

# ASEC–SLDI Educational Insights

*Together we are making a difference in the lives of women religious in Africa!*



## TABLE of CONTENTS

From the Directors Desk . . . . .	2
News & Events . . . . .	3
Funders Voices . . . . .	11
In Appreciation . . . . .	12
Impact by the Numbers . . . . .	13
ASEC Staff Voices . . . . .	14
Sisters' Voices . . . . .	16
ASEC Board Voices . . . . .	29
Instructors' Voices . . . . .	30
Partners' Voices . . . . .	32
Sisters in Action . . . . .	34

## Voice of the Proud Mama

**by Sr. Rosemarie Nassif, SSND, Ph.D., Program Director, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation**

This year I had the tremendous opportunity to be with and learn from our Catholic Sisters in Africa on several occasions, including visiting the sites in Kenya and Uganda where our SLDI graduates are utilizing the skills they've learned; as well as meeting with the HESA students at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), Tangaza University College and Chemi Chemi in Nairobi, and Kisubi Brothers University College and Uganda Martyrs University in Uganda. I also had the honor of accompanying our new president of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, Peter Laugharn, on his first visit with our Catholic Sisters Initiative in Africa and experiencing his freshly formulated impressions and insights. I have now been to seven countries in Africa and although each country is different from the other, I am consistently overwhelmed by the inspiring and resourceful lives of the sisters – inspiring in terms of their complete giving of self and resourceful in their ability to create so much with so little.

I am struck by two unique strengths across this continent, the sacred value of community and the joy of music, dance and celebration. The Sisters engage their local communities in their livelihoods, in their ministries, in their prayer lives and, ultimately, in their missions as women religious. They live the joy of the gospel amidst the challenges and obstacles of extreme poverty. Their music and dance unite across religious, economic and national differences.

I was deeply touched when I met with the HESA students in March 2016. Sister Lydiah Wachira, their spokesperson, bestowed on me the honor of being called their "mama." I

*Continued on page 3*

*Come let us tell of the Lord's greatness; let us exalt his name together! Psalm 34:3.*

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As we come to the close of 2016, I am filled with gratitude for our achievements together and hopeful for a future full of new possibilities. In retrospect, 2016 has been an incredible year, your continued support and solidarity with sisters in Africa has touched my heart and soul and given profound meaning to my life.

In particular, a life giving convening was held in Nairobi, Kenya under the auspices of the Catholic Sisters Initiative at the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and ASEC. The convening brought together 189 individuals from 21 countries including, congregational leaders, philanthropic agencies, nonprofit, government and civil society organizations. This spirit filled gathering had a momentous positive energy emanating from a shared understanding that together Catholic sisters, foundations, non-profit organizations, and other sectors, will make significant strides in the realization of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). Attendees left the convening with a commitment to work together to further the UNSDGs.

Since its founding in 1999, ASEC has served nearly 4,500 sisters in 10 countries in Africa. In 2016 alone, ASEC received two major grants from the Conrad N Hilton Foundation which will support over 2000 sisters to participate in its major programs by 2020; 1300 in Phase 4 of the Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI), and 850 in the Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA) project which expanded to include support for sisters to pursue undergraduate and master's degrees at 23 colleges in 10 countries in Africa partially online in the US. ASEC continues to develop its programs, including the Scholarship Program, Service Learning Program, and Research Initiative. Already, over 200 sisters are being served by the Scholarship Program, enrolling to complete high school and two-year college diplomas in Tanzania, Malawi, and Zambia; a new class of students from Marywood University and Chestnut Hill College in the US are preparing to travel to Tanzania in Mary 2017 for Service Learning; and over 50 sisters and scholars participated in a research training held in East and West Africa. Furthermore, a new component of ASEC's

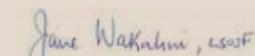
programming is providing training to superior generals and councilors, over 500 participated to date.

Through ASEC programs, sister beneficiaries continue to improve lives for the disadvantaged in healthcare, education, social welfare and pastoral ministries. ASEC continues to witness the impact of its alumnae and their mentees. Reporting from 2016 found that alumnae and their mentees raised over 10 million dollars to support their projects, serving nearly 1.7 million individuals and creating 2,000 jobs. SLDI Alumnae are mentoring over 20,000 individuals in one-on-one sessions, in groups, and through trainings, sharing knowledge gained by ASEC facilitators.

ASEC's talented and dedicated board directors, staff, and partners are moving forward ASEC's mission each day by reaching out to women religious in Africa and the people they so willingly serve in their ministries and communities. I am deeply grateful to ASEC staff in the USA and Africa and partners for coming together to contribute significantly in making meaningful and a positive difference in the lives of Catholic sisters in Africa. I am also pleased for your continued commitment and journeying with me to realize the mission of ASEC. I am confident you will continue to partner with us in important and meaningful ways to realize the mission of ASEC in support of Catholic sisters and their ministries in Africa.

I hope you find the stories from our sisters, board members, funders, instructors and staff to be enlivening and informative. Thank you for your gracious support, together we look forward to a new year and a future with hope and optimism. I wish you grace filled Thanksgiving and Christmas festivities!

Sincerely,



Sister Jane Wakahiu, LSOSF, PhD  
Executive Director.



Group photo at the International Union Superiors General (UISG) Assembly Weaving Global Solidarity for Life in Rome, Italy (May, 2016)

## Proud Mama, continued from cover

I am humbled by this honor and take the role of "mama" seriously. I had the privilege of being the Guest Speaker at the CUEA commencement in October, during which Sister Lydia and four other HESA students graduated. I am very proud of them as a true mama, not only for all they have achieved in earning their degree, but, most especially, for why and for whom they are achieving. Every HESA student acknowledged "education as a powerful tool that greatly enhances her service to the peoples of Africa."

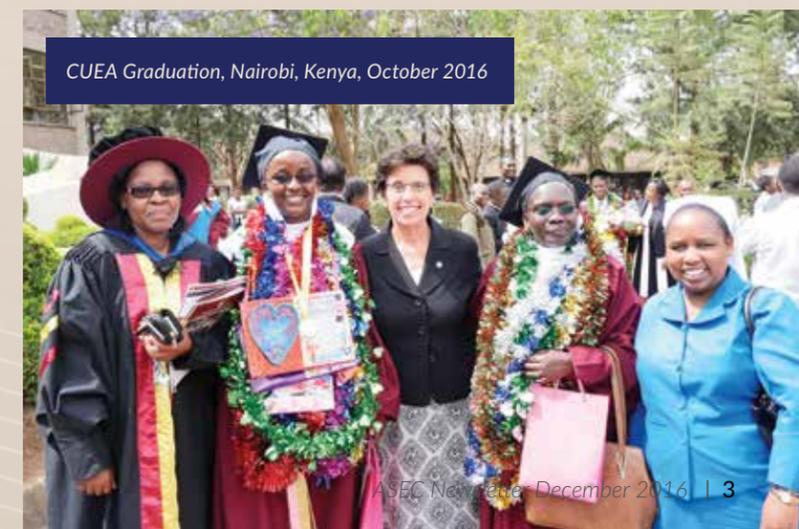
The Sisters' commitment to improving the lives of the peoples of Africa was highly apparent at the Catholic Sisters Initiative convening in Nairobi, which took place from October 16-19. The focus of the convening was "Catholic Sisters: Champions of Sustainable Development in Africa" and the framework was situated within the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals as developed by the United Nations in 2015 and signed onto by 193 nations globally. Over 130 leaders of congregations of women religious participated in the convening, as well as government, Church, community based organizations and international and local leadership associations. In total, the 189 participants represented more than twenty countries, ten in Africa. From the outset it was obvious that the ultimate power of this convening was in the historic gathering itself -- coming together of this diversity of sectors to focus on one agenda -- the sustainable development of Africa and the engagement of sisters who have been in this work long before the SDG framework was developed.

One of my key takeaways was the power of conscientization, i.e., coming to an awareness that shifts the balance of power. The significant elements of "conscientization" were reflected by two of the participants, Dickens Thunde, National Director World Vision Kenya, in his comment that sisters are invisible Champions of Sustainable Development and that his eyes have been opened. The other by Sister Susan Clare Ndeezo, Little Sisters of Mary Immaculate, Gulu, who remarked "I came like a toddler--timid--I leave like a giant."

Sisters were more aware of their significant role in a worldwide agenda and the integrity and authenticity that their local on-the-ground experience brings to others engaged in human development. The national and international organizations

became more aware that sisters are an essential asset in building the capacity of communities to ultimately help themselves. All were more aware of the need for collaboration and the powerful partners in their midst. I would characterize this as a true "shift in the balance of power."

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation's Catholic Sisters Initiative seeks to build the network of sisters across the globe as a unique and formidable force to improve the lives of the vulnerable and disadvantaged. As a former chemistry professor, I understand the important role that a catalyst has in aiding a reaction to proceed with less energy and, therefore, more readily. In the world of foundations, the term catalytic philanthropy is often discussed with many interpretations including working together to achieve the same impact and using all available tools to create momentum for change. Catholic Sisters in Africa have all of the characteristics of being a true catalyst that inspires and ignites the global sisterhood. Their love of community, joy and celebration across differences and inspiring and resourceful immersion in their local communities are ingredients that make their chemistry a catalytic force. It is our role as foundations to listen and partner with them in ways that take seriously the opportunity to assure these ingredients are mobilized in order for the reaction to proceed successfully. We must continue to reinforce and strengthen the "shift in the balance of power" and take advantage of this unique moment for women religious in Africa and the advancement of the global sisterhood.



CUEA Graduation, Nairobi, Kenya, October 2016

## Why do we focus on Catholic Sisters?

Upon learning about ASEC's work in Africa, people in the U.S. sometimes ask, "Why focus on Catholic sisters?" This line of questioning presents a unique opportunity for those of us at ASEC to reveal why Catholic sisters in Africa are such powerful agents of change. Many people know that sisters spread the word of God and engage in ministries that are guided by their faith. **But the hidden story about sisters is that they are addressing a multitude of the most pressing development challenges in Africa today.** From improvements in healthcare, education, and infrastructure to increasing access to clean water and sanitation and reducing poverty, sisters are affecting change on the local, regional, and even national levels. From the ground up, sisters are moving the needle on nearly all of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. Yet few people are aware of the significant impact sisters have in Africa. ASEC is striving to change that narrative.

Sisters who participate in ASEC's programs are often able to enhance the effectiveness and impact of their work through the skills, confidence, and networks they acquire during and after participation. ASEC alumnae are well-positioned to lead development efforts across a spectrum of needs.



**After the Convening**

**By Sr. Jane Wakahiu, ASEC Executive Director**

In October 2016, the African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC) participated in a convening on Catholic sisters and sustainable development held in Nairobi, Kenya. The convening was collaboratively planned by ASEC, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundations' Catholic Sisters Initiative, and the Center for Study of Religion and Civic Culture. Bringing together sisters with representatives from government, intergovernmental organizations, philanthropy, business, the Catholic Church, and nonprofits, the convening was the first of its kind to take place in Africa.

The October 2016 convening brought together 189 attendees from 21 countries; including 123 Superiors General, Provincial and Regional leaders who represent over 6,658 sisters across ten countries served by the African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC). The sisters represented live in 1,283 convents, and provide services in 653 schools, 283 healthcare institutions, 243 pastoral and social service programs and 184 other varied ministries. These numbers illustrate a significant growth and change since 1822 when the Sisters of Saint Josephs of Cluny established a mission in the Gambia.

Working with a very committed and dedicated team; the Catholic Sisters Initiative at the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the Center for Religion and Civic Culture and the Africa Sisters Education Collaborative staff, the convening was a time for listening, learning and living true collaboration. Having participated in planning the convening, witnessing it unfold I had an aha moment, a paradigm shift in my perception. Silently I watched as attendees made connections, hugged each other, took pictures, listened to speakers, they were enthusiastic and a positive energy flowed and remained in the entire space through the convening. It was momentous to execute something bigger than ourselves for the benefit of women religious in Africa in honor of the work they do and the people they so willingly serve. It was a moment to elevate, appreciate and recognize their work as well as learn about



*Sisters during the commissioning ritual at the Catholic Sisters: Champions of Sustainable Development convening held in Nairobi (October, 2016)*

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) and how we can contribute in attaining these goals.

Reflecting on the proceedings, I continue to recall the African adage, 'it takes a village to raise a child.' In a majority of African communities raising a child is the responsibility of an entire community; a child is seen as a blessing to the community with the hope that after growing up he or she will contribute to building society. Through compassion, each sister strives to care, to nurture, to support life grow and to defend life by providing very essential services. Certainly, religious life has continued to grow but not without overcoming cultural, political, socio and economic challenges. The convening provided an opportunity for me to look back and ponder on the journey mapped by those early courageous women who beat all odds to establish and serve Africa as women religious. Their vision lives on, and is reflected in one of the goals of the convening 'to appreciate the potential of Catholic Sisters as full members of the global partnership for sustainable development as well as the obstacles they face in connecting to the networks of communion and expertise required to be effective partners.'

Although attendees represented various bodies including, government, philanthropy, church, religious institutes, nongovernmental organization and civic organizations, there was one message that cut across all these entities – a desire to connect, to take action, to make sustainable difference in society towards achieving the 2030 transformative agenda. There was a shared understanding that all were contributing to make a difference in the society, but there was deeper call to be more intentional and search for meaningful ways to collaborate and to measure our success together.

In speaking to several attendees, I recognized a deep sense of shift in our perception of the work sisters do and an understanding that they are truly full members of global partnership as described in one of the goals and demonstrated in the posters presented and displayed at the convening. The following were some of my observations and conclusions: there



*HESA students graduate from Tangaza University College, Kenya (May, 2016)*



*Peter Laugharn, President and CEO and Sister Rosemarie Nassif, SSND, Ph.D., Director, Catholic Sisters Initiative of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation (front, center) with HESA Students (July, 2016).*

was a consensus that our strength is our imagination and paying attention to what sustains life was more important than what destroys it; I felt we shared a quiet sense of community, we were a learning community, and a community that felt more empowered and wanted to continue contributing significantly to empower others and to create positive change we desired to see; also, I felt there was willful resolve demonstrating a quiet effect to change our society.

During a poster session that depicted projects and ministries operated by sisters in remote, rural and urban regions of their countries, I felt a river of dialogue was starting to flow, and a desire to work together enmeshed conversations leading to a creative energy in search for ways to collaborate. What remained was not what the next steps to take are, but connections were made and pathways of continued connection were charted including ways to share ideas. In the end, the desire to create a center to study consecrated life in Africa remained an essential dream that will continue to unfold in hope to continue enlivening religious life, studying essential trajectories, and nurturing the growth that is already evident in Africa.

I am most grateful to ASEC staff in the United States and Africa for embodying the mission of ASEC and giving their full attention to attain it. Thanks to the planning and coordinating teams in Nairobi. I am indebted to the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation for providing an opportunity for sisters in Africa to experience the convening in their own soil and to the Center for Religion and Civic Culture for your timeless dedication and working with us to make the convening a success - indeed it takes a village to raise a child – we all did it and so well. It will take several months to unpack convening experiences ...

**Conrad N. Hilton Foundation Travels to Africa**

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation went to East Africa, in July 2016, and visited the SLDI Basic Technology training session at Tumaini Center. Peter Laugharn, President and CEO and Sister Rosemarie Nassif, SSND, Ph.D., Director, Catholic Sisters Initiative of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation met with HESA students studying at Tangaza University College, Chemchemi Ya Uzima Institute, and the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), all in Kenya. The meeting also included faculty and staff from the three institutions and was held at CUEA.

While in Kenya, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation also observed the SLDI initiative at St. Francis Hospital in Kasarani. This was an opportunity for the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation to observe ASEC programs and how the sisters transfer their skills and knowledge to their ministries.

HESA students created an anthem for HESA and performed it for the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation at a Mass.

*Below: Peter Laugharn and Sr. Rosemarie Nassif were presented with gifts during their visit to Sr. Francis Spiritual Center, Kasarani, Kenya.*



## HESA Sisters Annual Reflective Learning Workshops

Reflective Learning workshops are designed for sisters to share their experience, continue building support within their cohort, and continue enhancing their educational experience. In May and June 2016, 222 sisters attended reflective learning workshops that were held in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda. Topics for reflective learning workshops are chosen based on each cohort's needs and wants that arise throughout the year. Topics this year include Individual Differences, Personality Type and Anxiety, Study Habits, Time Management, Incorporating Religious Life and Student Life, Stress Management, PowerPoint and Internet Skills, Leadership in Religious Life and Effective Communication.



Ghana, May 2016



Kenya, May 2016



Nigeria, June 2016



Uganda, May 2016



Tanzania, July 2016

## 36 HESA Students graduate with university credentials

Since January 2016, 36 HESA students graduated from college and university partners with higher education credentials. The sisters received diplomas in leadership and resource management and degrees in education, commerce, social work, and nursing. Congratulations to: Srs. Lydia Apili, LSMIG, Angelina Mulani, DSH, Regina K. Mwamba, DOJGS, Delvin Chebukwa Mukhwana, DHM, Ann Kamene Musyoka, ASN, Lydia Wanjiku Wachira, NSA, Marie Therese Fernando, HA, Anisia Kitaka, LSOSF, Sr. Mercy Waithera Ng'ang'a, MCESM, and Sr. Thecla Nyakerario Mokuia, STJ who graduated from **Catholic University of Eastern Africa in Kenya**; Srs. Hellen Atieno Apiyo, LOSJ, Joyce Peter Aya, NSA, Caroline Ndanu David, BB; Teresa Nyawira George, DC, Edina Nyakerario Kayugi, FSJ, Judith Atieno Magare, FSJ, Isabela Nekesa Matanda, LSDJ, Jacqueline Muchuma, SMMG, Regina Mugothi, Sarah Nyambura Mureithi, SJT, Winnie Mutuku Mueni, DC, Esther Mwawesu Wanjala, SSJ, Namigga Theopista, IHMR, Susan Nyakinyua Nderi, CPS, Hannah Wambui Njenga, SHS, Emily A Omondi, OSU, Elizabeth Onoja, MSHR, who graduated from **Tangaza University College in Kenya**; and Sr. Esther Wairimu Mwangi, LSOSF, who graduated from **Aga Khan University in Kenya**; Srs. Pelagia Chimpa, SOLQA, Agripina Fidelis, STH, Magreth John Kiria, OSS, Spesioza John Massawe, SCC, Efrosina Mbiki, IHMS, Restituta Msemwa, TS, Venosa Meraji Mshana, GRAIL, and Yustina Yilima, SRA, who graduated from **Saint Augustine University in Tanzania**.

Among the 2016 graduates, at least 6 who received a diploma advanced to bachelor's degree programs, and one who received a bachelor's degree advance to a master's program. Alumnae are reporting satisfaction with the program. One sister wrote of her experience with HESA, "it was wonderful because the program is very holistic;" another elaborated, "I enjoyed my studies and was very happy, adding "I was particularly happy will all the support (moral, financial, material, name it)."



Above: Sr. Jane Wakahiu at the Tangaza University College graduation in Kenya (May, 2016).



Left: Sr. Esther's graduation from Aga Khan University in Kenya. She completed a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, February 10, 2016.

## New Sisters Join the HESA Program!

Throughout 2016, 194 sisters enrolled in the HESA program, entering degree, diploma and Masters Programs at various ASEC partner colleges and universities. Another 85 sisters will enroll in the HESA program in January 2017. Each new student participates in the HESA orientation to acclimate to HESA's goals and expectations, entering a partner institution as a member of a HESA cohort at the start of the academic year. Orientation covers relevant topics to university study, including computer and study skills, time management, and program expectations.

Recruitment of HESA cohorts in 2017 will begin in January 2017. Contact ASEC country directors for more information.

## Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA) Program enters Phase II

The HESA program provides African sisters access to quality, affordable higher education leading to a bachelor's degree or diploma in professional fields identified as relevant and needed – including education, business administration, nursing, social work and religious studies. HESA is designed to be delivered entirely onsite in the traditional model and through the online-onsite model, which allows sisters to complete a portion of their studies online.

In June 2016, HESA was awarded a four year 15.3 million dollar grant from the Conrad N Hilton Foundation to deliver phase II of HESA (2016-2020). Phase II will serve over 800 sisters in 10 countries: Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Lesotho, South Sudan, Cameroon, Uganda, Zambia, Kenya, and Tanzania.

ASEC will continue to meet the diverse needs of Catholic sisters in Africa through HESA Phase II, supporting sisters from college diplomas, bachelor's degrees, and, for the first time, master's degrees. In response to expressed needs, HESA expanded to incorporate 23 partnerships with colleges and university in each of the 10 countries it serves, and added an online-onsite partnership with Rosemont College in the US for a bachelor of business administration degree. The program welcomed its first master's students in August 2016.

HESA continues to benefit sisters in Africa with its innovative program designed centered around the cohort system, in which sisters enter a college or university partner as members of a HESA cohort and participate annually in professional and skill development workshops.

## Cars for Coordinators

Funding was provided to purchase cars for our country coordinators in Cameroon, Ghana, Malawi and Tanzania to help with travel to conduct ASEC business in an effort to further our mission.



Sr. M. Tryphina Buchard, STH, ASEC Director in Tanzania, behind the wheel of her van.

## SLDI in Lesotho and South Sudan

For the first time, SLDI trainings were held in Lesotho and South Sudan. We are delighted to strengthen the capacity of women religious in these countries.



Left: SLDI Basic Technology workshop participants in South Sudan learning how to network computers through remote connectivity.

## New Partnerships Established

2016 was a busy year for ASEC Staff in the US and Africa. Over 20 successful site visits and meetings held in 10 African countries and three partnering universities in the United States. Six ASEC staff members, representatives of The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, ASEC board members and faculty of US partner institutions, gathered with students, faculty and staff representatives of the partnering universities in Africa to learn from one another. The site visits gave insight into program services and provided rationale and data for the expansion of partnerships in Phase II of the program.

Partnership planning meetings were held throughout the year at US partner universities Rosemont College, Chestnut Hill College and Marywood University between Sr. Jane Wakahiu, ASEC Program Director, and the university president to discuss HESA's project and vision as well as the future of the program in relation to the establishment.

ASEC facilitates two types of partnerships for the HESA program: Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) and Frameworks of Reference (FOR). Memorandums of Understanding are between two colleges/universities one in the USA and one in Africa, to deliver an online-onsite collaborative degree program. Frameworks of Reference establish partnerships between ASEC and universities in Africa to offer onsite educational opportunities for sisters.

During Phase II ASEC, has added 17 new partnerships to the HESA Program. In addition the HESA program has successfully established a partner in each country- Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, and Zambia, to increase economic feasibility for sisters to pursue higher education. Congregations are responsible for housing, accommodation and travel costs. Through evaluations ASEC found that some congregations were reporting differences in cost of living between countries. In response ASEC has worked diligently to increase the number of partnerships. In addition, ASEC has focused on incorporating nursing colleges in each country (Sacred Heart School of Nursing and Holy Family Nursing and Midwifery Training College) to address the reported desire for sisters wanting to enter the healthcare profession on evaluation forms.

As HESA moves into Phase II of the program our goal expands to serving 858 sisters in continuing education in undergraduate and master's degrees. Of the 858, 686 diploma/degrees will be offered and 172 master's degrees.



## Site Visits in Kenya, October 2016 Ms. Jennifer Mudge, Program Evaluator, SLDI

In October 2016, Rosemary Shaver, Assistant Director of the Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA) Program, and I traveled to Nairobi, Kenya with a very full agenda. As the Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI) Program

Evaluator, I was eager to interact with alumnae of the HESA and SLDI program, and to learn more about their experiences during and after their participation in the program(s). Did they gain new knowledge or skills that changed how they do their work? Did they see themselves differently, perhaps as a leader or mentor? Did their congregations and ministries benefit from their educational opportunity? Through site visits to sisters' ministries and interviews with sisters I would have the privilege to sit down, in person, with sisters and listen to their experiences. Our team collects most of the evaluation data through paper or online surveys and assessments, so a chance to interview sisters and tour their work settings is a rare and precious opportunity.

Over the course of our time in Kenya we conducted **9 site visits and 36 focus group and individual interviews with SLDI & HESA alumnae**. For some of these visits and interviews we were joined by a researcher and journalist with the University of Southern California's Center for Religion and Civic Culture (CRCC). CRCC serves as the Hilton Foundation's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning partner for the Catholic Sisters Initiative. For all of us on the evaluation team, we were visiting the sisters' ministries in person for the first time. As we made our way around Nairobi and a bit beyond, I was struck time and time again with how efficiently, strategically, collaboratively, and holistically sisters implemented the skills and knowledge they gained through the SLDI and/or HESA programs.

On one sunny afternoon, our team traveled to meet with Sr. Anne Kamene, Assumption Sisters of Nairobi, who is working in Limuru at a home for girls with physical and mental disabilities. She graduated from the HESA program in May 2016 with a Bachelor's degree in Development Studies. She began her tenure as Director of the home after graduation and one might expect her to still be settling into her role and simply maintaining the current services after only several months of employment. However, her accomplishments to date are more than some leaders might accomplish after years of work. She has expanded the home's income (and improved the girls' nutrition) through vegetable and tea farming on two previously unused acres of land, which we were able to tour. She is now seeking to develop a biogas plant soon to convert animal droppings into fuel. She developed a vision, mission, and organizational goals as there were none. She advocated for a girl at the home who was sexually assaulted and, despite an array of challenges, pursued the case until the perpetrator was convicted in court. Knowing that legal justice alone would not heal the girl's trauma, she partnered with a local university to bring in counselors, free of charge, for this young girl as well as other girls at the home who are in need of mental health services. She has successfully engaged her local community in fundraising efforts, while sensitizing people about individuals with disabilities. She has even started to engage in succession planning, which grew out of her desire for the home to be sustainable well after she leaves--and because she herself received no training when she began her role as Director.

Sr. Ann is an intelligent, collaborative, strategic-minded woman, dedicated to the girls she serves; but without further education,

she may not have been able to access a leadership role. Sr. Ann shared that the HESA program helped her gain the skills, strengths, and support she needed to be a confident leader. In talking with her, she said being a part of the program was not only about having her tuition paid. She felt the HESA program was like "entering a family" and called the experience enriching and supportive, even enabling her to complete her degree in two years rather than three. She expressed, "I would be in a very bad situation if I was given a home like this to run and then I don't have the knowledge and skills--that would be terrible. ...I have been able to use the skills I got in school to maximize on the resources we have."

Another site visit took us to the compound of the Evangelizing Sisters of Mary, where Sr. Mary Wambui is working with children and parents on a holistic program that addresses HIV/AIDS prevention and care, economic empowerment, education, and much more. Sr. Mary was mentored by an SLDI alumnae, Sr. Winnie. In turn Sr. Mary has passed along skills in delegation, communication, accountability, leadership, and record keeping to the staff and community members within the program. The staff Sr. Mary supervises spoke with us in an interview and explained that they gained valuable knowledge and skills which improved their teamwork and also encouraged them to act as "leaders of themselves," so that they are self-motivated and responsible for their own work. One staff member even credited her courage to speak publicly and confidently with the skills she gained from Sr. Mary's mentorship. In addition the program has developed a Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) office. The office grew out of a need to report specific data relevant to their USAID grant, but has since expanded to collect, manage, and share data about other aspects of the program. The data is openly shared with all staff and community stakeholders and is used to make programmatic decisions. I was particularly excited to see a vibrant bulletin board full of data visualizations hanging on the wall of the M&E office for all to see. The program is also strategically mapping its partners, collaborating locally to offer enhanced services to its beneficiaries, and offering seminars on finance and leadership.

Like Sr. Ann, Sr. Mary and Sr. Winnie are thinking strategically, holistically, and locally to run their programs. They are acting as servant leaders, empowering those around them and collaborating to maximize their resources and impact. While they still face challenges, these sisters and many others we interviewed consistently spoke of the personal and professional transformations they experienced during and after the SLDI and HESA programs. And importantly, they demonstrated that through educating and empowering one sister, an entire congregation and community of stakeholders can benefit.



Margaret, Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator at the Evangelizing Sisters of Mary, shows Jen some of the data from the congregation's USAID funded project.

## SLDI Presents Phase III Evaluation Report

In April 2016, the Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI) program completed its Phase III (2013-15) evaluation and presented an evaluation report at the annual ASEC Advisory Board meeting. After nearly ten years in existence, the program has achieved many successes, including the over \$10 million secured by SLDI alumnae and their mentees for urgently needed projects focused on education, infrastructure, healthcare, income generation and economic empowerment, social welfare, and much more. Sisters are truly taking up leadership roles after participation in SLDI and African communities are benefitting from the skills, innovation and dedication SLDI alumnae bring to their work. The SLDI program also continues to address challenges as they are identified and, much like the sisters we serve, continually seeks new ways to more fully achieve our goals. We invite you to take a closer look at our Phase III evaluation outcomes and learn about the different ways SLDI is positively impacting individual sisters, congregations, program stakeholders, and the lives of Africans in SLDI's countries of operations.

Visit [asec-sldi.org/evaluation](http://asec-sldi.org/evaluation) to see the evaluation report.

## SLDI offering consulting services for grant-writing support

Finally, this year SLDI added a new component to better support alumnae in their grant-writing and organizational planning efforts. The Phase III evaluation revealed that SLDI alumnae could benefit from consulting services, as many alumnae reported the need for ongoing support and consultation on the grant-writing process, creating budgets and writing effective strategic and financial plans. Acting on this need, SLDI has now hired part-time consultants in 8 countries: Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.

The consultant will review grant proposals, financial plans, strategic plans, and other project materials for SLDI alumnae. The Hilton Foundation approved this new component and ASEC is piloting this project for six months. Evaluation data will be collected and analyzed to determine the effectiveness of engaging consultants.

## Standout Stories from Bigwa Scholarship Applicants



Nineteen sisters pose with ASEC's 2016 scholarship recipients. These two young women received 2-year scholarships to study at Bigwa Secondary School Morogoro, Tanzania.

Almost all of the women have an interest in bettering their education. Many want to become a teacher and give back to their society and congregation, along with spreading their knowledge to others. Each one appreciates the school for teaching them religious and academic skills that they can later share with others. Almost all of the women in the program are Sisters who are older than the normal high school age, save for two young girls. However all of them are bright, dedicated, and spiritual women who are happy with their program.



### Sr. Ghislaine Uwitoze

Once I finish school, I want to serve the Lord through my congregation and the Church by helping people in different sectors which will be available. I am pursuing higher education to be well educated and be available to work with people of different education. I also will be able to share my ideas with other

intellectual persons. Currently I am a religious student here at Bigwa and I am continuing well with my studies. Since Bigwa School is for sisters and provides both normal and spiritual education, I applied here hoping to finish with a high performance.



### Winifrida John Rutaisile (young girl)

After I finish school, I would like to continue to study University level education so I can achieve my goals. I would like to be a teacher of higher level, teaching art subjects. But I would also like to be a business woman who can apply my skills to educate other people in the community. Being at higher

education is my wish in life. I want to increase my knowledge and skill academically and bring respect into my community. Higher level education helps to determine future goals, especially to help know what you want to be in life. Higher education will help me know my position and who I will be in life. My current situation at Bigwa is to be a responsible student. I work very hard to pass my classes and get good grades. Bigwa has helped me through prayer, working hard, and studying hard.



### Jacqueline Seveline

After finishing my studies here at Bigwa Sisters School, I want to be a teacher for the purpose of educating others to aware that they can get good education and not be illiterate. I personally want to learn more through materials and eventually go to University. Higher education will enable me to get a higher capacity of

knowledge and more confidence compared to my O-levels. At Bigwa, we are on a good time table. We pray to God every day and I like it very much because God is the one helping me in my daily life. At our school we have headmistresses and teachers that are teaching us well and advising us in order to get good performance.

**Over 500 Congregational leaders benefit from six-day SLDI program**

**By Sr. Jane Wakahiu, ASEC Executive Director & SLDI/HESA Director**

For the first time, superiors training were also held in Lesotho and South Sudan. 25 superiors from Lesotho participated in a training at Mahobong, Lesotho. In June, 2016, 16 superiors in South Sudan attended training at KIT Center in Juba (pictured above).

The training curriculum covers salient topics taught to sisters during one-month long training in a three-year cycle program; including topics such as strategic planning, strategy implementation and monitoring, grant writing, and reporting, management of nonprofit organizations, facilitation and teambuilding skills. Each attendee receives two books, on administration and nonprofit financial management. The training is geared to provide superiors with aspects of the SLDI program curriculum as a basis for superiors to understand of the knowledge and skills acquired by sisters on graduating from the program. Superiors are encouraged to be more intentional in selecting sisters who will maximally benefit from the SLDI and transfer skills to their organizations and communities amicably. There has been growing interest on SLDI program among the sisters, mentees, and colleagues in ministries. There is ongoing change and understanding management of nonprofit organizations among the sisters including fundraising strategies, self-esteem and confidence in leadership. We owe it all to the Conrad N Hilton Foundation for partnering with ASEC to deliver this noble program for the sisters in Africa.



16 superiors in South Sudan attended training at KIT Center in Juba (June, 2016).



116 superiors in Kenya had their training at Demese Spiritual Center, Nairobi, Kenya (October, 2016).



HESA, East Africa Student Mass, February 2016

**HESA, East Africa Student Mass**

Three universities in Kenya- Chemchemi Ya Uzima Institute, Tangaza College and CUEA, met at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa for a HESA students Mass in February 2016. There they collectively brought together monetary donations and various toiletries to be donated to CUEA students in need.



84 major superiors and councilors attending SLDI training in Kampala, Uganda (November, 2016). In 2016, over 500 congregational leaders have participated in this training across ten countries.



**“Building” a Global Sisterhood**

**by Brad Meyers, Senior Program Officer, Catholic Sisters Initiative, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation**

I am typing this missive to you today with hands covered in construction adhesive and a bruised thumb, a thumb that I hit with a hammer while hanging a joist to support some decking my wife and I are installing at our house. This kind of construction work is not something that I ordinarily do for a number of reasons, not the least of which is because I am very bad at it.

However, this year, I have taken it upon myself to try to become a better husband, which from my wife’s point of view means being a little more like her father, a man who, in his retirement, builds houses for other people just for fun.

In the field of philanthropy, we speak of “building” things quite a bit; however, what we build are things like “capacity” or “networks” or “relationships.” How many people in philanthropy actually have a background in construction? I venture to say not many. As members of the professional managerial class in the United States, we rarely have an opportunity to get dirt underneath our fingernails, at least during work hours.

So I have recently found myself reflecting on the audacity of some of the things I find myself saying in my professional life—especially one thing: At the Hilton Foundation, we speak often about our endeavor to “build a global sisterhood.” Let us put aside for a moment what the “global sisterhood” even means; for now, let us focus on the “building” part.

I thought I would offer a few (sometimes painful) lessons I have learned over the past year about working with my hands to build material things that I think apply equally as well to working with our minds to build immaterial things like the global sisterhood.

- 1. You need a plan, even though everything will not go according to plan.** Dwight D. Eisenhower was the 34th President of the United States from 1953 until 1961. Before he was president, he served as a general in the United States Army where he gleaned the following piece of wisdom: “Plans are worthless, but planning is everything.” Yes, you must have a good plan, but the plan itself is secondary to the insights you gain from engaging in the careful thinking and conversations required to develop consensus around a good plan in the first place. Through planning the good ideas are identified and developed and bad ideas are exposed. You also learn who your friends are, the people you can trust to help you adapt when the original plans inevitably go awry.
- 2. It will take longer than you think it should.** See that line that looks straight? It is not. What you thought was a perfect shade of red color looks pink in this light. The floor is not level. Beams do not line up the way you thought they would. Unseen things—mysterious wires, mold, termites-- are hidden behind walls and underground. Sometimes it rains for days on end. Contractors do not show up on time. Delay is the norm, so do not let it frustrate you. Plan on it.
- 3. You cannot do it alone.** This is obvious in the case of physical construction—thanks to gravity, sturdy, human-sized things tend to be quite heavy. We simply cannot lift them on our own. But because ideas do not weigh anything, it is easy to forget that ideas can, in a sense, themselves be heavy, too. I would venture to say “global sisterhood” is a heavy idea that needs a lot of people to help bear its weight and figure out how it “fits” in the world.
- 4. It will get messy.** You get dirty. Things will break. You will probably hurt yourself. You may even hurt others. This happens. You can be careful and reduce risks, but you cannot eliminate them. Construction sites are dangerous and not for the faint of heart.

In all of this, I am reminded that Jesus was a carpenter—a builder of things (the Greek word is tekton). As Christians, it seems to me that we are all called in various ways to be builders ourselves. Certainly ASEC is a shining example of something you have all helped to build, so let us take time to celebrate, and, in spite of all the challenges, delays, frustrations and messiness, let us keep building!



## APPRECIATION

### Members

Society of the Holy Child Jesus  
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia  
Cong. Srs. Servants of the IHM  
Convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph  
Chestnut Hill College  
Marywood University  
Neumann University  
Rosemont College

### Other Members

Jane Farr  
Marie McCormick  
Brigid Blake  
Terri Peters

### Associate Members

Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet  
DePaul University  
Saint Leo

### Friends of ASEC

Abbey of Holy Trinity  
Alan and Elizabeth Vincelette  
Allison E. Antonini  
Ann R. Henry  
Bellarmine Newman Center  
Benedictine Sisters of Chicago  
Bishop Hartley High School  
Blessed Sacrament Church/School  
Bob Lockyer  
Carroll Kelly Morrison  
Cecilia M. Cardesa-Lusardi  
Congregation of Bon Secours of Paris  
Connelly Foundation  
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation  
Daughters of the Holy Spirit  
Daughters of St. Paul  
Discalced Carmelite Nuns  
Dominican Sisters of Peace, Inc.  
Franciscan Sisters of Allegany  
Franciscan Sisters of Chicago

We would like to take a moment to express sincere gratitude to our donors, partners and champions who help bring our mission to life through their support. We thank you. We appreciate you. We recognize you:

J.W. Norpel/M.E. Norpel  
Jane & James Flanagan  
John & Elizabeth Stapleton  
Ken & Marie Elterich  
Mary Kay Daniels  
Mary Tichy  
Maryann Rooney  
Mary Ann Zimmer  
Maryknoll Fathers And Brothers  
Mount St. Francis  
Notre Dame Sisters  
Patsy Rose H. Billera Foundation  
Phillip and Mary Hansen  
Penates Foundation  
Religious Of The Assumption  
Rev. Richard O. O'Nyamwaro, AJ.  
Roman Catholic Bishop of Portland  
Rosalie Mirenda  
Sister of Mercy West Midwest Comm.  
Sisters of Blessed Sacrament  
Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth  
Sisters of Providence Inc.  
Sisters of St. Benedict  
Sisters of St. Casimir  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange  
Sisters of the Presentation  
Society of the Holy Child Jesus  
Sr. Jane Wakahiu  
Sr. Kathy Kurdziel  
Sr. Kathleen Miller  
Sr. Maria Rose Kelly, IHM  
Srs. of Our Lady of Mount Carmel  
Srs. of St. Francis Of Holy Name Province  
Srs. of St. Joseph of Peace Generalate, Inc.  
Srs. of St. Mary of Namur  
Srs. of the Visitation  
SSJ Associate Group  
St. Bernadette School  
St. Joseph's Fem Urs Acad, Inc.  
The Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart  
Theresa Sandok

## ASEC-SLDI/HESA Advisory Board

Dr. Jeff D. Borden, Chief Innovation Officer, Saint Leo University

Sr. Mary Bryan, SHCJ, Genial Coordinator at Holy Child Center

Dr. Kenya Grooms, Director and Administrator, New Learning, DePaul University

Dr. Laura Ann Camlet Houser, Director of Research and Sponsored Programs, Marywood University

Sr. Elaine Martin, OSF, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Political Science at Neumann University

Mr. Brad Myers, Senior Program Officer, Catholic Sisters Initiative, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

Sr. Rosemarie Nassif, SSND, Ph.D., Director, Catholic Sisters Initiative, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

Sr. Florence Nwaonuma, SSH, National President Nigeria Conference of Women Religious (NCWR)

Sr. Anna Mary Henrietta Nyangoma, MCESM, Superior General, Missionary Congregation of Evangelizing Sisters of Mary

Sr. Lisa M. Olivieri, SSJ, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Computer Science and Technology at Chestnut Hill College

Sr. Jane Wakahiu LSOSF, Ph.D. ASEC Executive Director & SLDI/HESA Director

*In April 2016, the ASEC Advisory Board held a meeting at ASEC's headquarters on Marywood University's campus.*



## IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS



# 80%



### REMAIN DEPRIVED OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Women religious dedicate their lives to social and human development. However, sisters often do not have access to the education and training they need to effectively carry out their work.

In fact, of the sisters who report their level of education upon entering SLDI, about 80 percent have no higher education credentials. But, with the support of our funders, we have been able to serve over 5,300 sisters through our programs, and that number continues to grow.

This newsletter is meant to celebrate the accomplishments of the sisters we serve and demonstrate that educating a sister can result in rippling, far-reaching impacts that significantly contribute to sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa.

## SLDI Program



## HESA Program



## Welcome to our new hires

We would like to welcome the following individuals who joined our ASEC staff since last year's newsletter was published. We look forward to you being a part of our team!

Melissa Frein, ASEC Accountant, Jaime Herrmann, ASEC Administrative Assistant, Amy Fedele, ASEC Web Content Manager, Sr. Kevin Karimi, SLDI Graduate Assistant, Briana Luppino, SLDI Graduate Assistant, Amara Chukwunye, ASEC Research Assistant, Kimberly Shaheen, HESA Graduate Assistant, Heather Wimmer, HESA Graduate Assistant, Sr. Angelina Kabwe, SCJ- Zambia Country Director, Sr. Rose Jane Adiero, SHS- South Sudan Country Director, Sr. Eleanora Molai, HFB- Lesotho Country Director, Sr. Lydia Wachira, NSA- Kenya Programs Coordinator, Sr. Clare Abisola Adedokun, DHS- Nigeria Programs Coordinator, Sr. Teresa Mulenga, TS- Malawi Programs Coordinator, Sr. Maria Telesphora, COLU- Tanzania Programs Coordinator, and Sr. Julian Zulu- Zambia Programs Coordinator. Visit <http://asec-sldi.org/who-we-are/our-team/> to read bios for all of our team members.

## Scholarships awarded to ASEC Africa Staff

Two Africa Staff members have been awarded scholarships to pursue degrees. Sr. Clementina Obembe, Nigeria, ASEC Regional Director West Africa, to study Master's Degree in Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution, and Sr. Hilaria Chombo, ASEC Director Malawi to study degree in Managing Rural and Community Development.

## SLDI - Bringing the Gap Among the Servants in the Vineyard of the Lord.

Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI) is the mother of ASEC's programs developed up until now and those that might follow in future. Much has been achieved from this initiative, which empowers sisters with leadership, administrative, financial, and technical skills. Walking in the footsteps of giants, on whose shoulders we must stand if we are to see far, SLDI echoes the wisdom of George Eliot who said, "It is never too late to be what you might have been." African Sisters have been given a second chance; what I see as a second liberation from an oppressive traditional background which did not give girls access to education. Of the 40,000 Sisters in Africa, SLDI has managed to reach approximately 10%, reducing the education gap among sisters who joined their congregations without a professional background. By reducing this gap, SLDI is helping sisters respond to a rapidly changing world. African Sisters have also been offered the opportunity to self-actualize in a unique way, by allowing them to learn professional skills in a program unique to them without laying the burden of shame or a blame for lack of previous academic excellence on them.

The sisters in Africa are reciprocating this endeavor significantly, marked by an increase in enrollment in the SLDI program and other ASEC programs (HESA and the Two-year Scholarship program) that have since been realized as the needs were identified. David Letterman said, "Sometimes something worth doing is worth overdoing." And here we see the sisters rising to what may have seemed a lost opportunity, when they first chose to serve as religious. The opportune time is now and yes, sisters are getting back to enhance what skills they might still have missed, bringing them wholeness and integral development.

As the scripture would have it, (Mathew 20: 1-9) Jesus compares the Kingdom of God through a parable to a man who went out to hire laborers for his vineyard. He hired workers all day long

up to the eleventh hour and at the end of the day they were all paid a penny, per their initial agreement at the time of hire. Some workers toiled from the morning, while others started work later in the afternoon or night, but all were paid their penny. In the same way, the sisters have been called to religious life from different backgrounds and enter the sisterhood at different times in their lives, but they are all working for the same mission. And they all deserve to earn their "penny," or in this case, the opportunity for education and empowerment.

As a matter of fact, SLDI marks a paradigm shift among sisters in Africa and echoes the wisdom of Joyce A. Myers: "A pencil and a dream can take you anywhere." These sentiments are echoed by the current Executive Director of ASEC, Sr. Jane Wakahiu, who envisioned and published a book titled, *Voices of Courage*. Through this book she sought to advocate for a place to have the African sisters tell their own stories from an insider's perspective. From ASEC's standpoint, an important piece of empowerment is to receive education—but an equally important aspect of empowerment is the capacity to use your voice and tell your own story. This view of empowerment manifests through ASEC's philosophy, that you give a pen and change the lives of African Sisters one life at a time. It cannot be emphasized enough how the dream of ASEC's founding congregations: The Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) - Scranton, Sisters of St. Joseph - Philadelphia, Sisters of St. Francis - Philadelphia, and The Society of the Holy Child Jesus - Rosemont, has traversed the African continent. From the humble beginnings in five countries, the founders' dream has now seen the initiative go up and running in 10 African countries. The commitment of ASEC Staff in USA and regionally in Africa is unfathomable.

SLDI is teaching us the lesson Nelson Mandela pointed out: "We must use time creatively and forever realize that the time is always right to do right." The coming together of the four founding congregations, the attraction of the Hilton Foundation and other donors as well as partnerships in this initiative, are all steps toward the right direction at the right time. As a Kenyan woman religious, studying at Marywood University in the U.S., who would have thought I would learn more about African sisters by first traveling far away from Africa? I have seen from the program outcomes that great potential has been unleashed in the past decade by giving sisters skills and an opportunity for education, which has changed not only the lives of African Sisters but the lives of the poor and marginalized they serve.

Through the SLDI program, I have found the opportunity to look at the challenges of Africa from an outside perspective, engage in a global perspective and learn best practices, enhance skills in advocacy for vulnerable populations, and participate in the mission of Christ of bringing fullness of life to all people (John 10:10). Adherence to this mission promotes the dignity and worth of every person, supports integrity and competence in service to humanity, and cements human relationships.

*My name is Sr. Kevin Karimi, a Graduate Assistant at ASEC for the SLDI program, an International Student from Africa, currently pursuing an MSW at Marywood University. Proud to be at Marywood, where the Catholic Identity and Respect comes first and everyone matters. The Quotes shared with you in this article shape our weekly reflections and goals at Marywood, a University for the World, beautiful both inside and outside, which gives access to education that enables all to achieve their full potential.*

## How Malawi has benefited from Sisters who participated in SLDI



Since 2014-2015 first ASEC programme, over 80 sisters have undergone training in finance and administration benefiting themselves, rural communities they serve and facilitators likewise. The benefits of ASEC in Malawi have appealed to sisters in Zimbabwe.

A number of sisters who had taken up responsibilities without prior training causing a myriad of challenges in executing their duties, but since going through the ASEC programme, have experienced a big shift in their performance. Those in administration positions like in hospitals and schools have attained skills that have improved efficiency and productivity as reflected in both their increased output and outcome.

Resource mobilization has tremendously hiked, with improved proposal writing to various donors across the global with the majority of these proposals being accepted and funding flowing towards various initiatives.

For rural communities, they have benefited through small scale-businesses that are a source of income. Sisters have trained rural households in running small business that have turned out to be the main source of income for the rural communities and turned the corner to self-sustenance.



### Meet Jaime Herrmann ASEC Administrative Assistant

I have been a resident of Northeastern Pennsylvania for my entire life. Living twenty-five miles north of Scranton, I believed I lived in a different world. My life has changed immensely since I began my career in the nonprofit sector over seven years ago and even more since I joined ASEC. ASEC's tagline reads *Empowering women through education in Africa...* I feel as though I am empowered every day by the work that is happening and the lives that are touched. Many people will cross our paths in life, some may leave a mark and some may not. In the past year, I have been blessed with having my life touched by sisters across the globe whom I would have never imagined touching my life in the immense way that they have. I am a believer in everything happening for a reason, I believe that my path in life has led me to the place where I am today, and that I will leave a mark on many lives with the work that I am a part of.



The importance of ASEC cannot be overemphasized. It has attracted participation from across the Malawi borders too, with colleagues from Zimbabwe joining us. ASEC-Catholic University partnership is cited as one of the motivating factors for sisters from Zimbabwe joining ASEC.

Personally, I have been motivated by testimonies that sisters have given after attending ASEC training. During an alumni workshop, stories the sisters shared were aspiring. A project in early childhood has seen increased donor inflows through successful proposal writing. Another example is the sourcing of a hospital recovery funds which was a headache before the administrator attended ASEC training.

The benefit of ASEC has been without boundaries. One of the facilitators Mr. Patrick Wanyaga from Kenya now over 60, impressed by the conduct of the Catholic Church through interactions with sisters, during ASEC programme decided to re-join the church he quit several years ago, when he was less than 10. Mr. Patrick, now a grand-father, says he is deeply thrilled and feels blessed for returning to his childhood church where he got his first baptism. He and the family are now in the Catholic Church leaving happily.

**Sr. Hilaria Chombo, ASEC Director Malawi**

### Meet Amy Fedele ASEC Web Content Manager

I graduated from King's College with a degree in Mass Communications and Media Technologies. For the past twelve years I've worked hands-on in the design industry: at small firms, in higher education, and as an independent-small business owner. I began working at ASEC in September, 2016, and my position here is an exciting one! I am responsible for designing and updating content on [asec-sldi.org](http://asec-sldi.org), as well as developing the monthly e-newsletters and our annual printed newsletter. I'm also the "face" behind our social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter. I believe that it is through education that people are able to thrive and do great things for those they serve. My own passion for learning and empowering others makes me feel a strong connection to the work being done at ASEC. I am excited for the opportunity to carry my experiences further in support of the mission and goals of ASEC, and look forward to working with all of you.



## Professional Development

ASEC is committed to providing education to all of our staff. These come in the form of pursuing graduate education, and attending classes or conferences so we can develop and expand our professional skills.

Here are some of the conferences we've attended in the past year.

- Comparative and International Education Society 2016 Annual Conference, Vancouver, Canada- March 2016 (Sr. Jane Wakahiu)
- Global Status of Women & Girls Conference- Newport News, VA- March 2016 (Rosemary A. Shaver, Jennifer Mudge)
- International Union Superiors General (UISG) Assembly Weaving Global Solidarity for Life- Rome, Italy- May 2016 (Sr. Jane Wakahiu)
- The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) Assembly Embracing the Mystery: Living Transformation- Atlanta, GA- August 2016 (Sr. Jane Wakahiu)
- Catholic Sisters: Champions of Sustainable Development Convening- Nairobi, Kenya- October 2016 (Sr. Jane Wakahiu, Rosemary A. Shaver, Jennifer Mudge)

# ASEC alumnae are returning to their communities providing innovations to serve in the fields of healthcare, education, pastoral, and social ministries.

## Triple projects conceived through the SLDI program

St. Helen's sewing centre is located in Okpaugwu, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria. It was established in 2008 as a result of assignment given to us at SLDI program in 2007 to share with others what we learnt from the program. The target group are those who cannot afford material resources to start up any business on their own because of poverty. But those coming for the work lacks the skills needed hence the establishment of Living Bread Bakery. To training them better in the skills brought about skill acquisition for girls known as Good Shepherd Vocational school, Amike-aba, Mile 50, Abakaliki, Ebonyi state, this is how triple projects were conceived through SLDI program.

**Our Aim/Objectives:** to provide job for the jobless and capacity building, holistic living to our neighbours and to alleviate the sufferings of people around us.

**Our Vision:** the centre envision a Congregation that will alleviate poverty in our society through hardworking; income generation in right conscience and eradication of joblessness among the useful youths in our community.

**Our Mission:** to empower young/adults to actualize their future through fair payment; capacity building in order to make their future brighter.

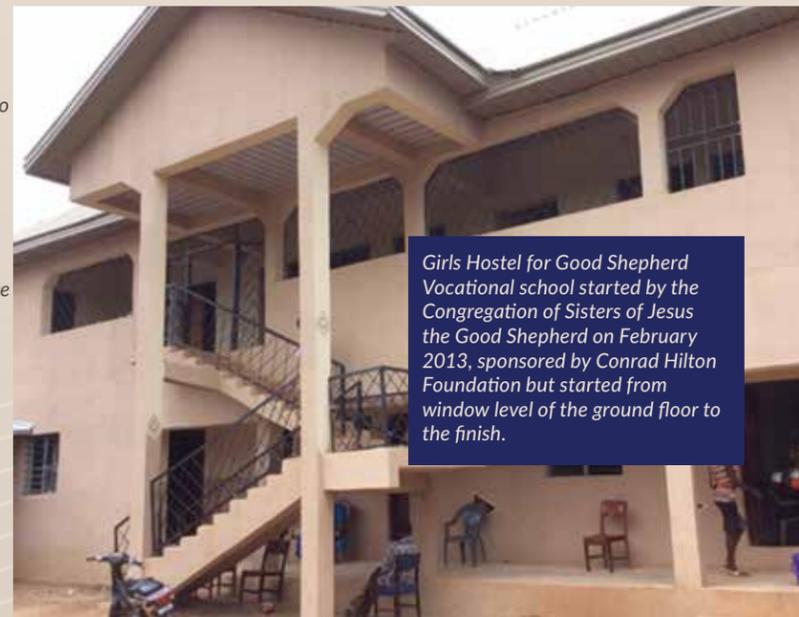
**Sr. Justina Ijeoma Elom, Sisters of Jesus the Good Shepherd, Nigeria**



Living Bread Bakery Industry, Okpaugwu, Abakaliki built by the Benefactors of Sisters of Jesus the Good Shepherd in the year 2009 to help and provide job for the youth especially the useful ones.



The people of Echara- unuhu, Izzi in Ebonyi state where our postulate House is located lacks portable water. St. Helen's sewing center constructed overhead tank with capacity of 12,000 liters of water and drilled motorized borehole in order for the community have access to portable water.



Girls Hostel for Good Shepherd Vocational school started by the Congregation of Sisters of Jesus the Good Shepherd on February 2013, sponsored by Conrad Hilton Foundation but started from window level of the ground floor to the finish.

## Asili Girls' Vocational Senior Secondary School Providing Quality and Holistic Education in Northern Uganda

I am Sr. Petronilla Kyomugisha an SLDI and HESA Alumna in the struggle to provide girls with quality and holistic education for transforming the society in Lira Northern Uganda. I am a missionary sister of Mary Mother of the Church and our Mother house is in Lira, Uganda.

*"I am very grateful to ASEC which empowered me through SLDI and HESA Programs to be able to carry out this noble task amidst many challenges. I owe them credit for all that they did for me and for my Institute."*

I obtained the Certificate in SLDI Administration in 2012 and Bachelor's Degree in Education under HESA program Cohort I. After my graduation 2nd October, 2015, I was assigned to head Asili Girls' Vocational Senior Secondary School, one of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church founded schools in Lira Diocese, Northern Uganda.



Sr Petronilla Kyomugisha, Head teacher in her temporary office

The school began on 21st February 2015 with 27 girls in senior one. However, the target number of the founders of the school which was 40 students per class was not obtained. I took over the headship of the school on 15th October, 2015 immediately after her graduation.

With the skills I acquired I intensified recruitment and now the school has total of 63 students in senior one and senior two. It is founders' desire, that by the time the school reaches senior six in 2020, it would handle about 240 students. The administrators and founders of the school intend to handle smaller numbers of girls per class so as to enable teachers/instructors to provide quality education and training to the girls.

The School's vision is the Promotion of Academic Excellency through a disciplined and God fearing girl child for a better future

and the mission is to provide quality and holistic education to the girl child for self-sustainability and for transforming the society

In addition to the usual school subject, our school has other examinable subjects of Art and Design, and Literature in English and Guidance and Counseling. Our plan is to add other subjects such as: Domestic Science, Technical drawing, Tailoring and Computer Science that will enable students to gain skills for self-sustainability

The school is keeping academic standards through effective teaching, close supervision and monitoring, guidance and counseling to keep girls focused on their future careers.

The main challenge of the education in the area is poverty in that most of the parents/guardians are not able to pay school fees of their children to access quality education. This forced the girls to drop out of school.

Students' demonstration gardens are playing a big role as they supply their produces to the school on the subsidized prices. Other crops grown by the students in the school are; maize, sweet potatoes, vegetable such as cabbages, greens and eggplants. However, the seasons of the area are unreliable, in most cases dry spells destroy most of the corps and harvests realize are not worthy it.

**Sr. Petronilla Kyomugisha, SLDI/HESA Alumna, Uganda**



Students of agriculture together with their teacher working in their tomato garden weeding, thinning and harvesting some which are ready.



**I've returned to my project committee with newfound knowledge**



I am so grateful to Conrad N. Hilton Foundation for giving access to many Religious Sisters in Africa and Malawi in particular to gain new skills and knowledge in Administration and Finance Management. Before SLDI –ASEC programme I had many challenges in life to give better services to all people I am serving. As a Vicarress and project manageress in the Congregation, it was very

difficult for me to serve people from different cultures, different backgrounds and also how to source funds for the sustainability of the Congregation. It was so hard for me.

After attending SLDI programme my life has changed, now I am able to deal with people by using the skills and knowledge I have gained from SLDI – ASEC programme and I am also able to write proposals which can convince the donor by using the knowledge I have gained from SLDI programme. After this course, the project committee wrote a proposal to Brothers and Sisters in need in Austria asking funds for buying a vehicle for the Formation house, it was successful-we got 28,000 Euro. With the skills and knowledge acquired through SLDI – ASEC program I shall never be the same. Stay blessed.

**Sr. Colleta Bester, Malawi, SLDI Administration Alumna**

**A leader is the key to development**

First and foremost I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the ASEC office for the education they provide to religious women in Tanzania. I thank very much my congregation for appointing me to attend the SLDI course based on administration. I learned a lot concerning leadership development skills.

From the course I understood who is a leader; what kind of leader am I, and how am supposed to be a good and consistent leader to my subordinates. A leader is a focal point in establishing and developing good relationship in religious ministry. Currently, I am happy enjoying the acquired communications leadership skills that assist me to foster the development of the Youth Centre in Dar es Salaam, handling conflict resolution and occurred challenges smoothly when performing my accountability. It is assisting me a lot in bringing positive attitudes not only in my working areas but also to my fellow religious in the community. As a servant leader majority of people have impressed and influenced with my mission than ever before. I successively managed to lead and motivate the youth in changing behavior and create the capacity building in making various things such as sewing clothes and performing embroidery activities.



From the administrative course, I also succeeded to expand my knowledge in fundraising which uplift the standard of apostolate in God's ministry. I am able to guide the youth on how to become responsible citizens and good parents in future. I have initiated workshop and some teaching on how the young people can accumulate income for their survival.

As a director for the youth development fund centre, I realized that professional leaders enforce development and lead more effectively and efficiently. With much respect and appreciation, I thank once again the ASEC and all the members contributed to the initiation of SLDI programs in Tanzania. God bless you abundantly.

**Sr. Gabriela Lyakurwa, Little Sisters of Sr. Francis of Assis (L.S.O.F.), 2015 SLDI Administration Alumna, Tanzania**

**I have been given the opportunity to improve my ministry**

My participation in the training had given me the opportunity to improve in my ministry. I coordinate the Sisters, Home Visitors of Mary Theology Institute based in Abuja. I apply most of the skills I learnt during the training. This has been helpful to work with the staff and students who enrolled in the Institute from all walks of life. The programme is established to train religious and lay faithful who have a sincere quest in faith seeking understanding. The Institute is open for Catholics especially, religious, catchiest, leaders of pious societies, pastoral workers and all other members who have no knowledge about theology.

My work as the coordinator includes working out the modality of admitting the students, defining the requirement, advertising and sending out fliers for interested candidates. Recruiting of staff is done in collaboration with the Missionaries of St. Paul priest here in Abuja.

This is achievable because of the acquired knowledge in the SLDI administrative programme.

Hence the training has been of tremendous help to me. It has built my working relationship with the staff and students. I can now manage my time well and have been able to teach others too in time management and teamwork. This would in turn assist the student, when in one way or the other appoints to hold any position in the church or in the society. As prospective leaders, they will have confidence in themselves; work in collaboration with others, able to manage their time in their workplace and family. Attentive listening was not left out as good counselors



to be. Also was the ability to understanding, and attend to the need of others. They are made to understand that, leadership is a selfless service. Ready to give out time, energy for the good and progress of the organization.

The students are few; because the awareness has not been created that lay people can study theology.

On this note, the management, staff and students of HVM theology institute cannot forget the benefit obtain from ASEC/ SLDI.

**Sr. Ndifreke M. Asuquo, Congregation of Sisters, Home Visitors of Mary, Nigeria, SLDI Alumna**

**Education is Power**

This article is the true testimony of one who has seen the light; one who has used the opportunity provided by this program to not only grow but also to empower others.

Upon attending the very timely (indeed God-sent) Administration and finance course, I came to the realization that truly knowledge is power. For many years, I and my fellow Sisters in administration of the local Health Centre had suffered exploitation and fleeing from our local banks whenever we made fixed deposits in the hope of making seem profit from the interest accrued.

Needless to say, just like many naive citizens, we had no idea that one could negotiate with banks on the terms of deposit. The rate was always fixed at between 1.35 and 3.35 percent. The teller's perennial reply to my concern that this was too much would be, Sorry Sister, these rates are not set here; we are following orders."

To my immense relief, the Administration course taught me that it is possible to negotiate and adjust to a convenient rate. I learnt that it is even possible to challenge the banks whenever I felt that I was not fairly treated as far as the rates were concerned! My reaction to this new information was akin to utter disbelief and I assumed a "wait and see" attitude, till I next went to the bank for a fixed deposit account negotiation.

**Sr. Annunciata Mwikali Kiio, SLDI Alumnae, Kenya**

**Educated. Inspired. Transformed.**

**An article published in the CUEA graduation booklet about Sr. Lydia Wanjiku, HESA Alumna and ASEC Programs Coordinator – Kenya**

*"Personal transformation can and does have global effects. As we go, so goes the world, for the world is us".  
Marianne Williamson*

Sr. Lydia Wanjiku Wachira graduates today with a Bachelor of Commerce (Finance option). A beneficiary of the partnership between ASEC and CUEA, she has since been recruited by ASEC as its Coordinator for Kenya.

She describes the Catholic University as a unique institution, which goes beyond offering high quality academics to inculcate virtue in students.

*"My two and a half years in CUEA have been exciting. I have interacted with students from different countries and in different fields of study. This has helped me grow socially. By engaging in study groups, community service activities and mentorship programs. I have achieved much in academics, sharpened my leadership skills and learnt to appreciate transboundary diversity in every sphere of life."*

Sr. Lydia says that the African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC) - CUEA partnership empowers Catholic Sisters in Africa to be effective instruments of transformation through education.

*"With a unique experience of pre-university orientation and annual reflective workshops I learnt to strike balance between academics, co-curricular activities and community life."*



# Mentorship

by Sr. Lina Wanjiku Ndung'u, SE ASEC Regional Director East & Central Africa

A renowned author by the name of Tony Dungy wrote, "Remember that mentor leadership is all about serving. Jesus said, 'For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give His life as a ransom for many' (Mark 10: 45). It becomes a life changing realization when others are able to gain from our experiences, learn from them, get influenced and even transformed without us realizing that indeed we were impacting their lives as mentors.

It is this life of "service leadership" or "mentor leadership" as Tony Dungy refers to it that inspires the lives and work of the Sisters in the SLDI and HESA program. They are nurtured in a system that trains them to serve and enlighten others through their own deeds and sharing. In their imitation of the greatest mentor known to have ever walked the earth, Jesus Christ, the Sisters seek to be the fertile soil upon which the seed fell and sprouted into a blossoming tree of blessings and transformation in their respective communities and countries.

I personally feel privileged to be a living witness to the varieties of transformative activities that are being carried out by the products of these two programs. I have traversed this beautiful region fondly referred to as "Mama Africa" (Mother Africa), and more specifically in the countries that form the Eastern and Southern region of it. I have interacted with individuals and communities that were hitherto limited in vision and who had

lost themselves in the attitude of helplessness.

In the same breadth, I have personally encountered reformed and transformed individuals who have in turn transformed the attitudes and outlooks of their fellow Africans through mentorship. This has been enabled by none other than the distinctive and self-believing graduates of the SLDI and HESA programs.

The SLDI and HESA Alumnae have sworn not to place a lid on this light that continues to illumine this beautiful continent of Africa. The Alumnae indeed know that the knowledge and skills learnt in these programs will not work well if stored in convent drawers and community chapels. Yes, the graduates always seek to transform the community, one person at a time, one village at a time, until every footpath, stream and mountain pass is witness to this empowerment Gospel. I personally thank the SLDI and HESA project for this powerful initiative that has transformed and continues to transform Africa. May all these efforts be for the greatest glory of God.



## Everyone is a Mentor: My experience of Mentoring

**Sr. Clare Abisola Adelakun, DHS, ASEC Programs Coordinator, Nigeria**

My training at ASEC/SLDI gave me more confidence in relating to people, the joy and freedom of mentoring.

A mentor is someone who accompanies, someone who groom, who steps down, and who guides to the right path with a clear conscience. Mentoring is like a habit which we exhibit every time, in our relationship with others, it is passing onto others whatever you have in your consciousness. I see mentoring as part of the core values of a woman religious, trying to share the little she has in love and in all sincerity. It is having the same task to be accomplished through the effort of people working together and having harmonious cooperative unit.

This attitude of mentoring is helping to have rich experiences for efficient performance through great listening and patience to the other. To mentor goes with freedom and not by compulsion with committed partners and this has led to experience the spirit of collective responsibility. Working hand in hand and to reach the

target decision on a continuing mission with common goals and objectives.

It has helped me to develop better confidence, courage and ability to withstand and cope with stage fright. Through mentoring also, God has blessed me with many good friends who are able to express and share their hidden stories, this has made me to develop more trust in Gods people around me.

Mentoring has no age group; it has been open to all irrespective of class, it has made me to see beyond myself, to be available to people's need, no matter the time it comes and from who which is in line with my religious calling.

The heart does not forget the good work that the initiators and sponsors of ASEC/SLDI/HESA is doing in the life of African Women Religious, I pray and I strongly believe that God will pour his blessings on you all. May God renew your vigor and strength always. Amen.

## The ripple effects of mentorship.

**Sr. Janet Aguorumba, The Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus, SLDI Alumna, Cameroon**

As the chain of mentoring in the ASEC/SLDI bulges, an unimaginable combination is drawn into the ASEC/SLDI web with amazing impacts in the aspects of evangelization and human capacity building.

### MENTORED BY ASEC/SLDI TUTORS

As one of the supposed fortunate pioneers of the Administrative Track, the program through her tutors has empowered me with some life-building-skills. These were particularly in such fields as

- Productive leadership
- Improved competencies for dealing with people
- Improved capacities for managing human and material resources
- Strategies for effective planning
- Skills for effective facilitation, proposal writing and much more
- Basic ICT skills, of course, not left out.

The end of the first phase of the program launched me into a situation where implementation of Human Resource Management skills was highly needed. With all gusto, a blend of my residuals and newly-acquired was preferred. And, of course, some fulfillment accompanied such moments. Some of naturally – endowed skills in me had, before then, sought expression without success for want of courage. These, with the impact of ASEC/SLDI tutorials and a grounded touch by the Scholastic Program of my religious family, eventually budded in readiness for bloom. One such aspects is the facilitation skill. My debut in this art met a success I never imagined. The compliments that flowed in astounded me.

As willed by God and being honoured with an invitation for more of this sort by my Congregation – The Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus – for an intensive and heavily-packed enrichment of some other dimension, all to the greater glory of God and geared

towards a more fruitful ministry.

### MENTORED AS AN ASEC/SLDI MENTEE

Just as a bee would often return to its source of nectar, so also did a coincidence of my need for a mentor on Finance issues meet with the need for a mentee on the part of an ASEC/SLDI participant. This need of mine which was a consequence of a drift into a familiar field of apostolate in a domain which adopts principles different from what I knew, created some anxieties. This was quelled by the mentoring activities which ensued. What more? The needed confidence was gained and our longings satisfied.

### MENTORED BY A FELLOW MENTEE

The meeting of all mentors and mentees in January 2016 offered the opportunity of listening to the shared experiences of the mentees. This was really interesting as the mentees comprised a mixed group – Consecrated persons and lay faithful, Catholics and non-Catholics, male and female, lettered and unlettered. From the shared experiences, the impact was predominantly in the moral, social and professional aspects. Much of the expressions from the mentees were that of appreciation. Closer interactions with some of the mentees opened up vistas for cross-fertilization of more ideas and knowledge; hence furthering the mentoring activities on other pertinent issues.

### THE GLOBAL RESULTS

By my reckoning, the chain of the ASEC/SLDI has been widening, the results fruitful, and the success immense. Glory be to God who inspired the idea of the ASEC/SLDI program in the mind of its initiators. A million thanks to the Sisters who offered their goodwill and resources for the good of others. And finally, kudos to all the ASEC/SLDI Coordinators wherever they may be.

**Over 1,600 SLDI individual mentees were reported in 2016.**

## Sisters who graduate from SLDI are expected to mentor at least 3 other sisters, and in doing so they utilize their newly acquired leadership skills.



**SLDI ALUMNAE:** Nearly \$9.7 M

**SLDI MENTEES:** Over \$353,000

**SLDI Alumnae and their mentees, raised over \$10M for projects focused on areas of human development and social impact, highlighting the indirect ripple effect SLDI has in African communities.**

**83%** OF MENTEES ARE **SHARING** THEIR KNOWLEDGE

In 2016, Sisters reported mentoring over 20,000 people individually, in groups, and through trainings.

In 2016 reporting, 82.8% of mentees went on to share what they learned with others in their congregations, workplaces, and communities.

**NEARLY 2,000 JOBS CREATED**

**NEARLY 1.7 M INDIVIDUALS SERVED**

# Sisters offer thanks and appreciation for the benefit of ASEC'S Programs, praising the impact of education in their own lives, in their congregations and in their local communities.

## CAMEROON

### I've conquered by dislike of technology

*"Gratitude is a debt which ought to be paid, but which none has the right to expect."*

It was on the 7th August, 2016 that I found myself at the pastoral centre of the Arch Diocese of Bamenda as one of the privileged chosen to take part in the Basic Computer course (an ASEC program) at the Catholic University of Cameroon Bamenda.

I went in for this course out of obedience to my superiors because I didn't like Technology at all. Our facilitator, Mr. Itoe Emmanuel from the PAN AFRICAN INSTITUTE of Buea, began by asking our expectations from the course. While others expressed all that they desired to learn, I told him that I had a serious phobia for Technology and I desire to overcome it by the end of the course. He assured me that I will, so I believed.

He led us systematically from the definition of a computer through computer peripherals, Operating Systems, Applications, Microsoft Office word, input of data into the computer, formatting and editing, saving data in the computer or in a peripheral device, data protection, viruses, types of Antivirus, scanning, networks, creating accounts, carryout research on the net, mail merge, Microsoft publisher and Microsoft Power Point just to mention highlights. This was done during the first three weeks. The last week was facilitated by Mr. Ngwa Joseph. He handled Microsoft Excel and Online collaboration.

These facilitators were excellent. I can't but express my gratitude to the initiators of ASEC, coordinator of ASEC Cameroon, our facilitators and my community for giving me this golden opportunity to update myself for the efficiency of my mission.

This knowledge equips me for my apostolate. I, being a teacher, can now effectively carryout research on the net, calculate my Examination marks in Excel, produce Christmas cards with the pupils in Publisher and I have presented a talk on "commitment" for the Altar servers of Nepha parish in Bafoussam using power point. This was my first implementation of the knowledge received. This is the best way I can express my gratitude.

**Sr. Mbah Mairo, Cameroon**



### The work I used to spend a week to do, I can finish in a day or two

When I was given some forms to fill and attend a training on Finance in 2014, I simply said to myself, "Another trap to find out who is disobedient. But this time around, I won't be part of it". Like an obedient religious, I simply filled the forms, returned them to my Superior while grumbling, "Can't she see that I have much work in school? Why must I be the one to attend this so called ASEC course? What happens to my accounts back in school in my absence?" Well, this is religious life.

**Little did I know that by the end of it, the work I used to spend a week to do, would now be done in a day or two.** My whole notion of bookkeeping would change. The accounts which I couldn't present without spending at least a week for understanding and rehearsal would now be done in few hours. The financial presentation which used to raise a lot of questions would become so simple and straightforward. I couldn't just comprehend this transformation. ASEC Oyeeee! Gone are the days!

**Few months after the Finance course, I was appointed Bursar General of my Congregation.** I had very little fear because I was beginning to have confidence in myself as far as working with finances was concerned. I have been handling the bursary for two years now and I feel so satisfied with my financial accountability. My whole approach to work has taken a different turn. I really enjoy my work. Gone are the days when I feared working with finances. ASEC Oyeeee!

**I was given another opportunity in July 2016 to participate in the course on Web Design. I must say, this is the best thing that ever happened to me.** I was able to create a website for one of our schools. I have become an expert in photo editing and designing. With the much I have learned from ASEC, I really wish God could double the number of hours per day. I see so much that needs to be done and I'm also bent on teaching as many Sisters as possible so that together we shall get somewhere. Gone are the days when we paid huge sums of money so our websites and nothing or very little was done to our satisfaction. ASEC Oyeee!

To the right is an edited picture of mine. Looking at it, one would think I put on glasses, but no; it's just a sticker which I put there. I can really do much, thanks to ASEC.

I remain grateful to all our benefactors and promise to use this knowledge to the best of my ability.

**Sr. Vera Ndifofo, Cameroon**



## Appreciating Religious Women from Other Congregations

It is closely a year since I wore the graduation robe, walked across the stage and was recognized as ASEC/SLDI Alumna. I feel strongly to yell and trumpet the unmeasurable deeds the ASEC/SLDI has done to me as an individual and why not the eighty religious women which the above mentioned program has done in our lives. This program has bragged those who so far have been privileged to be part of it.

Without any exaggeration, this program has made me a woman of great substance. I remain indebted to the initiators of this program. Their timid and humble beginnings have brought light, enlightenment and reawaken some insights to those of us who have been privileged to be beneficiaries of their inspirations. I wish to acknowledge and to confirm that their inspiration was inspired by the Divine Himself. "Did none of them decide to return and give praise to God, but this foreigner? (Luke 17:18).

One of the great things this program has done in my life is that I have come to appreciate, understand and embrace many religious women from different Congregations as we study together. This act is fulfilling the prayer of Jesus Christ, "... So that they may be one, as we also are."(John 17:11). My understanding and appreciation have come to light because of the closeness we expressed and experienced working together.

On behalf of the beneficiaries of this program, I wish to express my deep and profound gratitude to the initiators and to the coordinators of this program. Your tireless efforts are greatly appreciated and relentless prayers are offered on your behalf.

**Sr. Virgilia B. Zamah, Cameroon, SLDI Finance Alumna**

### I left school more than 25 years ago but I believed in myself



I am one of the pioneer's of African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC) and Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI) Project Directors Track (2007-2009) respectively.

After a successful graduation in 2009, the Alumnae meet every year at the Pastoral Centre in Kumasi to share ideas and plan the way forward.

#### THE GOOD NEWS:

It was at one of our meetings that the Director for Ghana, Sr. Francisca Damoah, SIJ, hinted us of the Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA) programme and that HESA and ASEC have signed a Framework of Reference (FOR) with Catholic University College of Ghana, Fiapre-Sunyani, in the Brong-Ahafo Region for Sisters to undertake Degree Programmes on sponsorship in Education and Economics and Business Administration (EBA). It was a mixed feeling as Sisters expressed appreciation to the Conrad N. Hilton Fund for Sisters, initiators, Directors, and Benefactors of the Programme to provide educational opportunities and each participant was presented with a laptop, pen drives, and mouse among others. While in the wonderland, others expressed their inability to study due to age. But I looked at the opportunity as a "Dream Come True".

I read an article in a Mirror - Ghanaian Newspaper Captioned: "Man, 71, Graduate with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Administration at the Methodist University of Ghana". Then I said to myself: "I can also make it. I am still in active service and I took the challenge to do the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with Management as my specialization. I left secondary school more than twenty five (25) years ago but I believed in myself.

*"One of the great things this program has done in my life is that I have come to appreciate, understand and embrace many religious women from different Congregations as we study together."*

## GHANA

Last year in August 2015, I was admitted into level 100 and currently in level 200. Currently I am doing a summer programme which will qualify me to be in level 300 in September this year.

Some of the programme of study include:

Introduction to Mathematics, Introduction to Business, Science and Technology, Academic Writing 1 and II, among others. Currently my programme of study includes:

Philosophy, African Studies, Principles of Accounting I and II, Principles of Economics I and II, Management, International Institutions, Business Communication, Statistics among others.

The lecturers are very good, dedicated and lessons are understandable. I offer advice and share my experiences with my classmates. They teach me and I also teach me.

It has not been easy but I am doing my best to make ASEC/SLDI/ HESA stand tall among the list. With the experience I have had, after my education, I can offer my services to wherever I may be needed. Currently, I have mentored one young man who is currently the Chaplaincy Assistant of the University for which through our studies has written a nice paper on Leadership and Change: the Christian Perspective.

I conclude with Philippians 4:13 "There is nothing I cannot master with the help of the One who gives me strength." We express our appreciation for the opportunity given to us to study. Long live Ghana! Long Live Africa!! Long live U.S.A!!

**Sr. Ruth A. Mensah, Sister of the Handmaids of the Divine Redeemer, Ghana, SLDI Alumna, HESA student, Project Directors Track**

## MALAWI



### SLDI training helped me be a better Lay Apostolate Coordinator

Before and after attending this programme of SLDI I have held the position of Diocesan Lay Apostolate Coordinator in the Diocese of Karonga in Malawi, looking after 10,000 lay

people who are in Movements. I was assigned this position without training, which meant training on the job facing a number of challenges in the learning process. This is not the case though after the training. Now I know what I am supposed to do or not. I am working confidently and effectively.

I participated effectively in the development of the strategic plan of the Diocese because it was done during the time when we were learning how to develop strategic plan. I am able to plan the activities of all Lay Movement members professionally and share it to all stakeholders through email, WhatsApp and other means due to the knowledge that I have gained through the same programme. This has helped in publicising the activities of the Lay Apostolate Office, and it has also helped us to build good relationship with our stakeholders since we all know the what, where, how, when etc of the activity ahead of us.

Now I am confidently helping the Lay Movement members to know and understand their calling and being able to respond to their call so as to live a happy life here on Earth and attain their goal which is to see the face of God after this life. This is all because of the help that I have been given through this programme.

Thanks a lot I really appreciate.

**Sr. Victoria Zimba, Malawi, 2015 SLDI Alumna**

### Gained Knowledge through SLDI

As one of the first African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC) graduates I have numerous benefits emanating from the course to share with you but will highlight just a few of them.



To begin with at personal level, I have adjusted considerably in my attitude towards all issues surrounding my life while self-esteem has positively edged on; all this is due to knowledge and experience gained from the training. Tasks are performed within allotted time to improve efficiency like teaching, Boarding Mistress duties and being a Master's student.

Secondly I am determined and informed when executing different duties which include teaching and some related assignments while at the same time pursuing post graduate studies at Catholic University sponsored by ASEC. In conflict management, as a Boarding Mistress, I handle effectively day-to-day issues concerning girls' welfare at school. This used to be an insurmountable challenge before but with the training I went through, it is no longer the case. I have the skills to source bursaries for students and effectively distribute them.

Thirdly, just a year after becoming an ASEC graduate, work mates have equally benefited from knowledge gained from the training through interactions and coaching, among others, how to handle various cases concerning girls who are facing different challenges and general administrative issues are dealt with promptly.

Lastly, lessons learnt from ASEC transcend from personal, workplace levels and fellow workers alike which points to the relevance of the programme. I will continue to replicate what I learnt during ASEC at my workplace.

**Sr. P. Chagomerana, Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Malawi, SLDI Alumna**

## UGANDA

### SLDI has opened many avenues

Since then I have been given chances in my Congregation to serve in different ministries using the skills that I have acquired in the programme. I am on the executive Committee of SLDI Alumni in Uganda. In February 2016, I was appointed Assistance the General Secretary of the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU). In this position, I am happy to continue utilizing and developing my skills in project writing, administration, monitoring and making evaluations. The programme has opened to me other avenues;

- It has given me a closer communication with the universal Mother church.
- An increased interconnectedness with fellow religious world over. This is a very is a enriching experience socially and spiritually
- I have access to digital evangelization; a number of resources are on the internet making a significant contribution to my spiritual reading of the bible, divine office, reading of the day with reflections and many church documents.
- Being computer literate trend has put me in position to assist to my fellow sisters who are inadequate in these skills.
- With the computer I can easily and safely keep my records and those of the office.
- It is an easy means to disseminate information to a big number of people.
- It is of great value and help in preparing my talks and educational exercises.

I am grateful to my superiors, our donors in USA who are sponsoring these programs.

**Sr. Angela Nambi Nakitende, Sisters of Mary Reparatrix, Uganda, 2008-2009 SLDI Leadership Alumna**

### Thank you ASEC I can now make calculations

I am grateful to the founders of ASEC for starting programs to empower Sisters in Africa with skills of leadership. I am one of the sisters have profited from programs of Sisters Leadership Development Initiative where I studied administration and now I have been given a chance to join University of Kisubi to study for a Bachelors in Business Administration and Management under the HESA program. I am now in the third and final year of my study.

It is amazing! Before joining HESA program, I was a secretary, so when I was recruited to study a degree in Business Administration and Management my worry was "business calculations" because many years had passed since I studied mathematics in secondary school. I did not know where to begin, but as time went on, step by step, with the help of the professors, I started getting some formulas in the second semester of the first year. Slowly by slowly light came as the lecturers continued to explain to us what was difficult. I joined group discussions also to enable me to understand more.



I am happy that now I can make calculations on my own and I love the course. I have discovered course has many benefits now I have learnt accountancy, procurement, Human resource management and entrepreneurship. At the end of the course I plan to use us the knowledge to begin projects for our Congregation and work to development and improve on the existing ones and make them more profitable.

I am grateful to the Director and the administrators of ASEC for this opportunity and for the good work they are doing for the sisters in Africa. May God bless you all!

**Sr. Rose Kyomugisha, Sisters of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mbarara, Uganda, HESA Student, University of Kisubi**

## NIGERIA

### Empowered each day by the courses I'm taking



I cannot re-read my life experiences without recalling the great work ASEC is contributing to the life of African Women Religious academically and how I am benefiting from their support. However, I am being empowered each day from the courses I am undergoing in order to acquire more knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and become competent to teach and impart

knowledge on others especially the young ones presently and in the future. There is no doubt that education is one of the most critical areas of empowerment of which ASEC has taken up this challenge to contributing to the education of African Women Religious. I have indeed benefited a lot from what I have learned so far in the ongoing HESA Online program with the Chestnut Hills College and I know that more awaits me as I move forward in

my studies to become better academically.

In this way, ASEC knows how salient education is in our desperate world of today where we yearn to have more competent and God fearing teachers who will tirelessly contribute to the growth of the young ones in our broken world. I am growing each day in the immense contribution of ASEC support towards empowering me to learn beyond just reading and writing. Thanks a lot to ASEC for their support both in cash and kind and for being zealous to continue in the good works they have begun. May the Lord who made the universe and holds it in existence uphold and sustain the managements and grant your good hearts desires.

Long Live Africa!!! Long live ASEC!!!

**Sr. Judith Okafor, DHS, Nigeria, HESA Student, Chestnut Hill College**

### Thank you founders of ASEC

Thank you for bridging the gap, educating your fellow sisters in Uganda and beyond to give the best for the transformation of Africa.

I remember this was the dream when we gathered from 26th to 30th September, 2004 in Pennsylvania, United States of America. If I remember well, it was then that ASEC was launched. Today after 17 years of ASEC existence, I have seen many young sisters changed by knowledge and skills acquired through ASEC training at ARU Secretariat, Uganda. As Superior General of my own Congregation, I also witnessed sisters teaching me how to keep financial records and proper financial management, as they reported to me after returning from the training. The program as a whole has given knowledge, confidence and skills to the sisters to run projects that involve money, planning, implementation and evaluation.



Having witnessed the birth of ASEC while I was Secretary General of Association of Religious in Uganda, You can imagine the joy that I carry as I watch and see ASEC programs grow and expand making impact of effectiveness and fruitful service rendered by sisters. These sisters are skillfully equipped with Computer, Administration, and Financial Skills that empowered them to give quality service. The Daughters of Our Lady of Fatima who graduated last year are a great gift in the ministries they do in Kabale Diocese and other places; they generously serve in Schools, Hospitals, Health units, Bookshops and Book Centers. The acquired skills make their work easier.

Thank you for the great dream of raising the African sisters and placing them on forefront of society equipped with modern skills to transform themselves, their communities and the societies in which they live and serve.

I rejoice with you again upon the dream that has liberated the sisters, to work with plans, implement decisions and evaluate goals. This new approach to service comes with changed minds that is more disciplined and productive; This brings about effective service.

Thank you again and again, for your commitment, marked with zeal, rooted in a vision for social and economic transformation of our beloved Continent. Yours has been a creative and holistic way of missionary thrust for development of Africa by Africans themselves.

**Sr. Mary Mukanyangezi, Commissioner - Daughters of Our Lady of Fatima, Uganda, SLDI alumnae**

### My gratitude for the opportunity to gain a formal education

Concern sees the problem, while compassion says, "I just can't let that happen to my Sister or Brother." Thanks to Hilton Foundation who thought it wise to educate African religious women, May God reward you abundantly. My gratitude goes to all our coordinators for the noble work done, without you the intention of Hilton would remain a pipe dream. Thanks to my Sisters in the Grail for giving me a go ahead.

I am in my final year of first Degree in Social work at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. My experience at CUEA as a social work student has increased my zeal of advocating for voiceless and be more merciful especially to the less privileged. How I wish everybody could be a social worker adding on their specialization!

On the other hand, life has gotten hills and valleys, nevertheless, I am determined and inspired to forge ahead with confidence and solidarity in my mission of helping people to help themselves, so as to bring about change in the society.

**Sr. Florence Asiimwe, The Grail Community, Uganda, HESA student at CUEA**

### My experience has improved the Asili Girls' Vocational Senior Secondary School

My gratitude goes to Hilton Foundation, ASEC and all the program coordinators for making it possible for us African Sisters to have some skill to uplift our own communities and the people we serve.

I tried a lot of possibilities after my course to find a way of implementing what I gained in the finance track, to give meaning to my community in and out, and the people around me. The SLDI Finance course I attended has helped me improve on the following;

St. Charles Lwanga primary school has improved on accounting especially on saving. Money was always spent anyhow, but now it has to be banked and then withdrawn when it is needed. This has happened as a result of training the school bursar.

We are also able to make budgets and follow them as a school.

The training I gave made the staff members of St. Charles Lwanga primary school has improved on the code of conduct, whereby they set their own core values and are able to follow them without being supervised.

Managing the finances of the community in which I say is a sign of a great work ASEC is doing in us.

**Sr. Marriet Kobuyambi, The Grail Community, Uganda, SLDI alumnae**



### ASEC programs a timely intervention

I will always remain grateful to the almighty God who has inspired this collaboration between Afro-American sisterhoods. It came in timely when sisters needed renewed strength or rejuvenation. It offers one of the best platforms for reshaping the destiny of the religious women.

It is a great joy to be part of ASEC's implementing arm. I'm indebted to Sr. Jane Wakahiu the Executive Director of ASEC for the trust of choosing me to be one of the instructors of ASEC program. I'm also happy to share the fact that, I'm a mentee who benefited from two mentors that is Sr. Mary Germina Keneema who boosted my Computer knowledge and Sr. Jane Rose Dropia who guided me in project management.

The principles of Project Management have helped me to run small projects with confidence and determination. I have always established higher goals in life and look forward join "donors club". This exposure has encouraged me to be fearless and join risk-taker's camp since success is not about perfection but the number of mistakes that offer learning opportunities.

As Instructor, I have loved the national platform this program has offered to the sisters. The long term barriers that existed between/among congregations are being overcome by fluid interaction and sisterly love and relationship, regardless of regions and congregation of origin.

The ASEC programs have also offered opportunity of exposure to the consecrated women. As much as many sisters have been blessed with educational opportunities, exposure has always remained a problem to be tackled being members of Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI). Identifying and talking about an issue is equal to solving the problem in question.

Knowingly or unknowingly, the sisters were influenced by the societal and cultural norm that offer women back seat. Many of



Participants of the Basic Technology Workshop with their facilitators at ARU Secretariat in July 2016

us confused these cultural issues with the virtue of humility yet these are completely parallel! I will continue to argue that humility does not mean submissiveness, lack of initiative, abandonment, taking back seat, keeping a low profile, being less assertive. But rather the truth about whom we are. Are we more or less talented? The most important thing is to accept oneself. Keep balanced at all times and remain positive when things go wrong because God 'writes straight' on crooked path.

I personally enjoyed the simplicity, intelligence and eagerness of the sisters to learn in order to make the world a better place for living and celebrating life in all aspects. The sisters also displayed a lot of sense of humor. We exchanged smiles and laughter on corridors dining and elsewhere.

There were also opportunities of learning from one another, sharing experiences, challenges and words of encouragement apart from the academic forum. May the Lord who inspired our sisters continue to guide and strengthen us all-Amen!

**Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru, Uganda**

### 2016 Board of Directors

Sr. Carol Jean Vale, SSJ (Board Chair), Chestnut Hill College

Mary Ann Buckley, SHCJ, Society of the Holy Child Jesus

Sr. Kathryn Doherty, OSF, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia

Sharon Hirsh, Ph.D. (Board Vice-Chair), Rosemont College

Sr. Ellen Maroney, IHM, Sisters of IHM

Rosalie M. Mirenda, Ph.D., Neumann University

Sr. Anne Myers, SSJ, Sisters of St. Joseph of Philadelphia

Sr. Mary Persico, IHM, Marywood University

Brigid Blake, MA

Jane Farr, Ph.D.

\*Margaret Gannon, IHM

Sr. Florence Hee, OSF, Ph.D.

\*Sr. Mary Anne Heenan, CSJ

Sr. Marijane Hresko, OSF, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia

Carol Ann Knight, SHCJ

Marie T. McCormick, MBA, Ph.D.

\*Kathryn Miller, SSJ, Ph.D.

Sr. Florence Nwaonuma

Sr. Anna Mary Henrietta Nyangoma, ESM

\*Pius Ojara, PhD

Terri Peters, Ph.D.

\*Barbara Spears, SNJM

Sr. Jane Wakahiu, LSOSF, Ph.D.

\*Welcome to our newest Board Members

### Associate Members

Sr. Mary Anne Heenan, CSJ, Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, Albany Latham, NY

Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., DePaul University Chicago, IL

Sr. Louise Lears, S.C., Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati Mount St. Joseph, OH

Please welcome ASEC's newest Associate Member: Dr. William J. Lennox, Jr., St. Leo University Saint Leo, FL

TANZANIA

A vote of thanks for my HESA sponsorship



The Swahili proverb says "Ukiona vyaelea vimeundwa" This means anything seems in the world should be created by same one else. Therefore I feel proud because I understand that I look as I'am, because there are same ones who made me. The first same one is God the creator of each and every thing, who created me, from His Love. My parents, relatives and teachers whom has been disturbed in molding my behavior. And let me be accepted in the society

More thanks to African sisters Education collaborative (ASEC) staff, HESA department and Funders for the whole program for you have helped me a lot to perform my duty with confidence. So I in a special way I would like to express my gratitude to African sisters Educational collaborative (ASEC) for sponsoring my studies since 2007 when I attended SLDI a ten week course of Leadership and management for Administrators, which the content taught were Strategic leadership, marketing and Advocacy, Human and Resource management, Ethical leadership, Team building and Strategic plan. Through this course I got different skills which enabling me to perform my daily activities professionally.

Immeasurably thank you for sponsoring my studies for three years at St Augustine University where I scored the first degree of Education under HESA sponsorship with other 7 sisters from Tanzania. Personally the skills I got there now are useful in performing my duty as a Headmistress of St. Mary's secondary school at Mpanda Diocese. Now I have 337 students. Where 134 are boys and 205 are girls. May God bless you all, and your most welcome to our graduation which will be called on sixteenth December two thousand sixteen (16/12/2016). Thank a lot

**Sr. Pelagia Chimpa, Headmistress of Sr. Mary's Secondary School, Mpanda Diocese, Tanzania**

Without ASEC, TCAS would not have reached this far

Having been one year as a Chairperson of Tanzania Catholic Association of Sisters (TCAS) I have enjoyed seeing how happy the sisters from different Congregations especially those who had the opportunity to attend and accomplish different courses offered by the African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC).



I remember the ceremony of 95 SLDI sisters who graduated after completing their various programs such as computers courses, Finance and Administration.

As they gathered together I could hear one sister saying "oh! Thanks to our donors (ASEC) that even me I am going to have the diploma and I know how to work with computers".

I could see the expressions on their faces, how happy they were while sharing their difference experiences among themselves.

Apart from this, in our Congregation we are witness positive impact as the sisters performing their ministry successively with confident and professionally.



I would like to express my sincerely gratitude to the ASEC members for the great effort that are making for us here in Africa-Tanzania

specifically in educating our sisters in different fields. May God bless you for sacrificing your time and pushing yourself to reach us at our marginalized Regions in Tanzania and Africa at large.

"Empowering the consecrated women educationally, is to make them efficiently and effectively in fulfilling their daily ministry in the society".

We superior General in Tanzania we are appreciating the golden chance of the SLDI one week workshop that you sponsored in February, 2016. You developed our awareness of SLDI programs that our sisters have been benefiting from 2009 to date.

Currently we can have good choices of candidate qualifies to join SLDI courses.

Thank you for all ASEC programs that you are sponsoring for our Congregations such as SLDI, HESA, Two years Programs, Bigwa High School and Alumnae programs.

For me personally I would say, "without ASEC, TCAS would not have reached this far, with much appreciation for what we have received let us join our hands in solidarity in the continuation in educating the consecrated women in Tanzania - and these are believed to be the mothers of the society and mankind at large.

**Sr. Gaspara Kashamba (COLU), Tanzania Catholic Association of Sisters (TCAS), Chairperson in Tanzania**

My first year serving on the ASEC board



It has been my privilege this year to begin serving on the ASEC Board and the Albany Province of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet is pleased to be an Associate Member. Our province mission statement proclaims that we witness to the Gospel message by being a unifying and reconciling presence to a world in need. Our 2013

Chapter called us to be open to new ways of partnering and strengthening mutuality to better understand and carry out our mission. The opportunity to partner with ASEC is a unique opportunity to respond to this call.

The wonderful work of this organization is not new to our community as one of our members, Sister Mary Salvaterra, CSJ, has been teaching in the ASEC programs. Sister Mary has often spoken of what a marvelous experience this has been for her and how much she has learned through her participation. As a new board member, my knowledge and understanding of the depth and breadth of the impact of ASEC programs has dramatically increased. The access to higher education and leadership development that ASEC provides have far reaching effects in the lives of the several thousand participating sisters from African Countries who benefit and also in the many whose lives they touch through their ministries.

Our world is desperately in need of knowledgeable, committed individuals who lead with integrity and genuine concern for others. In my brief experience on the board, the core values of collaboration, empowerment, leadership, service, capacity building and respect are exemplified in the board itself. The rich diversity of experiences, cultures and gifts present in the members empowers and enriches us all. I am pleased to add my efforts to theirs to help spread the word about, build support for and plan for a sustainable and strong future for ASEC and its programs. **Sr. Mary Anne Heenan, CSJ**

Thank you to Sr. Anne Munley

ASEC wishes to thank Sr. Anne Munley, IHM, for her years of devotion and contributions. She played a vital part in the work of ASEC and the growth of the programs. Sr. Anne finished her tenure as President of Marywood in June 2016.

ASEC Board Retreat

To continue cementing collaboration and leading ASEC from the front, ASEC Board of Directors held a retreat at Chestnut Hill Sugarloaf campus (July, 2016).



Returning to ASEC



It has been many years now since the beginnings of ASEC. I remember the conversations and early meetings and the dreams of what could be! The early pioneers, leaders of the four founding Congregations and their respective institutions of higher education, traveled the turnpike between Philadelphia and Scranton and plotted endlessly their plan of action. At times it seemed far-fetched and perhaps a bit too ambitious. Before long, our pioneer Sisters from several African countries began to connect with their American counterparts and the journeys soon extended beyond the Pennsylvania Turnpike to Tanzania, Nigerian, Ghana, Zambia and Kenya. In 1999 when it all began, I was fortunate enough to be an interested by-stander and by 2002 became a member of the ASEC Board. Our greatest partner was the Conrad N.Hilton Foundation for Sisters, who somehow believed in us and invested their resources into what some might have called a pipe dream.

The words and plans and dreams became a magnificent reality for me when in 2009, I had the privilege of traveling to Nigeria to participate as an instructor in the summer leadership program. There is no question that I received so much more than I may have given. The twenty young women religious with whom I worked, leaders in their own right, were midwives and teachers, nurses and social workers. They had their own dreams for their good people, oppressed by the government in a country torn apart by civil discord. Today, those twenty women are among the 1600 others who received training in technology, finance, and leadership in the SLDI program. In truth, it would be almost impossible to imagine or calculate the positive impact they have had not only in their small part of the world but across a global landscape. It has taught me a great lesson that vast systemic change can rise from a pipe dream.

In 2010, I left ASEC to pursue a new ministry for several years. I was proud that ASEC was a part of my history, both as a human being and as a woman religious. However, life is often full of surprises! Today my new ministry at Marywood has led me right back to the ASEC Board. At the September 2016 board meeting, I renewed old friendships and met new leaders, all dedicated to the mission of ASEC. In some ways nothing much had changed - the passion for partnering with our African Sisters, the commitment to developing more and better programs, the desire to bring justice to a hurting world through education - those things have not changed. What has changed is the magnitude of a human endeavor that took on a life of its own. With a new \$15,000,000 grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and the expansion from five to ten African countries, ASEC is literally changing the face of sub-Saharan Africa. Women religious, armed with the tools of peace, bring steady positive change to the lives of their people. They bring health care and social services to those most in need, especially women and children. They provide education for families who in turn become the leaders of their towns and villages. They bring compassion and the power of God's presence to the people they serve. I'm happy to be back - happy to be a part of the pipe dream!

**Sr. Mary Persico, IHM EDD, President, Marywood University**

## Like an Eagle...

**Sr. Vincenta Javier, HESA Instructor, Tangaza College, Kenya**

I first met them at the Orientation Session for the new ASEC students. They were a mixed group, perhaps only 2 were young Junior Sisters. The rest were Sisters who had come from different apostolates, carrying responsibilities in both the mission and their congregations. They were a mature group, tried and tested by their years of religious life and mission. And they were here because they wanted to learn more, to be better skilled for the work entrusted to them or that they knew was waiting for them. I listened to their stories as they introduced themselves...how they were thrown into the mission right after first vows without any training, having to handle jobs they had to learn by doing, learning from mistakes, doing the best they could.

This was a group that would take its studies very seriously because they knew what they didn't know, experienced the gaps in the competences they were supposed to have for the jobs they had to do. They knew the weighty demands of the mission faced with the needs of their people...whether in remote areas or among the poor, with the women, the youth, or the children, the abandoned, the disabled, the sick.

So, when they were doing their goal setting, it was no surprise when they chose for their class symbol what one group presented...an eagle...but with a story...the eagle who when it ages, needs to break its beak, and cut its claws on the rocks of a mountain peak so they can grow again. Only then can it soar yet again as it did at the beginning with its fresh beak and new sharp claws, confidently flying high once more, dauntlessly gazing straight at the sun...



## ASEC in partnership with Major Superiors is filling our world with hope and making great strides in Africa

By Bright E. Biney, Ghana, ASEC/SLDI Instructor



Most Reverend Sisters across the African Continent struggle with leadership responsibilities because they are assigned with little or no formal preparation and most often from the very early stages of their religious life. They work hard, sacrifice their lives and utilise their meagre and mostly scarce resources to better the lot of the poor and marginalized in society. Due to scarcity of resources, most Rev. Sisters

were unable to build, improve and empower themselves until the establishment of ASEC/SLDI.

The institutionalization of the ASEC/SLDI Program has given hope to women religious and is in the process of building the capacity and empowering thousands of Reverend Sisters to work more efficiently and to make use of modern technology to reach out to a larger proportion of the needy and marginalized in society.

"The best way to feel hopeful is to get up and do something. Don't wait for good things to happen to you. You can only fill the world and yourself with hope if you go out and make some good things happen" – Barack Obama

ASEC/SLDI in partnership with Major Superiors, is filling our world with hope and is making great strides in Africa, currently supporting and building the capacity of women religious in as many as ten African countries of which Ghana is included.

I am privileged to have facilitated the Basic Technology Course in Ghana since 2013 and have had a lots of interactions with women religious from all parts of Africa most of whom work in deprived areas, reaching out and giving assistance to the poor and marginalized in society.

Through the ASEC/SLDI program, thousands of women religious are able to work independently, reach out and write proposals to secure funding to support their ministries and their work. Reverend Sisters who have attended such workshops have become more confident and motivated to think outside the box and undertake projects that aim at improving the standard of living for those they serve by focusing on areas where the needs are greatest.

I was touched when a Reverend Sister told me that the act of obedience always comes with a price and the feeling of fulfilment. She enrolled on the Basic Technology Course out of obedience when she was nominated by her Superior and she reluctantly presented herself for the workshop, unaware of the wonderful experiences she was missing out on. The workshop enabled her gather enough skills to advance the course of her work in her small community and now every sister on her congregation wants to be part of the ASEC/SLDI Program.

The support provided by ASEC/SLDI through the Conrad Hilton Foundation is massive, ranging from the provision of ultramodern laboratory facilities, resources for all courses offered and provision of laptops and other amenities to facilitate the work of women religious.

Women religious in our part of the world have become more enthusiastic towards their work as they are now getting the support to excel and make the needed impact. Reverend Sisters are now empowered to work to support themselves and to be in a better position to help the needy and marginalized in society.

As rightly said by Mandy Hale, "There is nothing more beautiful than someone who goes out of their way to make life beautiful for others." Thanks to ASEC/SLDI.

## My Experience as a Muslim instructor

**Safiya A. Mansoor, SLDI Finance Instructor, Nigeria**

My journey in the partnership with ASEC/SLDI as an instructor in Finance Track in Nigeria started in 2007 when I was contacted by a colleague to facilitate in the pioneer set that provided training for five (5) African countries out of which we facilitated the training in two (2) countries (Ghana & Nigeria).

As an Accountant and a facilitator of Finance training in my organization this was something I was used to. When I was contacted by the Sisters and the Program Director/Coordinator West Africa, Sister Clementina Obembe OSF, I accepted the assignment, their concern was to get a qualified Accountant with the requisite skills and experience to facilitate the Finance Track for their organization. The fact that I am a Muslim with such ability did not really matter, when I asked about the program objectives and target audience I was told the main objective was to empower women religious in Africa and that the target audience were Sisters who were either Bursars or Treasurers in their various congregations.

When we finally started the workshop, I met with ladies of beautiful minds, some had bookkeeping knowledge while others had no training on the job they were handling. It was quite challenging, balancing the teaching methodology with practical application to ensure effective learning was achieved. I realized that they needed to know the rudiments of their job been Bursars or Treasurers. The workshop included several topics ranging from Bookkeeping, Budgeting, Internal control & Auditing, as well as Communication & Interpersonal skills development amongst other topics.

From the first contact to date, I have not had a negative experience with any of my Participants, Coordinators, or visiting ASEC members on the fact that I am a Muslim instructor therefore, I should not be in their mist. Instead they have always been fascinated with the way and manner I interact with the Sisters and other instructors. The Sisters were friendly, very accommodating and outgoing, this may be a result of their training, of selfless service to humanity, they were always eager to get the best learning experience to help them in their various congregations. I suppose, I also have an advantage because of my background as a trainer and a female, interested in imparting knowledge with the ability to communicate my skills effectively to the Sisters.

I have worked with the Sisters at all periods including the Muslim fasting period, and it had never interfered with my facilitation, nor has the fact of being a Muslim affected our relationship. I remember when we travelled to Ghana to facilitate the pioneer Finance Track in 2009 my baby was about six (6) months old so I had to travel with my mother in law to assist in taking care of my baby. Low & behold, the Sisters also helped in taking care of him throughout the period of our stay in Ghana.

I also remember when we travelled to Kenya with my baby for the first meeting of all ASEC/SLDI instructors, I met Sister Jaqueline the then Executive Director ASEC, and she treated us like a mother. It was quite an enriching experience because I met instructors from other countries and they were also friendly, there was no resentment or discomfort because I am a Muslim.

I also met Sr. Jane Wakahiu, LSOSF, Executive Director, ASEC at Marywood University who is a lovely Lady and very focused on empowering women religious in Africa. I made friends from Ghana, Kenya, Cameroun, Uganda and other countries that participated in the program.

Our partnership have always been focused on the reason why we were together, which is changing the work life of the Sisters towards effectively keeping records, accounts and rendering reports as at when due.

During the crisis in Jos, Nigeria my family house was burnt down but thank God no family member was hurt, it did not stop me or my colleagues from taking part in the training at any point in time.

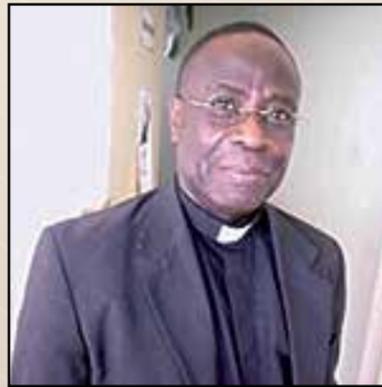
After the crisis, some Sisters who were aware of the volatility of the training venue would ask, how do you cope? And my answer was "my intention to participate in this partnership has been pure from the beginning to impart knowledge and skills and by the Grace of God He will continue to protect me." I have never regretted been a part of the partnership.

This has been my journey and experience in my partnership with ASEC/SLDI so far.

I must thank everyone that I have come in contact with over the years, I appreciate them and also appreciate my family who have supported me through my journey.

## HESA: Chestnut College and Catholic University College of Ghana's Partnership yielding Positive Results

Rev. Msgr. Dr. Stephen Ntim, Dean, Faculty of Education, Catholic University College of Ghana, Fiapre



It is almost a cliché to mention that Catholic population in Africa is on the ascendancy. The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate in June 2015 Report indicated that out of the global 57% growth in Catholic Population since 1980, African Catholic population has not only increased by 238 percent, but that this growth, is also

accompanied by increase in vocation to the priesthood and the Religious Life. Forming these agents of evangelization in Africa spiritually and intellectually, to equip them to be effective evangelizers in various areas of the Catholic apostolate cannot be underestimated. This is especially so for women Religious in Africa, where cultural traditional prejudices over the years did not favour academic formation of the girl-child. Thank God, this has changed in many parts of Africa in recent times. It is within this context, that some of us in Higher Education see the efforts of the African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC) especially its branch of Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA) as very commendable. Some two or three years back, as part of HESA's programme to expand Higher Education to African Women Religious, entered into a partnership (with a signed Memorandum of Understanding) with the Faculty of Education of the Catholic University College of Ghana, Fiapre. The first batch of women Religious students from across West Africa, especially Ghana and Nigeria did the first year online with Chesnut College in the US, after which they transferred to the Catholic University College of Ghana, Fiapre, for the on-site programme.

### Overview of Beneficiaries Academic Performance

The first batch of students who were advanced to Level 200 have just completed their first on-site academic year with the Catholic University College of Ghana. As Dean of the Faculty of Education of the University College and lecturer of these students, I have the pleasant duty, not only to inform HESA, but also their benefactors, about the overall performance of these students. Indeed, all of them are above-average students. Many of

them have cumulative grades points' average (CGPA) above 3.00 with the lowest about 2.5 CGPA. Their exposure to the on-line programme at Chestnut is also commendable in that it prepared these students for rigorous academic life in the University. These students are very highly motivated. They like to work very hard to achieve their goals. They are matured. They have the ability to grasp concepts and can undertake independent work without being supervised. I have personally taught them, and I have no doubts at all in my mind as their Dean and lecturer, that if these students continue with the same zeal and enthusiasm, there is no reason why they cannot graduate with success. Indeed, Catholic University College of Ghana, Fiapre, has a graduation history of more women religious students, compared to the other female students, graduate with FIRST CLASS, because the former are generally more determined compared with the latter. Indeed, it is my prayer that more of these beneficiaries of HESA graduate with FIRST CLASS.

### Keeping up the Good Work

Based on this, I am sending this write-up to HESA and to their benefactors to encourage them in their good work for Higher Education for African Sisters. This partnership between CHESNUT COLLEGE, and CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF GHANA, FIAPRE, is yielding positive results. Indeed, if we have to be honest and call a spade a spade, when one compares the amount of time, energy, resources that the institutional Church (dioceses, men religious congregations, etc.) put in training one priest, compared to women religious, one can see the mismatch. This becomes more challenging for women religious of diocesan origin in Africa. It is about time, that African women religious are empowered, given the necessary capacity-building and the chance to explore their highest academic potential, so that they can continue to put to use their services in our Catholic Schools and institutions of higher learning and hospitals, etc. in Africa. It is on this note that some of us see the work of ASEC and HESA as laudable and needs to be given all the encouragement and the financial support that they need.

The Faculty of Education of the Catholic University College of Ghana, Fiapre, is proud to be part of ASEC and HESA projects. We look forward to having more students from across the length and breadth of Africa from ASEC.

## Distance Learning: Bridges of Technology Grounded in Grace

Sr. Patricia Mengel, IHM



Sisters in HESA Cohort 3 to Chestnut Hill College college are pictured at orientation (July, 2016). Sr. Patricia provides instruction to the sisters through two online courses during their one-year of online study.

Global Education continues to expand at an exponential rate! As we anticipate the Fall Semester unfolding for the new academic year of 2016-2017 at Chestnut Hill College, I am gratefully aware of all that unites us with our Sisters from West Africa studying through ASEC Program and distance learning. Though the Sisters continue their ministries in parts of Cameroon, Ghana, and Nigeria – simultaneously embracing their course load and textbooks – technology bridges the thousands of miles between student and instructors who together explore what learning can reveal through common goals... and grace!

It has been a privilege for me to be a part of the ASEC Program since it began at CHC in 2013. In annual collaborative meetings with Administrative Leaders from this Program & our Campus in Philadelphia, we are reminded that the educational efforts of each cohort contributes to the overall benefit of the people served by the Sisters within their Countries and ministries. The ripple effect of these efforts seems to match the exponential growth of technology to me! Sisters continue to serve the People of God and their Communities each day, while taking up texts and syllabi after their daily work is done. These tireless energies directly strengthen their abilities to build stronger bases under healthcare, social and family issues, education, and the accompanying business concerns associated with a more hopeful future among the People of Africa.

Annually I have accompanied 15-18 Sisters in courses of Psychology and Religious Studies. Though each year the group of Sisters is unique in their geography, ministries, and educational goals – what unites us all and bridges our efforts as we learn and share is a desire to grow in the skills each of us possess. It is through this learning that we become more fully aware of who we are, are becoming, and how we are to serve the Church, the People of God, empowered by the grace grounding us all. The bridges formed by technology – and grace – decrease the miles between us and increase the global and reciprocal effects of all efforts in the ASEC Program I am privileged to be a part of through Chestnut Hill College!

Right: Uganda Martyrs University' ASEC and Uganda Martyrs University signed a Framework of Reference to deliver HESA for sisters in Uganda and the bachelor's and master's degree level, March 2016.

## Uganda Martyrs University (UMU) partners with ASEC

Sr. Dr. Speranza Namusisi (IHMR), Ag. Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs, Uganda Martyrs University

Uganda Martyrs University (UMU) is a Catholic founded, faith-based, not-for-profit private, university, established and owned by the Uganda Episcopal Conference. It opened doors to students in 1993 and received a Civil Charter on 2nd April 2005 from the government of Uganda to legitimize its existence and recognize the fact that it had attained the required university standards. It has an enrolment of 5000 students who carry on their studies in different modes, such as, Full time; Part time; and Distance Learning. This university has the main campus at Nkozi in Mpigi district 82 kilometers west of Kampala along Kampala-Masaka highway overlooking Lake Victoria; one can proudly call it a university at the equator. It operates in other different campuses including Rubaga in Kampala, Mbale in the east, Kabale in the west, and a teaching centre at Masaka. It also affiliates a number of institutions.

The University is committed to its vision, which is: "To be a university that is nationally and internationally recognized for excellence in research and the advancement of knowledge." It recognizes the present and challenging environment, proven by the emerging changes in terms of political, economic, social, technological, legal, ecological and demographic trends, which impact on the status quo of the environment and natural resources.

Basing on its slogan, "Making a Difference," The University members and alumni are encouraged to make a positive contribution to society wherever they are. The Mission of the University is to provide quality higher education, training and research for the betterment of society guided by ethical values.

UMU has been serving the church and all people of God for 23 years now. In this Endeavour to train humanity, especially the religious in Uganda, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between ASEC and UMU on 1ST March 2016. This new partnership is contributing to the education of religious sisters here in Uganda and having them study at UMU we are assured of quality. The first group to enroll was for academic year 2016/2017 for Postgraduate programmes where six sisters from different religious Institutes started courses in Master of Education and MSC IT Management.

We see this relationship strengthening Catholic education where morals and ethical values are core. Given the fact that students who graduate from UMU are easily absorbed on the job market, our sisters will be the best performers as they exhibit these values blended with their religious charisms.

It is our hope and trust that this relationship grows to heights and many more sisters be educated under this scheme. We thank ASEC for choosing to partner with UMU as we empower religious sisters through education.



# CAMEROON

# SISTERS IN ACTION



First HESA cohort in Cameroon attend orientation (October, 2016).



Signing of MOU between Rosemont College and the Catholic University of Cameroon; Bamenda 5th (July, 2016).



SLDI Participant Sr. Sylvie is excited to watch her first powerpoint presentation during the Cameroon Basic Technology Workshop (September, 2016).



Sisters Lucy and Dypna, HESA online students, during reflective learning.



Participants of the Web design of July 2016 with their facilitators Mr. Brown and Mr. Brice



Sr. Clementina facilitates the basic Computer training and helps Sr. Scholastica to understand the steps.



Orientation for HESA students from Cameroon, Ghana and Nigeria entering Rosemont College online pose for a photo with Catherine. They attended orientation in Elmina, Ghana in October 2016



Sister Mary Lucy Afful, SSL, a 2009 SLDI Graduate from Ghana, received a \$30,000 grant to initiate Clean Water Filtration Project in her community of Kumasi, Ghana. ASEC staff visited Ghana to see her project (January, 2016).

Catherine Coleman-Dickson provides instruction to HESA Sisters enrolled online at Rosemont College

# GHANA



# KENYA



Sisters in the Superior's training (October, 2016) participated in a breakout group session. The sisters reviewed an example grant application, identifying missing components. Taking on the perspective of a donor, each group discussed whether or not the group would fund the example project.



SLDI participants in Kenya participate in a web design workshop (June, 2016).



Kenyan sisters studying online at Marywood University receiving a tour of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) library during orientation (August, 2016).



Sisters attending the Catholic Sisters: Champions of Sustainable Development convening pose together for a photo.



Above: Sr. Dominica Mwila, OP asks a question during the Catholic Sisters convening proceeding held in Nairobi, Kenya (October, 2016).

Left: During a discussion led by Melanie Lidman of Global Sisters Report, Catholic Sisters discuss their role in UN sustainable development goals. Photo taken at the Catholic Sisters: Champions of Sustainable Development Convening held in Nairobi, Kenya (October, 2016).



Sisters in the Superior's training participating in a breakout group session.



Sr. Rosemarie Nassif, SSND, Ph.D., Director of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation's Catholic Sisters Initiative (center), was the keynote speaker for the graduation ceremony at CUEA (October, 2016). Here she poses with HESA graduates, ASEC directors, and Dr. Ann Rita Njageh, Deputy Director of Academic Linkages of CUEA, after the ceremony.

# LESOTHO



Sr. Agnes Thokoana from Lesotho presenting powerpoint presentation during the SLDI Finance Training Track 1 at Kalundu Study Centre.



# KENYA

Sisters from the SLDI Superiors training held at Demese Spiritual Center in Nairobi, Kenya pose together for a photo (October, 2016).



Sr. Rosemarie Nassif, SSND, Ph.D., Director of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation Catholic Sisters Initiative, conducted a site visit to the Cottolengo Centre for orphaned HIV positive children in Nairobi Kenya (March, 2016).



Sr. Maureen Malashya text books to Sr. Agnes Thokoana Lesotho during the Training at Kalundu Study Centre, Zambia

# MALAWI



SLDI participants from Malawi attending a Basic Technology workshop, February 2016



SLDI participants from Malawi attending a Basic Technology workshop, February 2016



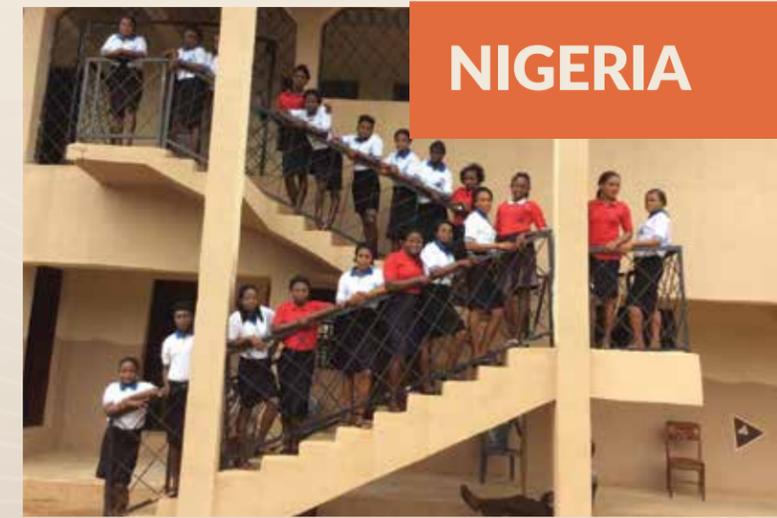
Participants of Superior's Workshop in Nigeria (January, 2016)

L-R Sr. Seliath from Zimbabwe, Sr. Lizzie, Sr. Jane in Basic Technology class

# NIGERIA



# NIGERIA



Girls Hostel in Nigeria



St. Helen's Sewing Center, Nigeria



Prepping at the Living Bread Bakery, Nigeria



Sr. Florence Nwonuma, Nigeria, discusses her congregation's poster at the convening held in Nairobi (October, 2016).



Principal teaching cake decorating, Nigeria

# SOUTH SUDAN



Sister sharing and comparing their work.



Participants print their Paint Artwork from their computers remotely to the printer



Participants learning how to network computers through remote connectivity.



Sisters and the priest in-charge of the seminary posing for a group Photo on their last day of the training.



Sisters while on their evening prayers.

# TANZANIA



Traditional site -- Mujora, Sukuma Tribe Tradition and Evangelization -- a center for generating income



Alumnae/Mentee group photo, Sr. Dominic Pastoral Centre, Mwanza (January 2016)



SLDI participants from Tanzania take a field trip to Lake Victoria and visit a Sukuma village nearby in Mwanza, Tanzania.



Tanzania sisters participating in their workshop lesson

# TANZANIA



# UGANDA



Uganda SLDI Basic Technology Class, July 2016

# UGANDA



Uganda HESA students in group discussion at the July 2016 orientation.



Sr. Kathryn Miller during project visit at Chipapa Community



# ZAMBIA



SLDI participants in Zambia pose for a group photo during their web design workshop

SLDI Administration Track participants from Zambia take a field trip to a sustainable farm



SLDI participants are excited to pass out their new books

# ZAMBIA



Zambian sisters working together during an SLDI Administration workshop.



SLDI Finance II participants from Zambia during their field trip visit to Chipapa

# PARTNERS IN AFRICA AND USA



CONRAD N. HILTON FOUNDATION  
Conrad N. Hilton FOUNDATION  
Agoura Hills, CA

The Catholic University of Malawi (CUNIMA)  
Association of Women in Religious Institutes of Malawi (AWRIM)  
Management and Organization Development Resources

Monze School Nursing Zambia  
The Zambia Catholic University (ZCU)  
Zambia Association of Sisterhoods (ZAS)  
Global Telecom

The Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA)  
Chemchemi Ya Uzima Institute  
Regina Pacis University (RPUC)  
Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya (AOSK)  
Advantech Consulting Limited  
Christian Organizations Research and Advisory Trust (CORAT)  
Enterprise Management Development Center (EMD)  
Viffar Consulting Ltd.

Catholic University of South Sudan (CUofSS)  
Religious Superiors Association of South Sudan (RSASS)

Catholic University of Health and Allied Sciences (CUHAS)  
Mwenge University College of Education (MWUCE) in Moshi  
Saint Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT)  
Tanzania Catholic Association of Sisters (TCAS)  
Water and Environment Management Consultants (WEMA)

St. Francis Hospital Nsambya Training School  
University of Kisubi (UNIK)  
Uganda Martyrs University (UMU)  
Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU)

National University of Lesotho (NUL)  
Conference of Major Superiors, Lesotho

Catholic University of Cameroon (CATUC)  
Bamenda  
Conference of English-Speaking Religious (CESR)  
Pan-African Institute for Development-West Africa (PAID-WA)

Catholic University College of Ghana (CUG)  
Holy Family Nursing and Midwifery Training College  
Ghanaian Conference of Religious (GCR)

Sacred Heart School of Nursing  
Veritas University Abuja  
Nigerian Conference of Women Religious (NCWR)  
Hobatta Globe Nigeria Limited (HGNL)

ASEC Associate Member ASEC Charter Member  
Research Initiative Partners

DePaul University, Chicago, IL  
Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, Mount St. Joseph, OH  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, Albany, NY  
Saint Leo University, Saint Leo, FL

Chestnut Hill College, Philadelphia, PA  
Sisters of Saint Joseph of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA  
Marywood University, Scranton, PA  
Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton, PA  
Neumann University, Aston, PA  
Sisters of Saint Francis of Philadelphia, Aston, PA  
Rosemont College, Rosemont, PA  
The Society of the Holy Child Jesus, Rosemont, PA

Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), Georgetown University, Washington, DC

To learn more about ASEC visit:

asec-sldi.org | facebook.com/ASEC.SLDI | twitter.com/ASECSLDIHESA