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# Mbougou-Mouyabi, Émilienne (née Niangui Loubota)

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**Mboungou-Mouyabi, Émilienne (née Niangui Loubota)**  
1957-1989  
Evangelical Church of Congo  
Congo

## **Childhood**

Émilienne was born in Congo-Brazzaville, on December 24, 1957, in the small town of Kimongo, in the Niari region. Daughter of Loubota Mbinda Albert, deacon in the annex of Kimouélé in the consistory of Louila-Kimongo [1], and Dienze Tsimba Esther, parishioner of the same annex, Émilienne was raised in a God-fearing family. Eldest in a family of eight children, she was full of love for her siblings and wished them to succeed in life. Her younger brother, Misère Emmanuel Loubota, remembers her as follows: "She was an older sister of good character; she was kind. She was especially very cheerful and loved to have her little brothers at her side. She played the role of a mother toward her siblings." [2]

Émilienne attended Emery Patrice Lumumba elementary school from 1965 to 1972, in Kimongo. She began her middle school at Sollat Hilaire in the same town. Disciplined and diligent, Émilienne had excellent grades. But her brilliant scholastic progress came to an abrupt end when she decided to abandon her studies in 1974, while she was in seventh grade. This decision was not undertaken lightly; in fact it shows Émilienne's maturity at the age of 15. Émilienne was frequently "courted by teachers" and she decided to leave in order to avoid "falling into temptation." [3]

Deplorably, the sexual harassment of minors by some teachers caused many of them to drop out of school, to contract venereal diseases, or to end up with unwanted pregnancies and a future life of sexual promiscuity. Instead of compromising her integrity, Émilienne chose to drop out of school and walk in the fear of God. She undertook the only decision that was within her reach in order to express her protest against a practice that debased and continues to degrade innocent young girls. She has thus left us an eloquent example of obedience to the Lord.

## **Calling**

Émilienne was actively involved in the different programs of her annex and parish. Baptized in 1972, she was already at that time the leader of the local choir.

After abandoning her studies, Émilienne devoted herself to God's work. She felt a burning desire to serve the Lord. During that period she taught catechism and was mentored by the evangelist John Paul Makosso. Having seen her dedication to the Lord and having perceived her call, he commended her to pastor Roger Bavibidila, president of the consistory and head of five parishes. In 1974, Émilienne was appointed consistorial secretary in Diambala [4] under the leadership of pastor Bavibidila. This position helped her assert the desire to serve God full-time, even though no woman in the EEC had become a pastor since the synodal Council had voted that women could become pastors in the Church. [5]

Émilienne was not the first Congolese woman who wished to serve the Lord as a pastor. Indeed, since 1969, when the EEC allowed women in pastoral ministry, there had been unfortunate candidates who did not even get the opportunity to take the pastoral test. In the parish of Mbanza Tsibi, for example, annex Kampala, there was a woman who had applied to become pastor. Unfortunately, she was denied that possibility and was not even allowed to become an evangelist. [6] Adversity against the pastoral ministry of women was like a wall in their way.

As a woman, becoming a pastor was an important step for young Émilienne, and the path was not without drawbacks. Difficulties began with her own family, as her brother Misère Loubota explains, "At the beginning of her calling, our parents believed that it was an adventurous thing to have a woman practice pastoral ministry." [7] It must have been a shock to her parents to know that their daughter wanted to venture into territory that was new and probably uncertain in their eyes.

Even though her premature abandonment of her studies weakened her, she thought about taking the pastoral exam. Determined, Émilienne confided in her pastor about her sense of being called to full time ministry. After that, pastor Bavibidila recommended her and two others, Elie Ndagami and Ndala Joel, to the synodal Council as pastoral candidates.

By encouraging her to follow God's call, Pastor Bavibidila displayed a spirit of humility and wisdom before God. He recognized that this young woman had the necessary talents and character to serve her God full time, and he decided to encourage and mentor her.

In 1976, the three candidates took the test for theological training at the Seminary of Mantsimou in Brazzaville. Émilienne was the only one to pass it. [8] It was a big step towards the fulfillment of her goal. On October 1, 1976, the young Émilienne Nianguï Loubota, age 19, started her classes at the Seminary of Mantsimou, the only woman among the men.

## Pastoral training

Émilienne's arrival at the seminary was a turning point in her life and in the life of the EEC. Pastoral training has two components: academic formation and practical training.

*Academic training.* Émilienne started with the pre-pastoral cycle reserved for students who do not have a middle school certificate. [9] She worked hard, both in her classes and [to obtain] the national middle school certificate. After her success, she started her pastoral training, which lasted five years. However, her adjustment was not easy. It was very daunting to find herself the only woman among all these young men as she admitted in an interview with Raymond Bitemo, [10] "The beginnings were difficult. At times I felt deficient." [11]

In this male environment, she had to overcome the difficulties of adaptation. After a few weeks, Émilienne began to feel comfortable with her teachers and classmates. She stated in the same interview, "Very quickly, I grew accustomed to my colleagues that I now considered like my brothers, and I was their sister." [12]

Émilienne was a young woman with very pronounced personal principles. For example, upon her arrival to the seminary, she refused to integrate [13] into the pastors' wives group saying, "What will I learn from them?" [14] Far from being proud, Émilienne expressed a fundamental need to spend time with classmates. She felt accepted and enjoyed sharing and studying with them.

As months went by, Émilienne felt relaxed among her colleagues, flourished in her personality and found her place. Pastor Tsibatala, one of her colleagues at the time, said, "She was a man among men; no one could dominate her." [15]

Émilienne was not afraid to give her opinion; she displayed exceptional bravery and honesty. Pastor Moundanga remembered her in these terms: "When there were misunderstandings or small conflicts between us, she was neither afraid nor ashamed to denounce the one that was wrong." [16] Pastor Loussakou has added, "She was not afraid to speak up; when things were not going well, she expressed herself openly and frankly." [17]

Even as she was smiling and welcoming, Émilienne was very serious in her calling and studies. On the academic front, she was coping very well. Her classmates recognized that she was intelligent and was always among the six best. During this period, the presence of a woman among student-pastors came as a shock to some people. When the illustrious evangelist pastor Ndoundou Daniel

first saw Émilienne Niangui Loubota among the student-pastors, he was very upset. He called three of them: Bamana, Yindoula, and Kibalou, to inquire into the reason why this young woman was in the seminary. They explained to him that she was being trained as a pastor too. Having realized this, pastor Ndoundou advised them to mentor her well. [18] Professors, missionaries and classmates helped young Émilienne to thrive academically.

*Preaching practicum.* Émilienne, like all the other pastors in training, had to spend two months of each year doing a practicum, during the dry season, in two different parishes. She spent her time in the parishes of Kimouélé and Kitsindi. The evangelists [19] and her brother, who sometimes accompanied and mentored her, played a considerable role in her spiritual growth.

She was perceived as a tireless servant of the Lord. Mrs. Jeanne Balehola, who was a young girl in the Kindounga annex (of the Kitsindi parish), remembered that period well, because Émilienne shared her room, due to lack of other accommodations. This is how she describes Émilienne's ministry: "When she came to our parish with many annexes, she spent three days in an annex, and was accompanied by an evangelist on these tours; she preached and sometimes led the morning worship (6:00 to 7:00 am) as well as the evening worship (8:00 to 10:00 pm)." [20]

Émilienne was "eloquent in her preaching; she had the art of communicating the Word of God." [21] During her internship, Émilienne would take time to communicate with women of all ages. Often she would say "I came for you mothers and girls. Come forward at the end of the service so that we may pray." [22] She spoke tirelessly, encouraged, and prayed with women. She was "nice, open, cheerful and friendly." [23] Émilienne did not put herself on a pedestal, but participated in the activities with the parishioners.

On the first two Wednesdays of October, student-pastors talked about their activities during the practicum, in addition to the report that the consistory sent to the seminar. Émilienne, who worked as hard as the others, did not find it difficult to speak of her activities during the internship. To be among the forerunners was a difficult task, as challenges and obstacles to her ministry abounded. She acknowledged this in her interview with Raymond Bitemo: "But I must point out that the learning of any job is difficult. Problems abound. In my case, I have sometimes known difficult moments in my training. But with the help of God, the advice and encouragement of pastors Nkounkou and Buana, I was able to surmount all obstacles." [24]

As a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, she also experienced 2 Timothy 3: 12, which says, "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." The scars left by moments of misunderstanding, humiliation,

and attacks on her person and ministry were so deep that her pain and suffering can be felt through the remarks reported in the preface to the thesis that she defended at the end of her seminary years: “Since I started here, I recognize that in this seminary I have been sometimes ridiculed, unfairly attacked, wrongly criticized by certain persons.” [25]

Despite these persecutions, Émilienne ran her race. In June of 1985 she received her pastoral degree and she was ready for divine service. Those nine years of pastoral training at Mantsimou were a great achievement and a first, as she put it: “Being a pastor was for me a goal. I reached it and I feel a deep sense of joy.” [26]

At the end of her pastoral training, the whole church was thankful to God for her heroism and endurance. Joseph Mandzoungou described her graduation as “The EVENT in the history of the EEC,” because it was the first time since the start of the Swedish missionary work that gave birth to the Evangelical Church of Congo that a woman was among the pastors. [27] And Raymond Bitemo spoke of the first “female product” of the EEC.

Émilienne’s graduation did not go unnoticed in the country. The national newspaper *Mweti* published an article that began by announcing that among “the 27 students graduating this year from the Theological Seminary of Mantsimou, a place of honor is bestowed to Mrs. Mboundou-Mouyabi, born Niangui Loubota Émilienne.” [28]

Her colleagues were pleased with her prowess. Pastor Jean Baptiste Milongo said that she was “the pride of our class.” The Reverend Dr. Dominique Tsibatala spoke of “a blessed class.” Her family and her church were proud of her. The EEC started to make plans to send her to Sweden to continue her studies. Émilienne was honored that day and hailed as a symbol of winds of change that were blowing in the EEC. She herself envisioned her imminent ministry as a sign of openness to women in pastoral ministry and as a movement of progress within the EEC:

The joy of being the first woman pastor translates in me as a sign of our church growth and Christian women’s awareness to work more with the men for the advancement of the work of the Lord. That is why I invite all women, including girls who feel the calling to become pastors, to not back down, but pray and go forward with faith. [29]

## **Marriage**

Towards the end of her studies, Émilienne was troubled by the question of marriage. She feared God, walking in the purity of heart and body, seeking his will. Émilienne did not want to marry a layman for fear that he would prevent her from freely exercising her pastoral ministry. [30] At that time, three of the student-pastors were single: two male students and her. Émilienne received a marriage proposal from one of the student-pastors, but because of opposition in the family and probably other factors, she declined the offer.

In 1982, Rev. Dr. Pierre Mboundou Mouyabi returned from France. As a PhD student in Paris, Pierre was abandoned by his wife, who found him to be too poor. [31] He arrived in the Congo as a bruised and divorced father. He was appointed at the Mantsimou Seminary to teach New Testament. It was in this seminary and in the context of his work that he first saw Émilienne Nianguiloubota, who was one of his students. A few months later, he proposed marriage to her. Encouraged and advised by pastor Madiata and his wife, she accepted his proposal.

Émilienne was a very bright student and her professors saw a future both for her and for the EEC in the pursuit of her studies. Therefore, her marriage to Dr. Mboundou-Mouyabi disappointed some leaders of the Church and probably some missionaries too. Some of them even verbalized their disapproval, since Mboundou Mouyabi had conflicting relationships with a few of his colleagues and leaders in the Church.

But this did not prevent the couple from celebrating their traditional marriage in 1982, in Kimouélé. Then, on January 30, 1984, their civil marriage ceremony was carried out by the President of the Court, Dimynat Diangala, in Dolisie. Thus, they became the first pastoral couple of the EEC. Émilienne was pleased to have married a servant of God, someone who had the same vision for lost souls and for the work of God. She confided to Raymond Bitemo in an interview: "My joy is complete to have a husband who is a pastor and shares the same aspirations as me. This greatly comforts me." [32]

As a wife and mother, Émilienne was a benevolent woman and a vigorous worker. She cared for her husband's children, having taught them what she had received. Her step-daughter Viviane Kombo remembered her with the following words: "We have lived five solid years, rich in daily emotions. She was a mother, and the day of her death, it was a tragedy." [33] Pastor Ruth-Annie Mampembe-Coyault, her other stepdaughter, speaks of "a woman rather low-key, very hard working with her hands: in Mouyondzi, she planted her own vegetable gardens, in addition to her pastoral ministry." [34] Recalling their life together, widower Mboundou-Mouyabi spoke with nostalgia of "five years of peace and pastoral joy." [35]

At the end of her studies, Émilienne and her husband were sent to the consistory of Kolo and began their ministry.

## **Ministry**

The minutes of the synodal council of the EEC in Brazzaville, dated July 3 to 5, 1985, state that Pierre Mboundou-Mouyabi and his wife were sent to the consistory of Kolo. At that time some leaders of the Church did not want a pastoral couple to serve in the same parish. Mr. and Mrs. Mboundou-Mouyabi were therefore assigned to different parishes. He had the responsibility of two parishes: Mouyondzi and Kinguala, in addition to the youth of the consistory, while his wife was responsible for the parish of Mouzanga.

Émilienne was ready to put into practice the words of wisdom she had uttered a few months earlier in an interview with Raymond Bitemo:

To lead a parish, is to lead men. It is a difficult task, but what is important is that the work is organized and responsibilities well-defined. The pastor is always helped in his task by advisors, deacons, deaconesses and believers themselves who are his allies.” [36]

Émilienne left her husband and her step-daughters and went to the parish that had been assigned to her. She was warmly welcomed by her parishioners and served her Lord wholeheartedly. However, Mouzanga was a highly malaria-contaminated and fairly primitive area. Access to drinking water and food required considerable efforts. Life in Mouzanga was a real challenge for her. Viviane, who visited this parish with her step-mother, recalled:

She was sent in a remote village of Mouyondzi. She left her home and went to this village to serve the Lord. She came back every two weeks or so. It was really a challenge for her as a woman. The living conditions in the village were very rudimentary. I remember. I went there once with her. But parishioners made sure she had water and food; things that were difficult to have. She had a very good contact with the Christians in this village. [37]

Émilienne knew whom she had put her faith in, and it was with joy that she proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ in those circumstances. She was very open in her sermons. With her soft and captivating voice, she shared with the congregation what God put in her heart, trying to help them understand the

mysteries of God's Word. Sometimes, at the end of her sermons, she would allow her listeners to ask questions, which she was always quick to answer. [38]

Courageous and determined, she treated her parishioners and those who came in contact with her with compassion. Émilienne abhorred lies and was known for her truthful behavior. People were attracted by her charisma and personality. She was a convener of the masses. Émilienne carried out her ministry with dedication, efficiency, and good will, even though separation from her family for part of the month was a considerable sacrifice. Émilienne was "a reasonable woman and [an] outstanding woman." [39]

After she had served in Mouzanga for some time, Émilienne struggled with malaria, like the rest of the people. The regional physician, "a little panicked" [40] because of the resurgence of crises of malaria in the area, suggested to the EEC that it was a bit risky for a young mother to live in these conditions. After some consideration, the church sent Émilienne to Mouyondzi, where she served with her husband. However, the good times spent in Mouzanga were not forgotten. Women could serve God as pastors just like men. "The myth is broken." [41]

Work in Mouyondzi took a different form as Émilienne was now sharing the responsibilities of the parish with her husband. The pastoral life still was not easy, especially on financial grounds. With a monthly salary of 28,000 francs (about \$61) and 55,000 francs (\$120) for her husband, Émilienne resorted to planting peanut and cassava gardens to supplement the needs of her family. During two years of service in the consistory of Kolo, Émilienne showed a passion for feeding God's people spiritually. She often went on the road to speak where the Church needed her services.

As the first woman pastor, Émilienne's work was not confined to her parish. In 1987, after working for two years in the consistory of Kolo, she was removed from her parish to facilitate her appointment to the EEC's department for work among women, whose headquarters were in Brazzaville. That department, chaired at that time by Mrs. Sikou Philomène, aimed for the well-being of women. Or, as stated by David Mboundou, its aims were "the struggle for the rights and duties of women." [42] This appointment caused some tension in Émilienne's family and marriage because she often traveled between Mouyondzi and Brazzaville to fulfill the many requirements linked to her new position. Mrs. Loubamba remembers those times as follows: "We often met and had a close relationship. I was a member of the national organization L'Œuvre Féminine. She worked there. She always had a vision. She travelled with Mama Sikou Philomène." [43]

In March of 1987, Émilienne was ordained as a pastor in the EEC, along with the rest of her class. Her ordination was a memorable day for the women of the EEC and a great historic event for the Church in the sense of change. Mrs. Loubamba stated: "the women were honored and happy and they gave donations. We cried with joy when she was ordained." [44] It was not only the women of the EEC who saluted the first female pastor, but the whole Church celebrated its "first female product."

It is important to mention that Émilienne's ministry was profoundly influenced by her prayer life. She drew her strength and inspiration from God. Her parents in Kimouélé recognized this dimension of her life:

It is through prayer that she managed to become a pastor. [When she] was getting ready for the exam, in all the letters she sent to the parents, she did not forget to ask them to pray a lot. *It's through prayer that she succeeded.* She liked prayer. She sometimes prayed alone or in a group. [45]

Monique Loubassou said she was a woman of prayer, and evangelist François Mvoubi-Poungui affirmed that "she had spiritual gifts and loved prayer."

## **Her death**

In 1988, the church leaders decided that the best five students from the class of 1985 would take the entrance exam for the Protestant Theological Faculty of Yaoundé in Cameroon. As part of the group, Émilienne traveled to Brazzaville in January of 1989 to prepare for and to take the exam. At that time, she was pregnant with her second child.

Shortly after her arrival at the seminary, she suffered from malaria and was treated by a Swedish nurse. As her health did not improve, her husband came hastily to Brazzaville to be with her. She was taken to Makélé-kélé hospital where medical examinations showed that she was suffering from anemia and high blood pressure. In addition, her pregnancy threatened to end in a miscarriage. She was therefore hospitalized on February 21, 1989. On May 10, she gave birth by C-section. But after the birth of her daughter, her blood pressure remained dangerously high. Fifteen days later, on May 25 at 4:30 pm, Émilienne Mboungou-Mouyabi, at age thirty-two, entered into glory to be with the Lord.

Her death was received as a shock that paralyzed members of the EEC. Raymond Bitemo captured the atmosphere of the moment: "The news of her

death spread the same evening in the capital as a wave whose brutal shock unnerved Christians and especially women, who were almost all in tears.” [46] Her death left a huge feeling of emptiness in the consistory of Louila-Kimongo, and people grieve her premature departure to this day. [47] Members of her graduating class and her family were deeply affected. Pastor Jean Baptiste Milongo said “I heard about her death in the train between Mindouli and Missafou. When they announced this to me, I almost fell. I went to Brazzaville.” [48] Pastor Tsibatala said, “She has left a void for our class; it was a shock. Until today this regret is there. She was the first to leave us; very young she left us.” [49]

Mrs. Loubamba agreed: “She left us one evening; her sudden departure perturbed me.” [50] Her mother (who took care of the orphaned baby), traumatized by her daughter’s premature death and overwhelmed by grief, spent five years in mourning and did not want any of her remaining children to become pastors. As for Émilienne’s husband, he never fully recovered from losing her, and it was clear during an interview with the author that his pain was still present.

The mortuary vigil held in Brazzaville, in the parish of Bacongo, was filled with members of the EEC, the Catholic Church, the Salvation Army, and the Kimbanguist church. At this vigil, the desperate prayer of a Christian woman expressed the state of mind and the thoughts of many: “Lord, in our churches we have many men pastors and we only had this one as a woman pastor. Why did you not choose to take a pastor from among the men and let the only and first woman pastor live? God, you’re unfair.” [51] Five days later, accompanied by a procession of hundreds of people, Émilienne’s body was taken to Dolisie by train, then on to Kimouélé by truck. It was with dismay, pain, and prayer that she was buried in the family cemetery.

Her premature death was seen as a tragedy. Some women in the consistory of Louila-Kimongo who wanted to serve God as pastors renounced their calling for fear that they would eventually meet the same fate. Evangelist Mvoumbi summarized their feelings in these words: “In the consistory people have callings, but unanswered callings. Women, especially, when they think of her death, abandon the calling.” [52]

In the eyes of those who loved her, Émilienne should not have died; she still had work to do. She left an emptiness that could not be filled. However, Émilienne went to be with her God and heard these words: “Enter in [to] your rest, good and faithful servant.”

## **Conclusion**

Émilienne Niangui Loubota lived a short life, but she left a considerable and positive impact that is still significant today. She had a burden and a vision for the women of the EEC that became a recurring theme in her talks, "*Kilokola ya bakento me kulunga*" [The hour of women is here]: "We need to serve the Lord; not only me, but all women after me." [53]

Her ambition and prayer was to see the Lord touch Congolese society through a cohort of women pastors. Thus, she continuously encouraged young women to serve the Lord in the Church. And her message was joyfully received by the women of the EEC, who were delighted to finally have a woman pastor. Her footprint in the EEC is huge and indelible. As Pastor Alphonse Loussakou said, "She broke the myth of not receiving women in the pastoral ministry." [54] Dr. Tsibatata exclaimed: "her testimony was to be understood like this: that we do not recognize a pastor by his cloak," [55] (appearances can be deceiving). Her example has helped many sisters take the decisive step toward their pastoral ministry. Monique Loubassou, who became the second woman pastor in the EEC, is one example, and here is her testimony:

In 1985, when they graduated from seminary, our Mayangui choir came to sing at the closing service of the academic year of the Seminary of Mantsimou. When I saw her, I thought to myself, as the pastoral calling has been burning in me for years, why can I not be like this woman pastor? Since she has dared, I can also do it. [56]

The vision that God opened before Émilienne, one of women serving the Lord in pastoral ministry, was impressive and ambitious. She demonstrated it through her life, and others have done the same. Pastor Ruth-Annie Mampembe-Coyault says in the same spirit, "I think that her example has left a big impression on the women of the EEC and has allowed them to understand that it is possible for them to serve God as pastors." [57]

At this point we want to note that Émilienne was not the first woman to attend seminary. The first woman, whose name need not be mentioned here, was approved when the seminary was still in Ngouedi, but she was not able to continue her training because of sin in her life, and she was sent away. [58] Émilienne did not shame her Lord. She disgraced neither her family nor her church. She left the exemplary testimony of a woman dedicated to her Lord, someone whose deepest desire was to serve him wholeheartedly. She opened the way for other women pastors. Pastor Laurent Loubassou said, "As she had not betrayed her calling, her main contribution, in my opinion, has been an incentive for the EEC to continue to accept women to full time pastoral ministry." [59]

Pastor Tsibatata has concurred, saying, "It is thanks to her that today we have other women pastors." [60] Today the Evangelical Church of the Congo has fifteen women-pastors and evangelists.

Émilienne Niangui-Loubota is a symbol of the emancipation of women in the EEC and the fight against rampant sexism. Through her, the Lord has shown that He can use women as well as men in His service. Her admission into pastoral ministry brought about a new atmosphere in the EEC. She was up to the task that was entrusted to her. Her courage, enthusiasm, and determination opened the door to divine service for other women. In our eyes her death was premature, but God accomplished His purpose in her short life. May our hearts not forget this exceptional woman, a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. [61]

### **Médine Moussounga Keener and Eliser Moussounga**

**Author's note:** The desire to write the biography of the first woman pastor of the Evangelical Church of Congo (EEC) originated while I was working on the article on Pastor Jean Mboundou. As I read through the booklet *Biography [sic] of the Pastors of the Evangelical Church of the Congo*, published in 2009, I noticed that Pastor Émilienne Mboundou-Mouyabi (née Niangui Loubota) was not included. This led me to ask the following questions: Why was she not included? Who was she? What has she done?

Pastor Monique Loubassou experienced similar difficulties when she was doing research for her thesis: "I defended my thesis at the end of my seminary years on the topic of the women's organization *Ceuvre Féminine*. And nobody supplied me with more information about her [Émilienne Niangui Loubota] and her work. (Monique Loubassou, interview by author, November 22, 2010, Brazzaville)

Pastor Jean Baptiste Milongo noted that "the whole Church does not have enough recollection of this woman." (Jean Baptiste Milongo, interview by author, January 20, 2011, Brazzaville)

The role of the first woman pastor of the EEC is too important to be forgotten and relegated to the past. That is why Pastor Eliser Moussounga of the EEC and I decided to write this article. We want to express our sincere appreciation to all those who kindly responded to our survey and have thus enabled us to revisit the life of this remarkable woman.

The admission of women to the pastoral ministry represents a turning point in the Church, and the Evangelical Church of Congo is no exception. For these women pioneers, who faced the socio-cultural pressures of their country

and other religious obstacles, it was a very complex period of time in their life and in their ministry. Acclaimed in *Mweti* (the most popular national newspaper in the Congo in the 1980s), the first woman pastor is mentioned on the first page of issue 1193, dated Friday July 5, 1985, as "woman-Pastor." Also, she was featured on the cover of *Le Chemin*, the EEC newspaper (issue 12, July-September 1985) with the phrase "Finally a woman pastor." Émilienne Niangui Loubota has become an emblematic figure of the EEC, a pioneer in the field of pastoral ministry.

#### Notes:

1. This name is taken from the Louila River and the Kimongo district.
2. Misère Loubota, interview by author, November 24, 2010, Brazzaville.
3. Loubota, interview.
4. The consistory of Diambala is now called Louila-Kimongo consistory.
5. The minutes of the Synodal Council of the Evangelical Church of the Congo, held in Brazzaville from March 18 to 20, 1969, on the proposal of the Matsimou seminary, reported on page 16 the adoption of the principle of the admission of women to seminary.
6. Alphonse Loussakou, interview by author, Nov. 16, 2010, Brazzaville.
7. Loubota interview.
8. François Mvumbi Pougui, interview by author, January 26, 2010, Brazzaville.
9. This degree allows students to go to high school.
10. We would like to express our gratitude to Mr. Raymond Bitemo, journalist with the newspaper *Le Chemin*. Thanks to his numerous articles, documentaries, and photos, we have a wonderful historical record, a treasure of the Evangelical Church of Congo.
11. Raymond Bitemo interview, *Le Chemin* # 12, July-Sept. 1985, p. 11.
12. Bitemo, interview.
13. Jean Baptiste Milongo, interview by author, undated.
14. Remarks reported by pastor Moundanga Bititi Dominique, her colleague at the time, Sunday January 23, 2011, Brazzaville.
15. Pastor Tsibatata, interview by author, December 9, 2010, Brazzaville.
16. Pastor Moundanga Bititi Dominique, interview by author, undated.
17. Pastor Alphonse Loussakou, interview by author, undated.
18. Recollection shared by Alphonse Loussaka.
19. During her practicum, the following evangelists accompanied her on a rotating basis: Tongo Felix, Tsimba Mboukou Zebedee, Dilou

- Maurice, Moussitou Gabriel, Toubi Benjamin, Bayekola Raymond, Jean Paul Mouissila, Mboumba Philip, and Makoundou Damas.
20. Jeanne Balehola, interview by author, Nov. 23, 2010, Brazzaville.
  21. Moundanga, interview.
  22. Balehola, interview.
  23. Balehola, interview.
  24. *Le chemin* #12, p. 10.
  25. Mboungou-Mouyabi, Émilienne, “La conception de notre père selon Martin Luther [The Conception of ‘Our Father’ According to Martin Luther]” (unpublished thesis, Mantsimou Seminary, Brazzaville, 1985).
  26. *Le chemin* #12, p.11.
  27. *Le chemin* #12, p. 10.
  28. *Mweti* #1193, July 5, 1985, p. 4.
  29. *Le chemin* #12, p. 11.
  30. Mboungou Mouyabi, interview by author, March 2010, Mouyondzi (Congo).
  31. Mboungou Mouyabi, interview.
  32. *Le chemin* #12, p. 11.
  33. Viviane Kombo, interview by author through email, July 12, 2010.
  34. Pastor Ruth-Annie Mampembe-Coyault, interview by author through email, July 16, 2010.
  35. Mboungou Mouyabi, interview.
  36. *Le chemin* #12, p.11.
  37. Kombo, interview.
  38. Moyo Jean Claude, interview by author, November 24, 2010, Brazzaville.
  39. Tsibatata, interview.
  40. Mboungou Mouyabi, interview.
  41. Tsibatata, interview.
  42. *Le chemin* #28, P.2.
  43. Mrs. Loubamba, interview by author, January 5, 2011, Brazzaville.
  44. Loubamba, interview.
  45. [Loubota] family in Kimouélé, interview by author, 2010, Kimouélé.
  46. *Le chemin* #28, p.4.
  47. Wilfrid Moussitou, interview by author, Nov. 23, 2010, Brazzaville.
  48. Milongo, interview.
  49. Tsibatata, interview.
  50. Loubamba, interview.

51. Prayer reported by Misère Loubota.
52. François Mvoumbi Pongui, interview by author, undated.
53. Balehola, interview.
54. Alphonse Loussakou, interview.
55. Tsibatata, interview.
56. Monique Loubassou, interview.
57. Ruth Annie Coyault, interview by author, undated.
58. Loubamba, interview.
59. Laurent Loubassou, interview.
60. Tsibatata, interview.
61. Pastor Mbougou-Mbayi has finally remarried—his wife’s name is Pauline Ngounga—and they now live in Brazzaville.

**Other sources:**

Bakissa, Jeanne Rose (pastor in the EEC), interview by author, November 2, 2010, Brazzaville (Congo).

Oniangue, Jules Albert (pastor in the EEC), interview by author, November 5, 2010, Brazzaville (Congo).

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