cut down the amount.

Then in reply to the query made by a few of the SIGNIS India members regarding the reasons for the allocation of amount very less than the requested amount in the past few years, he replied by saying that the reductions by the National Screening committee were not started recently, this has been done from the past many years. He then presented the details of the allocations from 2008 to 2019 and showed the percentage of deduction done by SIGNIS India screening committee from 2008 onwards.

Members expressed their dissatisfaction with the allocation done by the SIGNIS Asia screening committee and asked the President to present the grievances to the SIGNIS General Secretary.

President replied to the members saying, though it was asked to all the members to raise their grievances and write to SIGNIS India National office, only two persons had written and as per the protocol, those grievances are forwarded to Signs Asia president, but has not received any reply.

President further said that he will be write to the General secretary, stating the grievances from the members of SIGNIS India on the allocation of subsidy.

Fr Victor Vijay Lobo, Informed members that from this year (2020) onwards, applications are to be submitted online. The online project application portal is getting ready and is under test. Once it is ready, it will be informed to all the members through email. He said once the application is submitted online, it cannot be corrected. So, the regional screening committee will not be able to do any screening.

Later he presented the new project guidelines received from SIGNIS general secretary. He said that the draft of these guidelines was sent to all the SIGNIS India members, and the feedback or any suggestions were are asked to submit. Only one person had asked for clarification and that has been sent to the General secretary.

13. Other matters:

Then-President Fr Stanley Kozhichira shared three suggestions that had come up during the Governing Board meeting.

1. To prepare a project report by hiring someone from the secular fraternity to study the activities and training that is done by SIGNIS India which we can take to the funding agencies in India itself. It will enable us to raise funds locally. In this regard, he would contact Mr Verghese V Joseph from ICM, Bangalore and Fr Johnson Parackal President Northeast.
2. To open NISCORT-SIGNIS Media clubs in the schools as a collaborative venture.
3. Appoint an additional person to gather the news from the members update the website to give visibility.

Replying to this 3rd suggestion Secretary/Treasurer, said, it is not enough to employ someone. Unless members send their activity report, it is no use in employing an additional person. He requested members to send their activity reports to publish on the SIGNIS India website to give them more visibility.

Sr Joeyanna added to the point of the promotional matter, saying it was not enough for a printed matter which would get outdated in 2 or 3 years, but we need to have Digital Marketing operations for the SIGNIS India website and social media so that our platforms are up to date with all the works being done throughout the country.

14. Evaluation of SINA 2020:

Many members expressed their appreciation and gratitude to Fr Rafi and the team, expressly mentioning the well-chosen resource persons, the good food and accommodation facilities and the well-planned outing.

15. SINA 2021 – Hosting region:

SIGNIS Agra accepted to host the SINA 2021. The Place proposed was Jaipur in Rajasthan. The dates, venue and theme would be decided later.

In conclusion, President, Fr Stanley Kozhichira, thanked Secretary and Treasurer, Fr Victor Vijay Lobo for making all the preparation for the AGM. He also thanked all the National and Regional office bearers for their cooperation. He then declared the closer of SINA 2020.

Fr Stanley Kozhichira

President, SIGNIS India

Fr Victor Vijay Lobo

Secretary and Treasurer, SIGNIS India