

DECEMBER 2018

ASEC



AFRICAN
SISTERS
EDUCATION
COLLABORATIVE

Rays of Hope



When Communities

Count on Sisters...

Sisters Are Counting on You

TIME CONCEALS, REVEALS!

The role of faith, time and collaboration in healing our global community

The English saying “experience is the best teacher” is remarkably similar to the wisdom imparted to me by my Ugandan parents. From these two sources of wisdom, I realize that reflection prepares a person to anticipate what time conceals and be open to what time reveals.

I arrived in the U.S. “Alone with none but thee, my God.”

The decision to take up leadership of ASEC in the U.S. is the most difficult I have ever made in my 28 years of religious life. The difficulty was not so much for the mission as

for the context. A context absolutely devoid of personal, family or congregational relations. I would arrive in the U.S. “Alone with none but thee, my God” (St. Columbus 521-597). However, knowing that ASEC was a foundation of religious women in the U.S. dedicated to serving religious women in Africa motivated me to take bold steps to contribute to this important sister-to-sister mission.

When I left behind my beloved motherland of Uganda on November 13, 2017, **I was filled with hope, but not without fear.** It’s one thing to learn about the U.S. from the media, but it’s another to be totally immersed in a new country, a new culture and a new language with new people. But, my religious vow of obedience and the values of my family guided me. When I stepped on U.S. soil on November 14, the warm welcome I received from Sr. Margaret, Dr. Farr and Sr. Kevin at the airport, the kindness of the sisters at the IHM center, the support of ASEC’s Board, staff and the generosity of strangers in a new town proved the teaching of my parents to be true. Before I knew it, on November 20, I was stepping into my leadership role at ASEC after an induction by Board Member and Interim Executive Director, Sr. Marcia Sichol, SHCJ. I started this journey with trust, openness

and flexibility. I knew that ‘time’ was the most important resource in my hands as I delved deeper into the knowledge of ASEC.

I knew that ‘time’ was the most important resource in my hands...

The source of my strength was indeed God and the practical human skills and values I learned from my family. I grew up in a family of diverse cultural, ethnic, religious and social backgrounds; **I was taught that ‘people are people’ no matter what their affiliations.** I knew that in a community of people, there will always be individuals with whom I will connect.

One year down the road, I look back with gratitude to time. Initially, time conceals our future and can make us feel like we are navigating the unknown. I believe that this concealment also strengthens our trust in God that we are on the right path. It makes us work together to bring about change. Was this not the trust that motivated the founders of ASEC? Time is truly the best ally in a collaborative like ASEC! I believe that time will eventually reveal what God has concealed for ASEC’s future in the treasury of His goodness. **The stories of ASEC’s vibrancy and success continue to unfold as a testimony of what time conceals!** Of course, the defining factor of ASEC’s success is the remarkable commitment and effort of our Board of Directors, U.S. staff and Africa staff, as they continue to build thriving partnerships. Yet, ASEC’s full potential still remains in the treasury of time!

ASEC comes to Africa with a collaborative approach, which is more transformative, empowering and respectful of the local capacity of religious women, who achieve so much for communities in Africa. As I enter into my second year of service at ASEC, I am full of hope and gratitude to God for blessing me with the time and overwhelming support required to navigate the unknown world! I look forward to seeing ASEC’s collaborative approach lead the global community toward healthy international relations.

Sr. Draru Mary Cecilia, LSMIG, Ph.D., ASEC Executive Director

Left: Sr. Draru with street boys at Kwetu Home of Peace, a rehab center in Nairobi, Kenya where ASEC alumnae serve (Oct., 2018).





Prayer of Thanksgiving For Our Donors

Almighty God,

We thank you for our friends who are supporting us. May God grant them long life and abundant blessings. Amen.

Courtesy of Sr. Flrency Kapinda, ASEC student, Zambia

ANSWERING THE CALL

Sisters turn to you for help. Will you continue to rise up to the challenge?

Every business owner takes time to rate their business performance, identifies the peak seasons, then develops a strategy to increase sales or services when demand is highest. This approach works differently among Catholic Sisters, who dedicate their lives to social and human development. For them, offering their services through ministry is different from "doing business." There is a calling to serve and to be the voice of those in the margins.

Because of you, sisters in Africa receive an education and are better equipped to provide education, health, social and spiritual services to their communities. Throughout this newsletter, you will see the transformational work that sisters are doing to impact communities in need. **Education is the key to transforming lives. Perhaps you, like so many others, enjoy success today because of the Catholic school education you received in the hands and caring hearts of the sisters?** Although there are fewer sisters in some parts of the world, the number of sisters is still growing in Africa. ASEC is the product

of U.S. sisters reaching out in solidarity to support sisters in Africa through education. ASEC's programs support the sisters in different stages of their lives to ensure that they can continue to do what they do best: **serve the most vulnerable people in their communities and provide hope to the poorest people of Africa.**

Catholic Sisters are at the forefront of creating positive, sustainable change in Africa. We need your support to continue our valuable programs.

Want to be part of the solution? Your support for ASEC enables us to fulfill our mission. Join our efforts and pledge your support! We can't do it without you.

Sr. Nancy Kamau, LSOSE, ASEC Asst. Director, Development



ASEC IMPACT



80%



REMAIN DEPRIVED OF HIGHER EDUCATION



ASEC alumnae have **served over 2 million people** in poor, rural communities across Africa— where help is needed most.



Alumnae and their mentees have **raised \$13.7M in funding** for community sustainability and improvement projects.



Educated sisters have **mentored 6,000+ people**, sharing the skills they've learned with other sisters and community members.



Alumnae projects initiated by sisters have **created 3,300 jobs** in under-served rural African communities.

From 2012-2018, 311 SLDI alumnae and 2 HESA alumnae reported that they secured funds (incl. grants, monetary and in-kind donations) for needed social and/or human development projects; this is about 25% of the total SLDI graduates (N=1253) through 2015.



ASEC USA Staff pose for a photo with Sr. Joan Chisala, CSJB (standing, second from right) during her visit to ASEC headquarters in Scranton, PA (Nov. 9, 2018).

2018 Celebrations!

ASEC staff and Board of Directors would like to congratulate the following partner organizations celebrating important milestones in 2018.

- *Bigwa Sisters Secondary School, Morogoro, Tanzania*, Golden Jubilee (50 yrs.) Apr. 21, 2018
- *Uganda Martyrs University (UMU)*, Silver Jubilee (25 yrs.) Nov. 9, 2018
- *Zambia Association of Sisterhoods (ZAS)* Diamond Jubilee (60 yrs.) Nov. 17, 2018
- *Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU)*, Golden Jubilee (50 yrs.) celebrations through Nov. 3, 2018

CARA Visiting Scholar Visits ASEC U.S. Headquarters



Sr. Joan Chisala belongs to the international congregation of the Srs. of St. John the Baptist (CSJB) in Zambia, central Africa. Through a grant awarded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, Sr. Joan is the third sister scholar accepted for a

six-month research fellowship at the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), Georgetown University. Sr. Joan will continue to work with CARA staff through December, 2018, strengthening her applied research skills. Then, she'll return to Zambia and apply those skills to conduct research on the Catholic Church in Africa.

Sr. Joan also visited ASEC's Scranton, PA office from November 6-9, 2018 to assist in week-long research activities with our evaluation team.



Hilton Grant Supports Primary School Children in South Sudan

Through a grant awarded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, ASEC provided tuition and school supplies to students in camp sites under the care of the Srs. of Sacred Heart in South Sudan. The ten students pictured (above) are recipients of full tuition scholarships to attend Usratuna Primary School in Juba, South Sudan.



ASEC administrators from 10 countries in Africa and the U.S. gathered together in Livingstone, Zambia for a week-long staff training (Jan., 2018).

SISTERS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Since its inception in 2007, ASEC's largest program, the Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI), has expanded from five countries of operation to ten, **servicing more than 2,500 sisters**. Through SLDI workshops, sisters are equipped with skills and knowledge in technology, finance, administration and leadership. They gain confidence as they learn how to work more effectively and collaboratively.

2018 marks Phase IV, Year 3 of the program and we have many milestones, highlights and experiences to share with you. This year alone, ASEC facilitated **36 SLDI Workshops** (18 Administration, 18 Finance) in ten countries in sub-Saharan Africa!

SLDI Phase IV graduations will continue to take place until December, 2018. The program anticipates **approximately 780 sisters to graduate** by the end of the phase. In October, Asst. Director of SLDI, Jaime Herrmann and Asst. Director of Evaluation, Jennifer Mudge attended the **first SLDI graduation in Lesotho**, where 22 sisters were honored for their hard work and successful completion of the program curriculum.

SLDI Lesotho graduate, Sr. Theresia Noko, SCO summarized the celebration ceremonies perfectly with her comment, "I will never forget."

Graduations are joyous occasions at ASEC, because a sister's involvement doesn't end there. Alumnae are encouraged to mentor others and collaborate with other program graduates and their mentees at annual gatherings. **Nine alumnae workshops** took place in early 2018.

Three-day **Partners Workshops** took place this June in **Kenya** and **Ghana**. The workshops brought together 70 key SLDI stakeholders to collaborate and prepare for the fifth phase of the program. Members of ASEC's U.S. and Africa staff, SLDI workshop facilitators and Secretaries General of different associations of congregations were in attendance.

Site visits and interviews were conducted throughout the year by U.S. staff in January (Zambia, Kenya), June (Kenya, Uganda, Ghana) and October (Lesotho), 2018. See page 12 for more site visit details.



ASEC Board Member Brigid Blake (4th from right, standing) visits SLDI sisters while in Malawi to attend graduations.



SLDI Administration I participants, Cameroon.



The first SLDI graduation in Lesotho (October 1, 2018).

SLDI field trips began in 2015 to provide a hands-on learning experience for sisters in the program. SLDI Administration and Finance workshop participants visit a variety of real-world projects, many of which are run by ASEC alumnae.

FIELD TRIPS



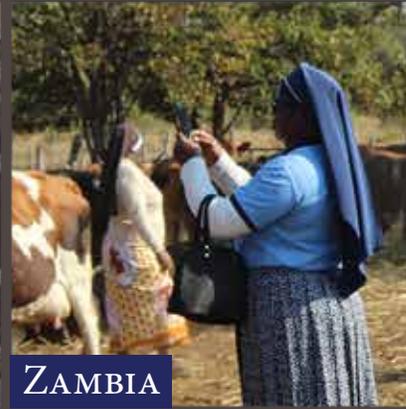
GHANA



TANZANIA



KENYA



ZAMBIA



UGANDA

SLDI Field Trips, 2018

- Ghana: University of Cape Coast Agriculture and Research Farm
- Kenya: Limuru Cheshire Home for physically and mentally handicapped children, Amani Rehabilitation /Primary School
- Nigeria: One Village Farm
- South Sudan: Bishop Mazzoldi Memorial Primary and Kindergarten
- Lesotho: Elizabeth Residence of the Srs. of St. Joseph, Sekamaneng Community of the Holy Names Sisters.
- Malawi: Early Child Development Center Ulongwe, Alinafe Hospital Benga, Mtendere Hospital sustainable projects, Chenzi Orphanage
- Zambia: Chipapa Holy Rosary Srs. Development Project, Kasisi Organic Farming Project, St. Mary's Secondary School, Chilanga Project
- Uganda: Bishop Asili Hospital projects, Mother Kevin sustainable farm Busunju, Srs. of IHM Reparatrix Projects Ggogonya

L-R, from top: Ghana, SLDI Administration I field trip: the University of Cape Coast Agriculture and Research farm (May, 2018). Tanzania, SLDI Finance II field trip: Amani Centre (June, 2018). Kenya, SLDI Administration I field trip: Limuru Cheshire Home for girls with disabilities (June, 2018). Zambia, SLDI Finance I field trip: Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre (June, 2018). Uganda, SLDI Administration I field trip: the Bishop Ceaser Asili Memorial Hospital farming project (May, 2018).



Zambia SLDI Administration I participants in group discussion (May, 2018).



Kenya SLDI Administration II participants work together on a problem tree (June, 2018).



Alumnae meeting in Cameroon for SLDI and HESA graduates (Jan., 2018).



Nigerian sisters get together for a game of football before the SLDI Administration I workshop (June, 2018).



Sisters in Tanzania are happy to reunite with their classmates at the annual Alumnae meeting.



HESA students of Zambia Catholic University pose for a photo under their alma mater's sign.



Veritas University College matriculation celebration for HESA students in Nigeria (Mar., 2018).



Uganda SLDI Administration I participants learn how to make liquid soap (May, 2018).



HESA students in Malawi participate in Reflective Learning.



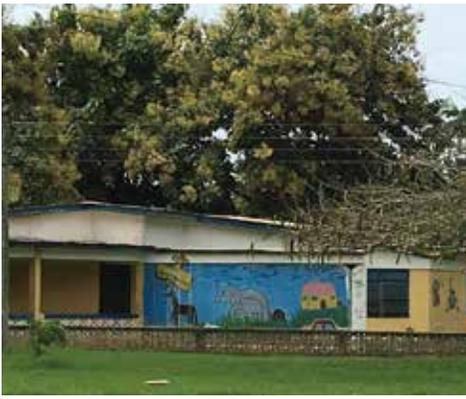
SLDI participant Sr. Bertha Chigowani plants trees with school students in Ntcheu, Malawi.



SLDI and HESA graduates in South Sudan gather for the annual Alumnae meeting (Feb., 2018)



As you can see, SLDI participants in Malawi are a very close-knit group of sisters.



Your support will give a student the opportunity of a lifetime. Make a donation today.



2019 SERVICE TRIP TO GHANA

A team of volunteers from Chestnut Hill College and Marywood University will travel to the West African nation of Ghana in late May, 2019 under the auspices of ASEC. Two sisters from the congregations that sponsor ASEC will also join the group. The group will serve in three organizations in the Cape Coast region:

- Mary Queen of Peace School, led by Sr. Mary Ann Matachinskis, SSND
- Cornelia Connelly School of the Holy Child Jesus, led by Sr. Louisa Huni-Dadzie, SHCJ
- The Padre Pio Rehabilitation Center for children and adults, led by Mark Mantey

The trip should be a busy but joyous experience for all those involved. In preparation, participants will take a 3-credit course in the spring on serving in a developing nation, with a special focus on Ghana. There will be many volunteer opportunities at the schools and center, such as:

- teaching young children rhymes, songs, dances
- coaching soccer and volleyball
- tutoring elementary students in English, Math, Science and Art
- assisting in the set up of a new Reading Center

Mentors for this trip are Dr. Melinda Krokus, Assoc. Professor of Religious Studies, Marywood University and Dr. Nicole Monteiro, Asst. Professor of Psychology, Chestnut Hill College. Sr. Francisca Damoah, SSJ, ASEC Country Director, Ghana, has been invaluable in assisting with trip planning and will continue to offer local guidance for the implementation of the program.

The students attending the trip are studying for degrees in Education, Music Therapy, Speech Therapy, Art and Special Education; all useful fields for the volunteer opportunities available on this trip. Participants undertake a great deal of work and spend countless hours preparing for this worthy activity, including vigorous fundraising to defray the cost.

But the joy, excitement and wisdom they will experience far exceed the challenges they will face. Students are told as they begin the process that “You will leave your heart in Africa.” By the time they return to the U.S., they always agree.

We tell our volunteers, "you will leave your heart in Africa," and when they get home, they always agree.

Support our service trip volunteers at asec-sldi.org/service-learning

By Sr. Margaret Gannon, IHM, Ph.D., ASEC Board Member (emeritus) and Advisory Board Member

ASEC Board Member Sr. Kathryn Miller, SSJ, Ph.D., Chestnut Hill College along with ASEC Ghana staff members Sr. Francisca Damoah, SIJ and Sr. Martha Attakruh, SHCJ visited service trip sites in August, 2018, in preparation for the 2019 trip.

Top left: Mary Queen of Peace School serves 300 children from the ages of 2-14yrs. Top right: Sr. Kathryn (right) talks with Sr. Mary Ann, SSND, who has served at Mary Queen of Peace for 44 years. Left: Sr. Louisa Huni-Dadzie, SHCJ, head Cornelia Connelly Basic School, gives ASEC representatives a tour of the school, which serves 186 children from 1-11yrs of age.



HIGHER EDUCATION FOR SISTERS IN AFRICA

Initiated in 2013, the Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA) program provides Catholic sisters with access to undergraduate and master's level education that aims to enhance their service in the community. ASEC partners with **23 colleges and universities** to make this happen. HESA sisters study as a cohort at ASEC's partner institutions in ten countries in Africa and online in the U.S. Together, each cohort participates in orientation and an annual reflective learning program.



HESA graduates of the University of Kisubi, Uganda (Oct., 2018).

1,200

PROJECTED UNDERGRADUATE AND MASTER'S DEGREES BY 2020 IN ACADEMIC FIELDS RELEVANT TO COMMUNITY NEEDS.

46% **Education**, achieving quality and equitable access at all levels

26% **Business**, generating decent work and economic growth in Africa

10% **Human Development**, building sustainable and healthy communities.

9% **Nursing and Sciences**, ensuring good health and well-being for all

9% **Theology**, supporting faith formation of sisters and communities.

Since its inception, **more than 1,000 sisters** have enrolled in higher education with **nearly 200 graduates!** Phase I (2013-2017) served **280 sisters** and in Phase II (2016-2018), we estimate supporting **more than 800 sisters** in pursuit of diploma, bachelor's and master's degrees.

Graduations

Seventy-four sisters graduated from HESA between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2018 and over **100 sisters are due to graduate** by the end of 2018. ASEC Country Directors and Coordinators were present to support HESA graduates at each of the university ceremonies. Additionally, ASEC Executive Director, Sr. Draru Mary Cecilia, LSMIG, Ph.D., attended the graduation ceremony at Catholic University of Eastern Africa (Oct., 2018) and Jane Farr, Ph.D., ASEC Board member, attended the Uganda Martyrs University graduation (Nov., 2018).

Among the graduates from **Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA)** and **Catholic University College of Ghana (CUCG)**, are sisters who began their studies online at **Marywood University** and **Chestnut Hill College**. Through partnerships between these insti-



HESA students graduate from Tangaza College, Kenya (May, 2018).

Congratulations to our 2018 HESA graduates! We are so proud of you!

Catholic University College of Ghana (10/2017, 10/2018), Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya (11/2017, 10/2018), Chemchemi Ya Uzima Institute, Kenya (11/2017, 10/2018), Tangaza University College, Kenya (5/2018), Veritas University College, Nigeria (12/2017), St. Francis Hospital Nsambya Training School, Uganda (9/2018), University of Kisubi, Uganda (3/2018, 11/2018), Uganda Martyrs University (11/2018), Mwenge Catholic University, Tanzania (11/2018), Saint Augustine University, Tanzania (11/2017, 12/2018).



HESA students from Catholic University College, Ghana, participate in Reflective Learning (May, 2018).



SLDI and HESA alumnae in Uganda learn how to raise money by making soap and books at the alumnae workshop (January, 2018).

tutions, sisters complete one year of coursework online before transferring onsite to a university in Africa. The **first cohort of students from Chestnut Hill College** online graduated from **CUCG** in October 2018 where **14 sisters** received Bachelor of Education degrees through the hybrid online-onsite program.

HESA's **first Master's degree graduates** will matriculate in 2018.

Additionally, ASEC signed **new partnership agreements** to expand existing online-onsite degree programs and offer new opportunities to women religious in vulnerable countries. Partnership agreements were signed with **CUCG** (3/2018) and **University of Kisubi** (8/2018) to expand the online-onsite Bachelor of Business Administration degree program offered by **Rosemont College**. A third partnership agreement will be signed with **CUEA** by the end of the year. This added to existing partnerships with **Veritas University** in Nigeria and **Catholic University of Cameroon**, enabling sisters in Uganda, Kenya and Ghana to participate in HESA through this hybrid program.

ASEC also engaged an entirely **new HESA partner, Jordan University College (JUCO)** in Tanzania. ASEC Executive Director, Sr. Draru, visited JOCU in October 2018 to complete the signing with plans to implement this new HESA partnership in the next phase of the program.

By 2020, HESA anticipates serving an estimated 1,200 sisters with approximately 550 Bachelor's Degrees, 175 Master's Degrees and 25 College Diplomas.

Below: HESA orientation in Tanzania (2018).



Reflective Learning

In May and June 2018, **13 reflective learning workshops** were held in all 10 countries with a 96% attendance rate. The annual workshops bring together HESA cohorts in each country for reflection, learning and networking. Covered topics include prophetic roles in the school environment, social media, globalization, time management and research methods, among others. Sisters studying online through U.S. university partners also participated, meeting with instructors at Marywood University and Chestnut Hill College via video.

Partnerships

ASEC renewed several concluding partnership agreements for HESA including: **CUEA**, Kenya (9/2017), **Chemchemi Ya Uzima Institute**, Kenya (9/2017), **St. Augustine University**, Tanzania (7/2018), **Catholic University of South Sudan** (7/2018) and **CUCG** (7/2018).

SITE VISITS IN AFRICA

In 2018, ASEC staff and board members visited SLDI and HESA sisters conducting site visits and interviews with program participants and alumnae in **Zambia, Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Tanzania** and **Lesotho**.

ASEC Executive Director Sr. Draru Mary Cecilia, HESA Asst. Director Rosemary Shaver, HESA Evaluator Tara Lopatofsky, SLDI Asst. Director Jaime Herrmann and Asst. Director of Evaluation Jennifer Mudge traveled to **Zambia in January 2018** for a staff meeting. The meeting provided a space Sr. Draru to introduce herself to the Africa staff and facilitate team-building and organizational development.



ASEC staff visit Makunka Rural Health Centre in an isolated community in Southern Zambia plagued with HIV cases (Jan. 2018).

While in Zambia, ASEC staff visited Makunka Rural Health Centre where SLDI alumna **Sr. Constancia Nzovwa Lungu, LSOSF**, leads a small team of 15 that provides medical care to over 1,200 residents in the rural community of Kazungula.

Afterwards, several staff continued to **Kenya**, where they met with HESA students studying at Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), Chemchemi Ya Uzima Institute and Tangaza University College. Nearly 100 HESA students greeted ASEC staff at CUEA. Welcoming staff by singing their self-composed HESA song, the students shared stories of their education and ministry. The HESA students in Kenya have developed a student association and are very active in the higher education community.

In **Kenya**, ASEC staff also visited **Sr. Felistas Jematia Chesire, ASE**, an ASEC alumna who is currently enrolled in a Master's of Business Administration program at CUEA. She serves as the Executive of the HESA student association at CUEA and maintains the finances for many of her congregation's projects. She is



Sr. Felistas raises funds for Kwetu Home with support from the community and income projects such as a health dispensary, farm and greenhouse.

also the Financial Administrator of **Kwetu Home of Peace**, a rehabilitation center that rescues young boys from the Nairobi slums (read more on page 16).

In **Uganda** (June, 2018), ASEC U.S. staff interviewed 29 participants, alumnae and stakeholders and conducted site visits in seven locations including farms, hospitals, schools, a water production plant and more. Staff met three SLDI alumnae from the **Good Samaritan Srs.**; Mother John Mushiga, Sr. Juliet Sanyu and Sr. Peter Namasinga. The sisters operate **Kyasira Home of Hope**, an orphanage/boarding school. They also maintain a farm where they teach students and the community how to grow food. They also raise pigs, chickens, goats and ducks!

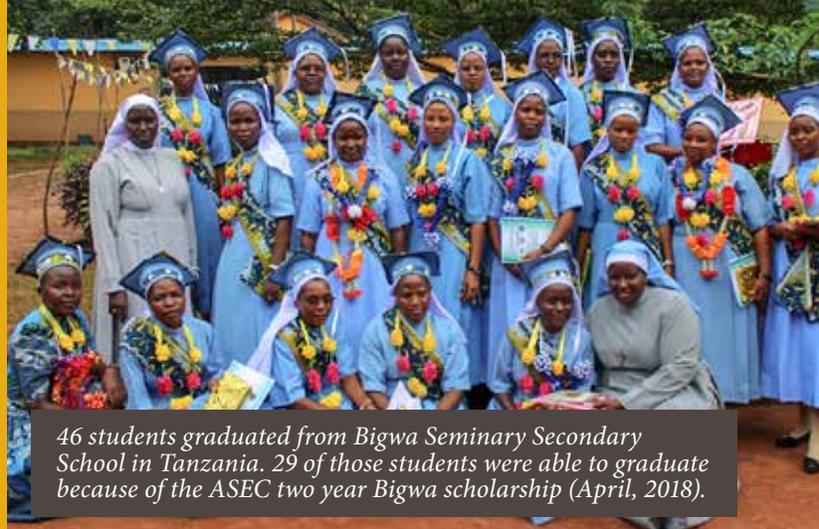
In **Ghana**, ASEC staff interviewed eight SLDI program participants. Staff also visited the **Infant Jesus Preparatory School**, where they met SLDI alumnae Sr. Irene Christine Oparku (Headmistress) and Sr. Diana Yiguro (Bursar). The day school serves nearly 700 students from nursery school to junior high. Using the grant-writing skills she learned in SLDI, Sr. Irene secured funding for safety features such as a wall around the school and a solar power system. Sr. Diana uses her SLDI skills to keep the finances in order and mentors many people in the community.

Every day, we are touched by the challenges sisters face in service to God's people. Their call to discipleship is indeed changing one life at a time. As you can see, education is an incredibly powerful tool to facilitate transformation in Africa. Our travels to Africa are always an eye-opening and rewarding experience that allows us to see first-hand the impact the sisters are making in their communities.

**More site visit summaries available
online at asec-sldi.org/evaluation**

"Each sister contributes so much diversity to the program through her background, goals and aspirations. It's an honor to be a part of the journey."

-Victoria Kelly, Research Asst., Scholarship Program



46 students graduated from Bigwa Seminary Secondary School in Tanzania. 29 of those students were able to graduate because of the ASEC two year Bigwa scholarship (April, 2018).

SCHOLARSHIPS

Initiated in 2012, ASEC's Scholarship Program provides two-year scholarships for African religious women to obtain a secondary or post-secondary school degree.

Secondary School Program

In Tanzania, about 60% of religious women lack secondary school education. Attending Bigwa Sisters Secondary School (Bigwa), a residential high school for religious women, is a vital first-step for these women to begin to acquire the skills, networks and confidence needed to take on professional roles in their communities.

In 2018, **21 students** received scholarships to attend Bigwa, where they joined ASEC's 13 returning scholarship beneficiaries.



Bigwa Golden Jubilee celebration (Apr., 2018).

In April, ASEC board member Dr. Jane Farr, traveled to Morogoro, Tanzania to represent ASEC at Bigwa's Golden Jubilee (50th Anniversary) celebration. Dr. Farr also attended Bigwa's graduation ceremony, where 29 of ASEC's scholarship recipients received their high school diplomas.

Two-year Degree Program

In 2016, ASEC expanded the program to include scholarships for two-year post-secondary degrees among women religious. This year, a total of **31 students** in Tanzania (13), Malawi (9) and Zambia (9) were given the opportunity to study for two-year degrees in a variety of subjects such as education, nursing, medical science and public administration.

Program Impact

Currently, **84 scholarship recipients** are enrolled in school. Because of your support, a **total 244 two-year scholarships** have been awarded since the program's inception in 2012.

We are relying on your continued support to provide scholarships to sisters through this program. Your gifts, large or small, mean so much and go so far. We are so grateful for your kindness and generosity. We can't do it without you!



ASEC Board Member Dr. Jane Farr, introduces herself to the crowd at Bigwa's Golden Jubilee celebration. She traveled from the USA to Tanzania to attend the celebration on ASEC's behalf.

OUR AMAZING SUPPORTERS

We are grateful for your donations.* Every single dollar you've given makes such a big difference. You are always in our thoughts and prayers:

- Anges Cardoni & John Cardoni
- Bob Lockyer
- Brigid Blake
- Carmelite Monastery of Concord NH
- Carolyn Wiczorek
- Chestnut Hill College
- Convent of the Srs. of St. Joseph
- Corpus Christi Monastery
- Daughters of the Holy Spirit
- Dominican Srs. Of The Perpetual Rosary
- Frances Shepherd
- Hong Soon Kim (on behalf Sr. Cyrilla)
- J.W. Norpel/M.E. Norpel (SSJ Group)
- Jane Farr
- John & Elizabeth Stapleton
- John Shepherd
- Justin Wahy
- Maryknoll Fathers And Brothers
- Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity
- Montrone Family Charitable
- Mount St. Francis
- Precious Blood Sisters
- Provincial, Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ
- Religious of the Assumption
- Robert & Elizabeth Olson
- Rosalie Mirenda
- Roseann Swegle
- Sinsinawa Dominicans
- Sr. Jane Wakahiu
- Srs. of Blessed Sacrament
- Srs. of Providence Inc.
- Srs. of St. Casimir
- Srs. of St. Francis Oldenburg
- Srs. of St. Joseph of Orange
- Srs. of the Holy Redeemer, Inc.
- Srs. of Mercy of the Holy Cross
- Srs. of Mercy West Midwest Community
- Srs. of Our Lady of Mount Carmel
- Srs. of St. Francis (Cong. Leadership)
- Srs. of St. Mary of Namur
- Tarrel Shepherd
- The Dominican Nuns
- the Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart
- Ursuline Srs. of Youngstown
- Vincent & Elaine Fedele
- Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
- Franciscan Srs. of Chicago

Our gratitude goes out to you, our generous partners, donors and friends. It's not possible without you.

We'd also like to thank all those who have contributed through Facebook, AmazonSmile and the Paypal Giving Fund.

Thank you for your service

You have given so much of yourself to ASEC during your time of service. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you:

Marie T. McCormick, MBA, Ph.D., Former Board Member

Dr. William J. Lennox, Jr., former Associate Member representative for Saint Leo University

Jeff Borden, Ph.D., former Advisory Board member

Sr. Mary Anne Heenan, CSJ, former Associate Members Board Representative

**As of September 30, 2018*





ASEC Board of Directors held a meeting at ASEC's headquarters on Marywood University's campus (April 2018).

ASEC ADVISORY BOARD

Sr. Draru Mary Cecilia, LSMIG, Ph.D. *Executive Director, ASEC*

Susanne Dumbleton, Ph.D. *Professor Emeritus, DePaul University*

***Sr. Margaret Gannon, IHM, Ph.D.** *Professor Emeritus, Marywood University*

Jaime Herrmann *Asst. Director, SLDI Program, ASEC*

Diane Keller, Ph.D. *Assoc. Professor (Social Work), Marywood University*

***Mr. Stephen Kubasek** *Development Officer, Saint Leo University*

Tara Lopatofsky, M.Ed, CCLS HESA Evaluator, ASEC

Sr. Elaine Martin, OSF, Ph.D. *Assoc. Professor, Political Science, Neumann University*

Jennifer Mudge, MSW, LSW *Asst. Director Program Evaluation, ASEC*

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

Sr. Anna Mary Henrietta Nyangoma, MCESM *Superior General, Missionary Congregation of the Evangelizing Srs. of Mary*

Pius Ojara, Ph.D. *Director, NGO Secretariat South Sudan*

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

Sr. Mary Persico, IHM, Ed.D. *President, Marywood University*

Sr. Michele Puma, SHCJ, Ed.D. *Undergraduate Facilitator, Division of Extended Learning, Holy Family University*

Rosemary Shaver, M.Ed. *Asst. Director, HESA Program, ASEC*

Sr. Jane Wakahiu LSOSF, Ph.D. *Director, Catholic Sisters Program, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation*

**Welcome new Members*

Opposite: The ASEC Advisory Board held a meeting at ASEC's headquarters on Marywood University's campus. ASEC staff members posed for a group photo with Members of ASEC's Board of Directors and Advisory Board (April 2018).

ASEC Board of Directors

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- Sr. Kathryn Dougherty, OSF, Ph.D. (Board Chair)
- Sharon Hirsh, Ph.D. (Board Vice-Chair)
- Chris Domes, Ed.D.
- Sr. Carroll Juliano, SHCJ
- Sr. Ellen Maroney, IHM
- Sr. Anne Myers, SSJ, Ph.D.
- Sr. Mary Persico, IHM, Ed.D.
- Sr. Carol Jean Vale, SSJ, Ph.D.

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- Jane Farr, Ph.D.
- Sr. Margaret Gannon, IHM, Ph.D.
- Sr. Florence Hee, OSF, Ph.D.
- Sr. Marijane Hresko, OSF
- Sr. Carol Ann Knight, SHCJ
- Sr. Kathryn Miller, SSJ
- Sr. Florence Nwaonuma, SSH
- Sr. Anna Mary Henrietta Nyangoma, MCESM
- Pius Ojara, Ph.D.
- Sr. Marcia Sichol, SHCJ, Ph.D.
- Sr. Barbara Spears, SNJM

Associate Members

- A. Gabriel Esteban, Ph.D., Depaul University
- *Sr. Anne Marie Hass, CSR, Srs. of the Reedemer
- *Jeffrey D. Senese, Saint Leo University
- Sr. Louise Lears, S.C., Srs. of Charity of Cincinnati
- Sr. Mary Anne Heenan, CSJ, Srs. of St. Joseph of Carondelet

**Welcome new Members*

YOUR SUPPORT IN ACTION

Every day, you touch lives through the hands of sisters

Africa is in crisis. The continent is being torn apart by hunger, disease and poverty. However, ASEC uses the greatest weapon of all to help Africa; knowledge. We are on a mission to ensure that every religious sister in the ten countries we serve receives an education with the expectation that they will use this knowledge to help their communities. In the past year, many religious women and ASEC alumnae have shown exceptional desire to revitalize their communities. These are the stories of ten women.



Inmates are often marginalized in society, especially in countries like **Cameroon** where accused detainees often have issues acquiring legal assistance and adequate healthcare. This makes it difficult for inmates to reenter society and raises their chances of being sent back to prison. However, **Sr. Gwendoline Bijisang Ngwemetoh**, Srs. of St. Therese (SST), is working to change this unfortunate reality. Sr. Gwendoline is using the grant writing skills acquired through her ASEC-sponsored education to help secure funding and give second chances to current and former inmates in four of Cameroon's 79 prisons. So far, Sr. Gwendoline has been able to secure \$429,000. Sr. Gwendoline said she believes her work with inmates would not have been possible without ASEC,

“I must say that thanks to the knowledge I got from the ASEC program it has been a challenging yet fulfilling experience attending to the needs of thousands of current and former inmates.”



In Nairobi, **Kenya** another marginalized group is trapped in a cycle of poverty and drug addiction. This group called “street boys” is made up of homeless youth as young as eight years old. **Sr. Felistas Chematia Chesire** of the Assumption Srs. of Eldoret (ASE), visits the slums to form connections with these street boys to encourage them to move to Kwetu Home of Peace where there are substance abuse treatment and educational opportunities. After two years at Kwetu Home, the boys “graduate” and are once again immersed in their home environments where, unfortunately, 65% of them will revert back to previous habits. Sr. Felistas is using the knowledge she acquired through ASEC to combat this problem by implementing income-generating projects that will provide more opportunities to the boys following graduation. Sr. Felistas’ role at Kwetu Home does not end there. She also works as the financial administrator for the center which provides for 246 students. She understands that without financial support the work that the center does would not be able to thrive. With the knowledge she has gained from ASEC's SLDI and HESA programs, Sr. Felistas learned resource mobilization and financial planning skills which enable Kwetu Home to make a bigger impact.

The young are not the only group that people tend to overlook in areas of Africa. With age comes a need to be taken care of; however, the elderly are often ostracized in many parts of Africa being forced to care for themselves. **Sr. Theresia Ntsoaki Noko**, Srs. of Charity of Ottawa (SCO), is on a mission to change that unfortunate reality. Sr. Theresia has spent twenty-one years as a Sister of Charity. During that time she began working at Elizabeth Bruyere Old Age Home in **Lesotho**. Although



excited to begin work with the elderly, she noticed quickly that her lack of office and management skills were a barrier in her ability to serve effectively. “I didn't have skills for running the facility,” said Sr. Theresia. “I was just sent to be in charge of the facility doing the work with compassionate love as sister.” She needed management skills in order to help successfully run the home. That’s when she turned to ASEC. Sr. Theresia began attending workshops through ASEC’s SLDI program where she was able to learn the management and computer skills she desperately needed. Now Sr. Theresia is able to better administer care to the elderly.

“Like a dream ASEC has changed my life,” she says.



Although Sr. Theresia's dream came true, the spreading of a disease across Africa has turned into a nightmare. One disease in particular, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), is particularly harmful to the population. According to UNAIDS, at the end of 2016 there were approximately 36.7 million people worldwide living with HIV/AIDS. 69% of all people infected with HIV live in sub-Saharan Africa. One reason in

particular, is the lack of education about the disease in Africa. SLDI alumna **Sr. Veronica Chibuzor Iloh**, Srs. of Jesus the Good Shepherd (SJGS), is using education to change this circumstance. In her home country of **Nigeria**, she educates the public on underlying factors that make them vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, like social and economic weakness. Emerging evidence suggests that economic strategies may contribute to improving social, economic and health outcomes among women. Through her work, she created a plan to educate others on economic empowerment to help prevent more cases of HIV/AIDS. Through Sr. Veronica’s teachings, people learn about the many preventive measures they can take to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS.



Zambia is also dealing with the brutality of HIV/AIDS. Currently, 1.2 million people in **Zambia** are living with the disease. For those infected with the disease, finding proper healthcare is difficult. The challenge intensifies for those living in rural parts of the country. However, the Makunka Rural Health Center is facing this challenge head on.

Leading the battle against AIDS is ASEC alumna **Sr. Constanca Nzovwa Lungu**, Little Srs. of St. Francis (LSOSF). Sr. Constanca is the facilitator-in-charge of the clinic where 100 to 150 individuals get tested for HIV every month. One out of ten of those tests are positive. Although the need for treatment is there, the finances usually are not. When Sr. Constanca arrived, the center was struggling financially. During her training with ASEC’s SLDI program Sr. Constanca was able to study finance. She has used her studies to purchase a generator, a laboratory refrigerator and a vehicle so that employees can make home visits. Most importantly, she has begun to budget for the clinic’s future so that the clinic will be there for the people of rural Zambia who need medical care.



MALAWI

African countries are also fighting against another devastating disease; malaria. Malaria is the leading cause of death in countries across Africa and unfortunately **Malawi** is no exception. In the first three months of 2018, St. Kizito Integrated Health Centre confirmed over 700 cases of malaria. It becomes increasingly difficult to support the constant influx of patients. **Sr. Grace Akpan**, Medical Missionaries of Mary (MMM), who works at the clinic, says that most patients come to the clinic when their condition is at its worst and she has no option but to respond immediately. Luckily, St. Kizito has found the Artesunate injection to be very effective in the treatment of malaria. However, it's €1.90 (\$2.22 USD) per bottle and most patients require multiple doses. For a poor country like Malawi where people earn less than \$1.90 a day, treatment for malaria is difficult to afford. To help support the facility, Sr. Grace is using the grant writing skills she learned in ASEC's SLDI program to raise funds for the clinic. Sr. Grace sees her work as simply following through with God's inspiration. "Tomorrow is Monday and you never know who God will inspire to help us this week," she says.

"Tomorrow is Monday and you never know who God will inspire to help us this week."

Sr. Elisabeth Swai, Little Srs. of St. Francis (LSOSF), found her call to service at Providence Home for the disabled in central **Uganda**. On the walls of the center reads the slogan "Disability is not inability" as a way to welcome those who feel as if they don't belong in society. Providence Home cares for orphaned children, older adults and individuals with physical and/or mental disabilities. Sr. Elisabeth is one of the administrators and a social worker at the center. When the center began to struggle financially, she was able to apply the knowledge



UGANDA

she gained from her ASEC education to help launch an alternative farm projects to support Providence Home. The center plants a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. All the produce is consumed locally and the excess is sold off to raise funds. Although the center is on stable ground now, one never knows what the future will hold. However, because of the education she received from ASEC's HESA program, Sr. Elisabeth will be able to take any problems head on.



GHANA

Sr. Francisca Damoah, SIJ, ASEC Director, Ghana, plays with a child at St. Elizabeth Day Center for Children & Young Adults with Disabilities during a site visit (June, 2018).

In **Ghana**, another sister is helping children to realize that disability is not inability. **Sr. Zabibu Mipute Juliette**, Daughters of Mary and Joseph (DMJ), is a current SLDI student. When she's not busy with her studies she serves at St. Elizabeth Day Center for Children & Young Adults with Disabilities. At the center around 38 children up to age 17 receive outpatient services such as assistance with feeding, exercise therapy, endorphin release therapy, play and educational services for parents. Like Providence Home, this center also had financial struggles. To help keep the center afloat, the older children make palm crosses which are sent to England for donations. Sr. Juliette also oversees the congregation's farm where



they grow and sell maize, plantains and pineapples to help fund the center.

Perhaps Sr. Juliette's greatest accomplishment is her advocacy work. She works tirelessly to advocate for the acceptance of disabled children in Ghana. As a result, the center has seen an increase in donations along with an increase of understanding.



For Sr. Lucy Chemutai Yego, Assumption Srs. of Eldoret (ASE), ASEC gave her the resources to have understanding for her new role in a **South Sudan** high school. When she arrived at the school she was prepared for the opportunity to teach young people; however she was not prepared when she was asked to fill multiple positions in the understaffed school. Sr. Lucy's greatest challenge came when she had to fill in for the school bursar. At the time Sr. Lucy had no knowledge of finances and records. However, Sr. Lucy did have dedication for the school. This dedication inspired her to apply for ASEC's SLDI program's finance track. Through the program, Sr. Lucy gained the financial knowledge needed to manage the school's finances. When Sr. Lucy arrived at the school she was eager to help mold young minds, but she never imagined that, in the end, it was her mind that would be molded.



Another religious sister who has been stepping out of her comfort zone is **Sr. Benedicta Anslem**, Evangelizing Srs. of Mary (ESM). Her congregation mobilizes many projects throughout **Tanzania** to help revitalize the country. Some of the projects include building a primary school and constructing an administration building. To help get these projects started Sr. Benedicta will go to the sites to get the projects off the ground...literally. Not only does Sr. Benedicta help plan the projects, she also occasionally helps to construct the buildings. Sr. Benedicta has dreamed of using her planning skills to help better Tanzania since she started ASEC's SLDI Project Management (Administration) Track in 2007. In the program, she learned skills, such as fundraising, that have proven to be beneficial to her service. Eleven years later, Sr. Benedicta is using the knowledge she gained through ASEC to help rebuild Tanzania one brick at a time.

These ten religious sisters could have fallen in the face of serious challenges like hunger, disease and poverty, but they didn't. As result of the educational opportunities provided by our generous donors, partners and friends, these sisters have not only been able to rise above statistics, but to help others rise above as well. There are so many more stories to share. We invite you to visit our website to read them at asec-sldi.org/success.

Over 5,300 religious sisters have received the gift of education through ASEC and have used their education to help revitalize Africa. Even though this may seem like any extraordinary number, it isn't. There are still so many women who have not been able to start their stories due to lack of education. This means that ASEC's story is not over, either. We need your help to continue our mission to educate women religious in Africa.

by Brianna Ryan, ASEC Intern and Marywood University, Broadcast Journalism student ('21)



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