

2024 FINAL REPORT SYNOD PROJECT



World Union of
Catholic Women's
Organisations



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FINAL REPORT: SYNOD PROJECT 2024

Introduction

In 2021 WUCWO created the World Women's Observatory (WWO) whose motto is "listening to transform lives". One of our ongoing projects focuses on Women and Synodality and has led to the creation of the WUCWO School for Synodality, in the beginning of 2024. The main objective of this school is to promote the synodal methodology, both among women and among the other members of the People of God, in order to be transformed together into a Synodal Church in mission in which everyone can fully and co-responsibly fulfil the mission that corresponds to them, particularly women. We intend to spread the culture of listening, silence and discernment, key principles of the synodal methodology.

In this final report, we want to present you an overview of all the activities that took place during 2024. We hosted diverse webinars and events, meetings with synodal mothers, facilitator trainings and Conversations in the Spirit. The preliminary findings of these conversations were presented in two events in May and in September. During the month of October, we organised a cycle of conferences entitled 'Walking with the synod', including in person events in Rome, which were live streamed therefore accessible to all. Concurrently to all these events and webinars, we also launched a series of testimonial videos of divers lay and religious that participated in the Synod. Below you will find more information about these events, inspiring quotes and numbers of attendance for all that was proposed. Enjoy the reading and join us next year!

1. Meetings with Synodal mothers

On 27th February, **WUCWO's School for Synodality: Women's mission in the Synodal Church** was born. The project started with a series of webinars that had as their main objective to inform and deepen, with Assembly participants, the progress of the synodal process and the fundamental content of chapter 9 of the Synthesis Report in the first session of the Synodal Assembly "Women in the Life and Mission of the Church". The application of the synodal methodology in the Church, with a special focus on the full participation of women, was also promoted.

Four webinars, [two](#) in [English](#), one in [French](#), and one in [Spanish](#), were held. Each of

these meetings featured two speakers that participated in the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2023: a lay representative and a religious sister. The speakers were: two religious women chosen by Pope Francis as Delegate Presidents for the Synodal Assembly, Momoko Nishimura from Japan and María Dolores Palencia from Mexico; the philosopher Sr. Anne-Béatrice Faye from Senegal and UISG Sister, Maria Cimperman from the USA. The lay representatives were the Mozambican journalist Sheila Pires, the Australian professor Susan Pascoe, Eva Fernández from Spain and Sandra Chaoul from Lebanon. Each panellist talked about her personal experience at the Synod Hall at the first Assembly, gave her opinion about the chapter 9 and deepened the idea of how to be a synodal Church in mission also at a local level. In total 507 people participated from 61 different countries.

In the graphic below you will find more information on each webinar: how many people participated and from how many countries. After the event the recordings have been available on our YouTube channel and have been viewed more than 1200 times¹.

Language of the webinar	Number of people who attended	Number of countries
Spanish	159	16
French	99	19
English 1	116	33
English 2	133	37

Below some examples of inspiring **quotes** from our webinars:

Momoko Nishimura (Japan): “All the people of God can be involved in the decision making that provokes to commit towards co-responsibility”

Susan Pascoe (Australia): “Let’s stop talking about women as a problem but instead promote culture where women and men dialogue together”

¹ Data collected on the 12th of November

Sr. María Cimperman (USA): “Everyone has the opportunity for this kind of formation, the School for Synodality, free formation and theological formation, so that people can discern their gifts.”

Sheila Pires (Mozambique): “We need to really journey together, we need to have more spaces like this, to have proper dialogues, so that we know how are we going to embark on this journey, as women together.”

Sr. Maria Dolores Palencia (Mexico): “By living this icon of the round tables from the beginning, an experience of communion was created, and an experience of community was created.”

Eva Fernandez (Spain): “A different kind of Church awaits us.”

Sr. Béatrice Faye (Senegal): “My experience of this synodal assembly was, as I like to say, an unforgettable spiritual journey. The great polarisation of the world also runs through our Church, but by listening to each other we have managed to overcome it. We have felt a call to concrete action”

Sandra Chaoul (Lebanon): “Women were able to bear witness to a new face of the Church, which is essential for the development of synodality. They opened a new way of sharing, between gentleness and courage, and inspired others to talk more personal from their hearts.”

2. Online School for Synodality

2.1 Facilitator trainings

In April 2024 the School for Synodality hosted 4 facilitator trainings, in [English](#), [Spanish](#) and [French](#) in collaboration with the Ignatian Encounter Ministry. In this 90-minute training participants were formed to become a facilitator for our global virtual Conversations in the Spirit and were provided with resources to hold similar conversations in their local community. One week before the training, they received an email with several documents, including a script to help them guide the conversation and tips for facilitators. The training included an overview of Conversations in the Spirit and the role of the facilitator. There was a fish-bowl conversation demonstration and a training about the method for notetaking.

Finally, the session ended with a time of questions and answers. More than 250 from nearly 50 countries participated in these sessions. In the graphics you will find more

information about the countries of origin. After the event the recordings have been available on our YouTube channel and have been viewed more than 100 times².

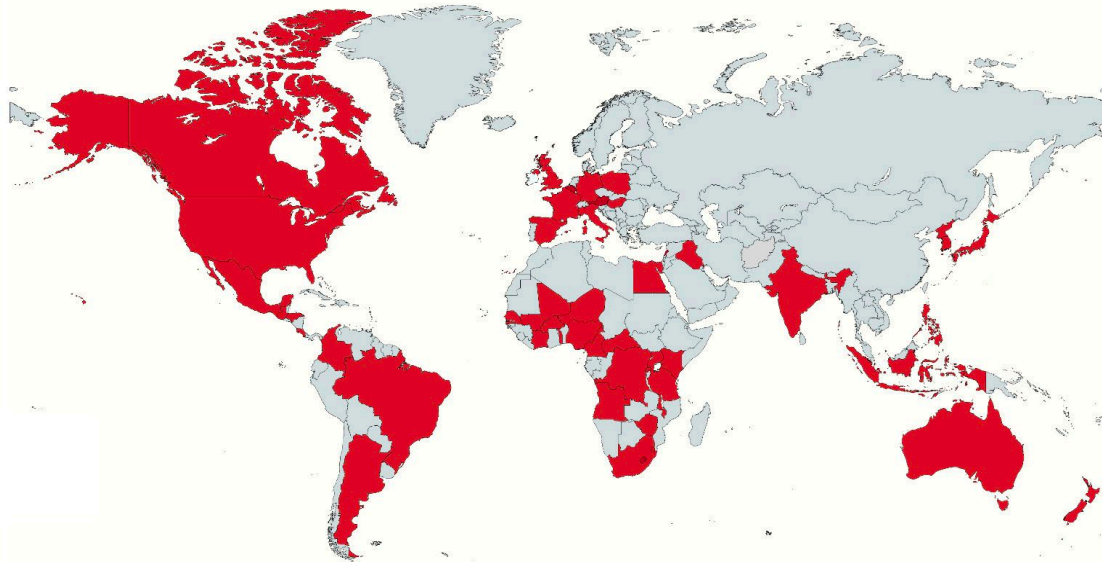
2024 WUCWO SCHOOL FOR SYNODALITY



April 17, 2024: Facilitator training

49 countries

253 participants



Language of training	Number of people who attended	Number of countries
Spanish	69	11
French	47	13
English 1	81	30
English 2	56	21

After the training, we sent the participants a small questionnaire where we asked:

- Are you interested in hosting “Conversations in the Spirit” in your faith community?

² Data collected on the 12th of November.

- What activities do you think you could do to promote Conversations in the Spirit and synodality in your faith community?
- Through what instruments do you consider that we can accompany you in these activities, from the WUCWO School for Synodality?

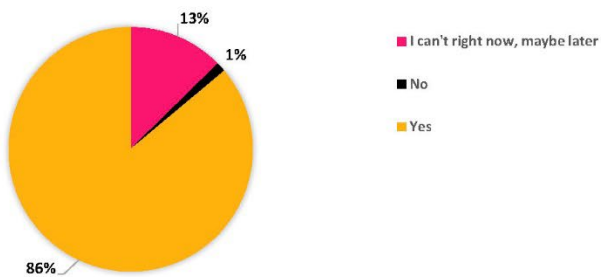
There were 79 facilitators who participated in this questionnaire from 35 countries. A big majority wanted to work with the methodology in their local faith community. The largest recommendation from our facilitators was to have more training webinars in the following year. Other suggestions emerged such as: a database of

2024 WUCWO SCHOOL FOR SYNODALITY

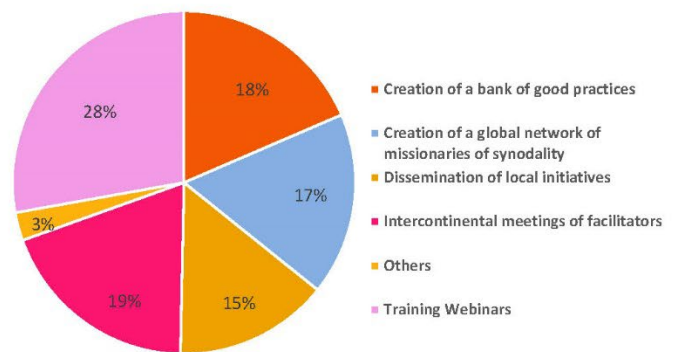


WUCWO CONVERSATIONS IN THE SPIRIT: POOL RESULTS

In the framework of the WUCWO School of Synodality, are you interested in starting "Conversations in the Spirit" in your faith community?



Through what tools do you consider that we can accompany you in these activities?



good practices and an intercontinental meeting of facilitators. In the graphics below you can find more information. Thanks to these results we will adjust our formation program for next year.

2.2 Conversations in the Spirit

The Conversations in the Spirit model has been recommended for Synodal consultations as part of the Synod on Synodality and was used by the Synod delegates at the first General Assembly in Rome in October 2023. All Catholic faith communities have been encouraged to learn, practice and share this discernment model of encounter, active listening, shared silence and collaborative discernment of the Spirit as an integral step in promoting wider participation, deeper communion and increased attention on the Gospel mission and the presence of the living Spirit

April 23 and May 9: Conversations in the Spirit on women's participation in a Synodal Church



COUNTRY	PARTICIPANTS
United States	129
Canada	67
Mexico	46
Argentina	21
Colombia	5
Brazil	1
Guatemala	3
Bolivia	1
Ecuador	2
Honduras	2
Jamaica	2
Puerto Rico	2
Trinidad and Tobago	2
American Samoa	1
Chile	1
Costa Rica	1
Dominican Republic	1
Greenland	1
Paraguay	1
Peru	1
Venezuela	1
TOTAL AMERICA	294

COUNTRY	PARTICIPANTS
Spain	44
United Kingdom	32
France	25
Italy	16
Germany	7
Poland	6
Czech Republic	3
Malta	3
Portugal	3
Switzerland	3
Ireland	2
Slovakia	2
Vatican (Italy)	2
Albania	1
Austria	1
Belgium	3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1
Greece	1
Hungary	1
Lithuania	1
Netherlands	1
TOTAL EUROPA	156

COUNTRY	PARTICIPANTS
Kenya	20
Senegal	16
South Africa	16
Nigeria	15
Ghana	10
Tanzania	9
Rep. Dem. Congo	8
Cameroon	6
Burkina Faso	5
Malawi	4
Egypt	3
Eswatini	3
Lesotho	3
Mali	3
Zimbabwe	3
Côte d'Ivoire	2
Uganda	2
Gabon	1
Liberia	1
Togo	1
Rwanda	1
Madagascar	1
Mauritius	1
TOTAL AFRICA	134

COUNTRY	PARTICIPANTS
Philippines	16
China*	14
Australia	12
India	11
Lebanon	6
Indonesia	3
Singapore	3
Malaysia	2
Timor-Leste	2
Vietnam	2
Bahrain	1
Bangladesh	1
Japan	1
TOTAL ASIA - OCEANIA	74

CONTINENT	N° COUNTRIES	PARTICIPANTS
AMERICA	21	294
EUROPE	21	156
AFRICA	23	134
ASIA	12	59
OCEANIA	2	15
NO DATA		19
TOTAL	79	678

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	678
TOTAL COUNTRIES	79
TOTAL SMALL GROUPS	93

* China: In-person Conversations in the Spirit

We also want to share **some inspiring quotes** from our participants:

“The experience of sitting at the round table with women from other continents whom we had just met, feeling heard and listening to the voice of the Spirit through other women, has been a great grace in our lives. We have felt sisters in Faith, eager to transform our Church, which we love so much, so that it becomes a great house that welcomes, listens to, and accompanies humanity”.

“A personal and community transformation is necessary through discernment in the Spirit, the fruit of a responsible conversation in which I value the opinion of the other and, at the same time, my identity becomes relevant, to be authentic, not to be annulled, to be a full member who can contribute a lot from charity”.

“All felt honoured to be here today sharing together and gratitude for all in the group and this opportunity for our voices to be heard. Will pray for each other”.

“Let Pope Francis know that we appreciate him and thank him for this Synodal process and for empowering women to assist in the growth of the Church”.

2.3 Webinars with the results of the School for Synodality

On 29th May, there was an in-person event, that was live [streamed](#), about all the projects of the World Women's Observatory: **“WUCWO's World Women's Observatory. Results of listening and networking”**. In the first part of this webinar, we talked about our synodal project: “The mission of women in the Synodal Church: Listening to the Spirit: challenges and contributions”, including some preliminary reports about the results of the Conversations in the Spirit, presented by our president Mónica Santamarina and our WWO project director Ana Martiarena. Father Giacomo Costa, Special Secretary of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, also spoke about the synodal method and how to include women. The second part of this webinar spoke about our project against violence and discrimination in Africa. There were more than 200 participants in the webinar and more than 100 attended the live event.

On 26th September we organised another [webinar](#): **“Voices and faces on the threshold of the Synod”** with the conclusions of the Conversations in the Spirit. Held a few days before the start of the Synod, the intention of this webinar was to prepare the people of God to enter together in the next phase of the Synod, namely the Second Assembly. The webinar was divided in two parts: in the first part the results of the Conversations in the Spirit were presented by Mónica Santamarina, our President, and in the second one two members of WUCWO (Barbara Dowding from Canada and Elisa Delgado Cabrera from Mexico) and one synodal mother (Julia Oseka) testified about their personal experiences in local synodal projects and shared their good practices. The analysis of these Conversations in the Spirit has been prepared by the Catholic University of Argentina.

“Forming and exercising synodal leadership is an important desire that we need to address together. We hope that more scholarship opportunities for women in various parts of the world will also be made available”, hopes Mónica Santamarina, WUCWO's President General.

Theological, pastoral and leadership training is one of the recommendations resulting from the Conversations in the Spirit. But not only for women. “Updating the formation for priests to be better prepared to connect and collaborate with the laity and in particular with women, and answer to today's challenges” reads the synthesis.

The other convergences concern, among others, the following aspects:

1. The invisibility of women, where they are seen only when their work is required but are hardly ever included in decision-making processes. The word ‘frustration’ was the most commonly heard word when relating to these experiences.
2. Lack of appreciation of women's contribution: the feeling of being underestimated and undervalued is common, especially at decision-making moments.
3. Insufficient recognition of the gifts that women bring to Church communities.

Despite the many steps that have been taken in the Church regarding the participation of women, both lay and consecrated, the meeting underlined the importance of continuing to move forward to build “communion and unity in diversity, overcoming exclusion and building a more inclusive community, in which cultural and gender differences are valued”.

The synthesis also highlights some divergences, i.e. issues on which no consensus was found among women. One of these is women's access to ordained ministry. “Some strongly support the inclusion of women in these roles as a necessary response to the decline of vocations in the clergy and as a sign of justice and equality, while others are sceptical or totally against it”.

More than 250 people from 49 countries attended the webinar. In the graphic below you can find more information. Some countries are presented in different language groups. After the event the recordings have been available on our YouTube channel and have been viewed more than 130 times³.

<i>Language</i>	Participants	Countries
English	146	30
Spanish	62	12
French	39	13
Grand Total	259	

Some **inspirational quotes** from this webinar:

Julia Oseka, the youngest Synod mother, 23, a student of physics and theology in the United States and originally from Poland “where I hope to return once I finish my

³ Data collected on the 12th of November.

studies” she says. “As I sat in that chair, I felt how many women before me have contributed so that today we can be heard. I also felt the inspiration I have received from many women who, for me, are models of leadership in the Church. My experience at the Synod is one of equality: the methodology of the conversation means that everyone, regardless of the role, has equal time and equal questions. For some of us, I think it’s the first time we have had such an equal experience of dialogue with priests, laity and bishops”.

Elisa Delgado Cabrera, Commissioner for Formation of the Mexican Catholic Women’s Union, recounts her experience as a synod facilitator: “Being a facilitator for me was an exercise in listening, as I am used to talking. In organising Conversations in the Spirit for women from 29 dioceses in Mexico, we witnessed the joy of the people who, through us, felt listened to by the Church without being judged. In the conversations we saw the capacity of each person to be guided by the Spirit, listening deeply to others. Needs for attention and care emerged, but also much hope”.

Barbara Dowding, WUCWO’s Regional Vice President for North America, also engaged in promoting encounters as a facilitator, says: “The Church can best support women in their leadership roles by promoting a culture of active listening, open communication and ongoing formation. For the future, members felt it was essential that the Church continue to promote the unique gifts of women, encouraging their participation at all levels, allowing them to take on more decision-making roles within the Church, and remaining open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in these endeavours”.

3. Testimonial videos

During the Second phase of the Synodal Assembly, and in agreement with the Secretariat of the Synod, we have published 10 testimonial videos of synodal fathers and mothers, both religious and lay, representing all continents. In these videos we asked them the following questions:

- Given your experience at the Synod and the various official documents that have been released so far in the process: What do you think could be a concrete proposal to involve women more and better in the synodal Church in mission?
- How can we work together to achieve this?

The speakers were Rev. David McCallum (expert and facilitator), Rafael Luciani (expert and facilitator), Grace Wrackia (witness), Nora Kofognotera Nonterah (witness), Sr. Beatrice Faye (expert and facilitator), Mons. Marcelo Daniel Colombo (episcopal conference of Argentina), Mons. Jude Thaddaeus Ruwa'ichi (episcopal conference of Tanzania), Sr. Liliana Franco (witness), Sr. Xiskya Valladares (member of pontifical appointment), Eva Fernandez (special guest at the Synodal Assembly).

The [videos](#) were published on our own webpage and YouTube channel and were distributed as well by Vatican news, they were subtitled in English, French, Spanish and Italian. On 12 November 2024, they already had more than 3000 unique views. In the table below you find more information by language:

Language	Views
English	1022
Spanish	701
French	835
Italian	604
Total	3162

Some **inspirational quotes** from the videos:

Sr. Liliana Franco (Colombia): May we as Church, be able to walk together with all women, migrant women, women victim of human trafficking, women who defend human rights and those who care for our common home and the planet, may we welcome their cries and make possible together: Good News, Kingdom of God, synodal Church, missionary Church.

Sr. Béatrice Faye (Senegal): It is important to me that the Church respects the pace of moving forward of every local church.

Nora Kofognotera Nonterah (Ghana): To be a Synodal Church where women can feel part of and participate fully will be to, first of all, understand that to be a Synodal Church means to be a Church where everybody counts and where everybody matters.

Mons. Colombo (Argentina): Indeed, the place of women deserves to be debated and reflected upon, deepened in the light of such rich experiences, in which we see that woman, with her gaze, with her criteria, with her own experiences, enriches the overall perspective.

4. Cycle of conferences ‘Walking with the synod’

During the Second Synodal Assembly in Rome, we organised two parallel events at the Vatican. These gatherings reflected WUCWO’s commitment to foster reflection, formation and dialogue on synodality in the Church. Both events provided a space to listen to diverse voices, from different continents, and to discern together the way towards a more inclusive, participatory Church, closer to contemporary realities. The aim is always to bring synodality closer to all the people of God in their local parishes. In each of the events there was an opening prayer to enter in the Synodal Spirit.

4.1 Synodal experiences: Signs of hope

The event on 17 October was organised by WUCWO together with the International Forum of Catholic Action (IFCA) and the collaboration of the Azione Cattolica Italiana. It was moderated by Mónica Santamarina and Eva Fernandez, president of IFCA. It was an in-person event that was live streamed. The speakers were: Mons. Luis Argüello (Episcopal Conference of Spain), Momoko Nishimura (President Delegate of the Synodal Assembly), Sr. Anne Beatrice Faye (Expert and facilitator), Fr. Ernesto Sánchez (Superior general of the Marist Brothers), Erika Aldunate (Witness) and Tommaso Cappelli (Social media expert at the General Secretariat of the Synod). All the participants talked about their personal experiences in the Synod Hall and during these last years as members of the synod. They also shared their ideas for the future of this new Synodal Church in mission and the changes they feel are necessary. The panellists were divided into two groups, and after each group people had the opportunity to ask questions. More than 200 people from 53 different countries joined us online. In the table below you can find more information. After the event the [recordings](#) have been available on our YouTube channel and have been viewed nearly 100 times⁴.

<i>Language</i>	Participants	Countries
English	86	31
Spanish	83	12
French	31	17
Italian	15	1
Grand Total	201	

⁴ Data collected on the 12th of November

Some **inspirational quotes** from this event:

Momoko Nishimura explained that, when she returned to Japan after the first session of the Assembly, she found many people interested in learning more about the Synod, the Conversations in the Spirit and how to implement them in their parishes: 'The best thing is to listen to each other as equals'.

On the other hand, Erika Aldunate (Bolivia) stressed: 'The Pope asks women to speak without fear. When I mentioned this in the parishes, women came up to me and shared their painful stories. They have a lot to tell.'

4.2 "Women: their participation in a Synodal Church in mission: Responsibilities and ministries in response to the pastoral needs of our time"

The event on 24 October focused on the future of the synodal Church, with a particular attention on the role of women. It was an in-person event at the Argentine Embassy to the Holy See. Speakers reflected on what it has meant for them to participate in the Synod and highlighted the changes needed for women to fully assume their mission in this new synodal Church in mission. Among the participants were Cardinal Juan José Omella (Episcopal Conference of Spain), Julia Oseka (Witness of the Synodal Assembly), Sr. María de los Dolores Palencia (President Delegate), Fr Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (Witness of the Synodal Assembly), Claire Jonard (Expert and Facilitator), Sr Yvonne Reungoat (Expert and Facilitator), and Avril Baigent (Expert and Facilitator).

They shared their reflections on how synodality is taking shape in different cultural and local contexts, underlining the active role of women and youth in this process. Sister Nathalie Becquart, Under-Secretary of the General Secretariat of the Synod, also participated. In the in-person event 40 guests attended, and online we were joined by more than 260 participants from 54 different countries. In the table below you can find more information about the online participants. After the event the [recordings](#) have been available on our YouTube channel and have been viewed more than 600 times⁵.

⁵ Data collected on the 12th of November

Language	Participants	Countries
English	143	37
Spanish	99	17
French	51	13
Italian	13	2
Grand Total	268	

Some **inspirational quotes** from this event:

Mónica Santamarina, WUCWO President General, highlighted: ‘There is so much to do to bring God’s love to our brothers and sisters in this world which, as Pope Francis mentions in his recent Encyclical “Dilexit nos”, seems to have lost its heart. So many people are suffering from violence, abandonment, hopelessness and poverty [...] The problems of today’s world call for new solutions, and the Church must be prepared to offer them at all levels. To do so, it must have the valuable and essential full and co-responsible collaboration of more than half of its members: women’.

Sr. Yvonne Reungoat, expert and facilitator at the Synodal Assembly, underlined ‘Women have empathy, closeness, and so much more. It would be important for them to be more visible, not to have more power, but to pass on their gifts to others’.

Julia Oseka, the youngest synod mother, spoke about women’s participation in Church ministries: ‘When I think about women’s participation, I think it is dangerous to consider the female diaconate just because there are areas without priests. That objectifies women. One of the highlights of this Synod on women’s co-responsibility is to recognise their dignity [...] It is important that the Church speaks and dialogues with women, not about women.’

Sr. Nathalie Becquart told us: ‘One of the most important things about this Synod is that women have become more and more empowered to speak, to give their opinion and to contribute their input... The closer we get to a synodal Church, the more united we will all be in mission.’

5. Conclusions

During this first year of the School for Synodality, we can say that we have made the start of a new network to work together on synodality at grassroot level. This network is stable, in all the webinars we have hosted throughout the year, we have the nearly

same number of people who are connecting, our range is always more than 50 countries.

For next year we want to invest in expanding our network, by training new facilitators and also start working with a larger group of young people, men and women. We will give more training sessions (webinars) to deepen the understanding of the synodal process as well as deepen the formation that our first cohort received. There will be more Conversations in the Spirit. We will also carry out a survey for all the women who participated in the synodal process, in one way or another. Next to these initiatives we will also share more local good practices to inspire all the women part of WUCWO to become missionaries of synodality.