

ASEC

AFRICAN
SISTERS
EDUCATION
COLLABORATIVE

ASEC-SLDI Educational Insights

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

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JAMBO SANA! (Swahili phrase for Hello!)

Helen Keller once wrote, "Life is either a bold adventure or it is nothing at all." Our travel through Africa with our sisters was a true testimony that a bold adventure can have a transformative payoff. We visited four countries, twelve cities, fifteen ministries of our Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI) alumnae and four technology classes and met with the administrators of four Catholic universities and the executive teams of five conferences of women religious in eighteen days. Traveling from Nigeria, to Ghana, to Tanzania and then Kenya is like traveling across the United States, but with many more hurdles, inconveniences and potentially precarious encounters. The journey was both arduous and exhilarating. At every point of the way, the inspiration and joy outdistanced the fatigue and insecurity.

There were four common themes across every encounter: the sisters always greeted us with joy-filled song and dance. At several moments I attempted to join with them and even play the tambourine, but it was obvious that I didn't have the "moves" that they did. We signed numerous visitor books as a significant ritual, almost as our gift to them just to be present. They served us their most delicious and savory foods and drinks, which we ate as a sign of our communion with them. We were lavished with meaningful gifts that were symbolic of their cultures, which we accepted humbly and gratefully.

Although Africa is one continent, the cultures across the countries have distinct characteristics that influence the nature of the sisters. I loved the passion and energy of the Nigerian sisters who seemed unafraid to put forth their voices. The alumnae with whom we met emphasized how much their SLDI experience enlivened their voices and empowered them to assist other women, especially those with whom they worked, to trust their own voices. The Nigerian sisters were so thrilled and amazed that we came. Many of them traveled more than a day just to meet with us. They receive few visitors from the United States due to the unrest and violence within the country. The SLDI

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Empowering Catholic Sisters in Africa through Education

One finger cannot lift a pebble! 2013 has been a year of great progress, and significant milestones were accomplished through the support of many. As the year draws to an end, we pause to ponder, to take stock of our resources, refresh our dreams, and to thank you for being part of our experience.

This first issue of ASEC Educational Insights highlights the 2013 activities in an effort to accomplish the mission of ASEC, which is to facilitate educational opportunities for women religious in Africa, which will enable them to enhance and expand services for the people they serve. ASEC runs four programs: the Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI), the Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA), Support of the Bigwa School, and the Service Learning Program. Education is an investment in human and social capital. ASEC continues to support the empowerment of women religious in Africa. Empowerment is a process that enhances the capacity of individuals to make informed choices, desired actions and outcomes in their own lives, their communities and in society. Through ASEC's programming, sisters in Africa have become change agents. The knowledge and skills they've acquired helps sisters to be more efficient in their ministries but they are also taking meaningful actions to create and run projects that are transforming lives and society in Africa.

In this issue, you will read about donors' and staff experiences during their site visit in Africa. Also you will hear the voices of hope, courage, change and confidence from the participants who tell of the impact of their programs on their apostolate – empowered individuals. Faculty, staff, evaluators and volunteers write about the transformative experiences and encounters. The stories not only tell how sisters are making a difference in their ministries, in the people they serve, and in their communities, but also how they touch lives and transform the society at large. Indeed, mutually beneficial relationships, intercultural exchange and global educational experiences have created meaningful bonds!

Undeniably, the African adage, one finger cannot kill a louse, speaks volumes for partnership with foundations, colleges, universities and individual donors and partners in the USA and Africa which have created incredible marks in our hearts and in moving forward ASEC's partnerships. The achievements of 2013 were made possible by excellent leadership, dedication and commitment of the ASEC board of directors, staff and partners in both the USA and Africa. I am intrigued and filled with gratitude for all the pieces that came together to make a successful year.

I look forward to 2014 with a hopeful and optimistic heart that you will continue to journey with ASEC to create new pathways to provide the so much needed education for the Catholic Sisters in Africa. I invite you to join ASEC in whichever way you can - together we can make a difference not only for the sisters but also to the people they so willingly serve – changing one life at a time! As Saint Paul affirms us in his second letter to the Corinthians 9:12 "This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God."

I wish you abundant blessings during Christmas and a New Year full of goodness and peace!

Sincerely,
Sister Jane Wakahiu, LSOSF, Ph.D., ASEC, Executive Director



Sr. Jane Wakahiu



Sr. Mary Rose Koech and Sr. Mary Annet Namara sign bridge course forms CUEA.

in regards to the core teaching concentration for university students. The sisters were given provisional entrance to CUEA subject to completion of this bridging course. The Pre-University program took place for three months during the summer of 2013, and has the objective to upgrade secondary school leavers to attain university entry to pursue bachelors' programs. The bridging course was held at CUEA. Sisters will join their HESA colleagues at CUEA once they transfer from Marywood University to CUEA in January 2014.

Marywood University Instructors Straddle the World

In November-December, 2012 two Marywood University faculty began the training of the first cohort in the Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA) program. Eighteen sisters from Uganda and Kenya met at the ChemiChem Institute in Nairobi and began their education degree programs as students of Marywood University. Sisters Margaret Gannon, IHM, and Kathleen Burns, IHM co-taught the course, but in an unusual manner. While Sr. Margaret taught on site, Sr. Kathleen connected with sisters over the Internet using WebEx, introducing them to the technical skills and knowledge they would need to participate in online courses beginning in Spring 2013.



Sr. Margaret Gannon instructs HESA students in Nairobi at HESA orientation.

Sisters were also joined electronically by two of Marywood's librarians, Leslie Christensen and Julie Wilson. Sr. Margaret and Sr. Kathleen say of their experience, "The sisters' commitment to learn was truly impressive; they spent long hours outside of class time, practicing the skills they had learned. Indeed, it was a challenge to get them to leave the classroom late into the evening!"

Sr. Margaret Gannon, IHM, Ph.D. is a Professor in the Social Science Department at Marywood University.

Sr. Kathleen Burns, IHM, EdD is the Director of Web Development at Marywood University.

Sisters Proudly Share their Ministries and Congregations through Web Design

Sr. Jane Rose Adiero is from the South Sudan. However, she traveled to Kenya to be included in a core of sisters undertaking training to learn web design as part of SLDI training. She was one of 274 sisters in eight countries who took part in the Basic Technology and Web Design Workshops in 2013. Sisters learned the concrete skills of how to create websites in order to highlight to the world the important work that they do in their ministries. So many creative and beautiful sites were created, sharing with the world the important work that congregations and their ministries do. You can find examples of their websites on the ASEC-SLDI website: <http://www.asec-sldi.org/programs/sldi/events/>.

Service Learning Program at the Bigwa School:

Students from ASEC consortia colleges travel to the Bigwa School in Morogoro, Tanzania to provide English tutoring and to have a cross-cultural experience in Tanzania. Over 58 students and 14 faculty chaperones from Chestnut Hill College, Marywood University and Rosemont College share experiences that impact their lives. Students have been affected by how students at Bigwa can study with very little resources yet they are competing on a global landscape with the haves. One of the American students was so touched that she donated \$1,000 of her graduation money to buy a cow for the Bigwa School so that students there can have milk to supplement their diet.



From one cow there are now three and students at Bigwa have plenty of milk.

Welcome and Send Off to ASEC Board Members and Staff

Thank you to Sr. Mary Paul Wamatu, CPS and Sr. Brigid Andoh, SSL for their dedication and services provided to the ASEC board during their six-year tenure. You are incredible women and your dedication and commitment to serve the people of God remains as the witness to your service in ASEC. You remain a part of our very own!

ASEC warmly welcomes new board members. Thank you for graciously making a choice to serve on the ASEC board to contribute to making a difference to the lives of women religious in Africa.

- Jane Farr, PhD
- Sister Marijane Hresko, OSF
- Sister Anna Mary Henrietta Nyangoma, ESM, Uganda.
- Sister Florence Iheoma Nwaonuma, SSH, Nigeria

Sincere gratitude to Sr. Anne McNamara for successfully leading ASEC as Chair from 2011 to 2013.

Welcome to Sr. Anne Munley, IHM, Ph. D., Chair from 2013 to 2015. Sr. Anne is the President of Marywood University, Scranton, PA.

Sr. Carol Jean Vale, SSJ, Ph. D., Vice Chair from 2013 to 2015. Sr. Carol is the President of Chestnut Hill College - Philadelphia, PA.

Welcome to new ASEC staff members:

- Sr. Germina Keneema, MSMMC, Uganda
- Sr. Clarisse Remjika Jaiwo, SST, Cameroon
- Sr. M. Tryphina Buchard, STH, Tanzania
- Sr. Hilaria Chombo, SBVM, Malawi

PEOPLE & PLACES

Hilton Foundation Representative Embraced in Africa



Sr. Rosemarie admires a sister's work at an SLDI Technology Workshop at the Tumaini Center, Nairobi, Kenya in July 2013.

Sr. Rosemarie Nassif, SSND, Director of the Catholic Sisters Initiative at the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation visited the four sub-Saharan nations of Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania and Kenya accompanied by Sr. Jane Wakahiu, LSOSF, ASEC Executive Director and Jennifer Alexander, Esq in

July, 2013. The purpose of the visit was for program monitoring, visiting SLDI alumnae ministries, meeting leaders of Associations of Religious, as well as for visiting with presidents of the Catholic colleges and universities that have partnered with ASEC to implement the Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA) program.

Sr. Bonita Gacnik Devotes her Time to the Bigwa School



Sr. Bonita teaches technology at the Holistic Center, Morogoro, Tanzania.

Sr. Bonita Gacnik, OSB, Ph.D. had already been in Africa to conduct Web design training for the SLDI Program in Kenya. Sr. Bonita decided to take advantage of being in Africa to donate her time to volunteer at the Bigwa School in Morogoro, Tanzania. After completing her training in August, Sr. Bonita left Kenya and after a short trip, arrived at the Bigwa School where she taught Math and Computers. While she was there she also worked on the computers in the lab at Bigwa. Sr. Bonita enjoyed leisure time while there, and often helped out in the garden picking tomatoes and other vegetables.

Sisters in HESA Program "Bridge" at CUEA

Working in partnership in higher education means sometimes finding creative ways to support sisters who otherwise would not be able to attend higher education. Two students, Sr. Mary Rose Koech and Sr. Mary Annet Namara, who were to enter the HESA program in spring 2013, and had first undertook a bridge course at CUEA because they did not meet certain requirements set by the government of Kenya

APPRECIATION

Sincere appreciation to our generous benefactors and partners, you made this year a success! We were blessed in 2013 to have received many charitable donations which helped us to implement our programs. We recognize with gratitude your generous support both monetary and in kind. May the generous God bless you abundantly!

Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
 Congregation of St. Joseph of Kansas
 Franciscan Sisters of Chicago
 Penates Foundation
 Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth
 Sisters of Joseph of Carondelet
 Sisters of Saint Francis of Dubuque, Iowa
 Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati
 Maryknoll Sisters of Saint Dominic
 Benedictine Foundation of Vermont
 Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross
 Assumption Abbey Bakery
 Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart
 Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception
 Congregation of Saint Joseph, Kansas
 Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Community
 Sisters of Saint Francis
 Notre Dame Sisters
 Sisters of the Divine Savior
 Sisters of Saint Joseph of Concordia, Kansas
 Sisters of Saint Francis of Holy Name Province
 Sisters of Saint Joseph of Orange, California
 Sisters of Precious Blood Dayton, Ohio
 Sisters of Our Lady of Mount Carmel of Reno, California
 Sisters of Saint Joseph in Los Angeles, California

Sisters Servant of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Monroe, MI
 Benedictine Sisters of Chicago
 Hospital Sisters of Saint Francis
 Sisters of Our Lady of Mount Camel
 Aquinas High School
 Mr. & Mrs. Elizabeth & John Stapleton
 Ann Henry
 Laurie Cassidy
 Brigid Blake
 Allison Antonini
 John & Ann Costanzi
 Christine Kessen
 Scot Anderson & Laurie McMillan
 Raymond & Janet Burke, Jr.
 Frances & David Zauhar
 Helen Bittel & Jeremy Prostka
 Mary Ann Zimmer
 Jose & Alice Reyes
 Sr. Maria Rose Kelly, IHM
 Susan & David Brangers
 Oswaldo & Diana Cuy Castellanos
 Agnes & John Cardoni
 Erin A. Sadlack
 Sarah Kenehan
 Mary Ellen Norpel
 Friends and family of Brigid Blake
 Patricia Kind Foundation (trustee grant)

via the Internet. It took me to Africa vicariously and into relationships with the women whose learning I facilitate - women who work all day in their ministries, prepare studiously for their three concurrent courses and maintain the responsibilities associated with their lives in their community. The educational endeavors of the sisters are not limited to the academic aspect of their experience. They are learning to get around technology that works well some days and inconsistently on others. They are adapting to different styles of teaching and balancing all that is on their plates. In Educational Psychology, the sisters are learning theories and concepts rooted in a culture not their own and finding insightful ways to make connections between theory and their own practice. The education that the sisters are receiving is transformative as they look with new eyes on their current ministries and responsibilities in light of what they are learning. Their ability to put their education to work for themselves as well as for all those



Sr. Katie Clauss, Sr. Mary Ann Zimmer, and Sr. Mary Salvaterra (sitting), HESA faculty Fall 2013 semester at Marywood University.

whom they serve has the potential to evoke change and growth in ways that we cannot ever imagine and will probably never see. As I continue to reflect on the impact the experience is having on me, I know that I have been transformed by women whose voices can be heard in their journal reflections, forums and chats and whose wisdom shines through the process. What a privilege it is to engage with them in this mutual learning experience. For this I am very grateful."

"Sister Mary taught Research Theory to the sisters in their first semester in the HESA program. Research is a very challenging course for new college students yet the sisters persisted in asking questions, working with online data bases, and trying some statistics. Sister Mary is now teaching the same sisters a course entitled History of Education. Sister Mary reflected on her experiences in teaching the HESA program: From January until May, 2013, I taught Research Methods to the sisters in the first HESA cohort and got to

know the sisters well. I am now teaching History of Education to the same group of sisters. I find that all the sisters have become quite comfortable with the technology involved in online courses. For example, one sister could not view a video I posted on Moodle so she went to the Internet and found the same video clip on YouTube. I notice that the sisters are more articulate in their responses to the forums. Because they are reading and writing a lot more, they have become more proficient in English writing. I truly enjoy teaching the sisters whom I have grown to know personally."

Mary Ann Zimmer, ND, Ph.D is Associate Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Marywood University.

Kathryn Clauss, IHM, Ph.D is Assistant Professor in the Department of Education at Marywood University

Mary Salvaterra, CSJ, Ph.D is a former Professor in the Department of Education at Marywood University.

MAJOR EVENTS



James Ephraim, Vice-Chancellor of the Catholic University College of Ghana, signs the Memorandum of Understanding with Chestnut Hill College on Oct. 31, 2013.

- 274 Sisters participated in a three-week Web Design and Basic Technology program in eight African countries. Sisters created websites to tell the story about their ministries and they have become technology savvy leaders.
- Through a partnership with the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the HESA program was awarded a \$3.85 million grant to benefit over 240 women religious in seven African nations to acquire college/university credentials.
- ASEC founding colleges and universities (Chestnut Hill College, Marywood University, Neumann University and Rosemont College) have partnered with eight colleges/universities in Africa to increase access to higher education opportunities for Catholic sisters in Africa.
- A partnership was sealed on October 31, 2013 with the primary goal to provide higher education for sisters in West Africa. Sister Carol Jean Vale, SSJ, President, Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia and Professor James Hawkins Ephraim, Vice Chancellor of the Catholic University College of Ghana (CUCG), Fiarpe signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work together to offer online distance learning classes to women religious in Africa starting in the fall, 2014, when 18 sisters from Ghana and Nigeria will begin the program. Representatives of the ASEC Board of Directors and the SLDI Advisory Board together with Chestnut Hill College Board Members, administration, faculty, staff and students joined Sister Carol for this historic event. Chestnut Hill College is one of the founding members of the African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC). Other members include Marywood University, Neumann University and Rosemont College together with congregations that founded these colleges and universities. ASEC's Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA) program, inaugurated in 2013 and funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, is providing opportunities for women religious to acquire higher education credentials through alternative means. Technology is rapidly changing the landscape of higher education as well as providing opportunities, particularly to these women who have longed for an education for years.
- Two Frameworks of Reference were signed for the HESA Program, with two partner universities in Africa: St. Augustine University – Tanzania and Tangaza University College in Kenya. These partnerships focus on educating sisters in-country. Chestnut Hill College and the Catholic University College of Ghana signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the goal to deliver a hybrid program in teacher education to benefit sisters in West Africa.



from left to right; Brigid Blake, Sr. Kathryn Miller, Sr. Carol Jean Vale, Sr. Anne Myers, Sr. Lisa Olivieri at the Chestnut Hill College signing of the MOU with CUCG.

• A cohort of 18 sisters was awarded scholarships to attend the Bigwa School in Morogoro, Tanzania. The eleven sisters who received scholarships in 2012 are continuing with their education. In addition four lay girls received scholarships. Thanks to the ASEC Scholarship Program.

• The congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati has joined ASEC as an Associate Member to support the endeavor of educating sisters in Africa. Thank you for taking this major step towards impacting the global sisterhood!

Voices of Women Religious in Africa Reveal Confidence and Hope

As said so truly by Sr. Lina Wanjiku, Program Director for East Africa, "No words can accurately describe the level of success that SLDI has had on the lives of the African people." Sr. Lina goes on to say in regards to



Sr. Lina is greeted by David Kimotho, who works with the HIV/AIDS program at the Evangelizing Sisters of Mary in Ongata Rongai, Kenya.

her region, eastern Africa, "What started as a proactive response to the dwindling numbers of Catholic missionaries in marginalized sub-Saharan Africa has grown and developed into a strong source of hope and enlightenment to populations living in some of the remotest areas of this eastern region of Africa. When ASEC responded to a plea by African congregations to help educate their female religious, little did they realize that they were planting a seed that would today be manifested in the successful story that SLDI has become." Indeed, the SLDI program has blossomed and grown through the years. Since 2007, a total of 504 sisters have graduated with a certificate in Administrative Leadership or Financial Management, and sisters have mentored over 8,004 colleagues and staff, individually and in groups. And the program continues to grow! Most importantly, however, is the impact that the program has had on the individual lives it has touched. As one sister from Nigeria Sr. Joy Nnenna Oti, SJGS has expressed, "I can sincerely and proudly say that SLDI has made a great impact in my life. Before I participated in the training, I had no knowledge of the use of computers. Having gone through the training, my knowledge and use of computers has improved, such that I can use Word, Excel and Power Point. The most exciting one is the use of Power Point – it seems like magic. I thought it was a complex exercise until we were taught and asked to prepare a presentation and then I realized how easy and enjoyable it is. The training has opened me up to the new world. I can now share the information with Sisters in my community and use it to carry out my work more efficiently." These voices attest to the power of knowledge.

Grace Lines, Administrative Assistant, ASEC/SLDI

I started working for ASEC on April 16, 2007. In my six years with this organization I have seen many changes and much growth. I have been asked what has touched me or transformed my life since working with this program. Upon reflection there are so many things. It amazes me that the sisters we work with every day do so much with so little. They cause me to be grateful for everything I have. I watch them as they come to our training sessions and the thirst they have for more knowledge. Again I am amazed with what they do with the knowledge they obtain from writing grants, to mentoring, to creating web sites for their communities and congregations. They don't just obtain the knowledge from the training sessions; they go back to their communities and put what they have learned into action. It has been such a pleasure to work alongside the wonderful people in this organization. I can honestly say that I look forward to hearing from our sisters in all parts of Africa and knowing that in some small way, I have played just a little part in furthering their education and growth.



Christina McDonald, HESA Program Coordinator

I have worked my entire professional life finding creative ways to provide equal access to quality education for those who are underserved, overlooked, or barred from opportunity for a slew of structural or cultural reasons. When I began to work with ASEC in August 2011 on developing the HESA program, I saw it as an honor and continued opportunity to empower others to make changes in the world through that empowerment. I am inspired and awed by the extraordinary work that sisters do day in and day

out in their everyday lives and ministries. They truly bring light and hope into the world. I smile each day when I come to work when I open my e-mail and receive such kindness and gratitude from the sisters; every day they send me prayers and blessings and thanks. I am truly lucky for this. Being a part of this extraordinary network of women has been a remarkable experience.

Sr. Maureen Malashya, SLDI East Africa Assistant Project Coordinator – Zambia



Sr. Maureen Malashya

Sr. Maureen Malashya of Zambia says, "The other great value of the (SLDI) program is on mentoring skills. All the sisters that have participated in the SLDI Program have learned the value of sharing knowledge. The sisters in Zambia have taken mentoring seriously. Thus we are committed to making sure that knowledge and education are shared among the religious and the people that we serve." Sr. Mary Germina of Uganda says, "The SLDI program which started training sisters in Uganda in 2007 has been embraced by superiors general of various religious institutes who carefully select sisters and send them for training because they see this as a big opportunity to empower the sisters with the urgently needed skills to effectively serve God's people in this ever changing world."

Sr. Marie Therese, HESA 2013



Sr. Marie Therese Fernando

This is a program that cannot be measured. Yes, education can be achieved, there is no doubt. But it is for those who can afford to do so. Either they are talented or not, through money they achieve what they want, sometimes even through corruption. There are those who have talents and yet cannot achieve because of the financial crisis. This is where we praise HESA for the wonderful job done. Some of us would not have succeeded if HESA is not here.

Sr. Elizabeth Ndulu, HESA Class 2013

HESA is helping me attain my professional dream through its provision of opportunity to gain skills and knowledge. It is giving me a brighter future by raising my income. Through it I will be a well-informed citizen. By participating in the HESA program I have widened my network of friendship, widened my view about other people's opinion in decision making, given me an identity; in the end I will be an alumnae of the HESA program. It is making me a role model to future HESA participants.



Sr. Elizabeth Ndulu

JAMBO SANA! (continued from front)

Phase I alumnae made a point of telling me that they did not receive a laptop on the completion of their workshops as did the subsequent participants in Phases II and III. We are in the process of amending that disparity.

The assertiveness of the Nigerian sisters is in contrast to the gentle demeanor of the sisters in Ghana. The Ghanaian sisters told me that the Nigerian sisters think they are too passive. Women religious in Ghana seem more connected to the priests and men religious as well as to the diocese. However, the reality of the sisters has unique characteristics and issues that can better be addressed when they act with one voice. They want to develop structures that will allow them to address these issues in concert with each other and, thus, more effectively.

Tanzania is the largest of the four countries that we visited. Although it is not much larger than Kenya, the infrastructure is less developed, which we experienced firsthand as it took over eight hours to drive from Dar es Salaam to Morogoro. As a result, it seems that the Tanzanian sisters have a greater difficulty coming together and connecting as a unit.

In Kenya, the Association of Consecrated Women of Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA) seems strong and organized. Each of the leadership conferences with whom we met seeks to construct buildings as hostels and/or conference/retreat/formation centers. They also identified "formation" as a high priority – both initial and ongoing formation.

The sisters have a compelling presence in Nairobi and are very influential across diverse ministries. We visited several ministries in Nairobi, including the Evangelizing Sisters of Mary near the Kware slums, at their school, farm, program for unwed mothers and HIV/AIDS clinic and dispensary. I was deeply touched by a teenage girl, Lillian, who dramatically and impeccably recited a poem that she wrote about her life. Her words were powerful and her elocution was moving. My immediate response was to want to assure she had the opportunity for a university education. At the Little Sisters of St. Francis near the Kabera slums we visited their hospital, clinic for children and families with HIV/AIDS and Home of Hope for street boys. Sister Esther does an amazing job with the clinic and seeks to earn her baccalaureate degree in nursing at Aga Khan University. I am thrilled that we are able to support her in her educational goals through the Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA) grant and have confidence that her university degree will enhance her effectiveness in ministry.

I could write volumes about the innumerable ways that sisters positively impact the people of Africa through their ministries and their lives. The Holy Child Integrated Agriculture Center in Abeokuta, Nigeria incorporates organic farming to teach and empower the community toward better health. The Hospitaller Sisters clinic in Dompsoase, Ghana serves 90 patients daily and their day care center serves 40 mentally disadvantaged children and adults. At the Bigwa Secondary School in Morogoro, Tanzania, 29 sisters are earning their high school diplomas. The students' and sisters' song and dance were jubilant. I planted my first tree in Africa at Bigwa.

I was deeply impressed with the Basic Technology and Website Development classes in all four countries. The faculty were professionally competent and culturally sensitive, as well as aware of each sister's level of technical skills and personal insecurities. The sisters were so grateful and attentive. I made the mistake of giving them my email address with an open invitation to send me a message at the end of their class about how they would use what they learned and what they sought in their next step in education. My email account was never so full, even before I returned to the states.

The meetings with the Chancellors and administrators of the Catholic University of Ghana, Tangaza College, St. Augustine University and the Catholic University of Eastern Africa were very informative and productive. I was pleased to learn of their openness and active partnership in the education of our sisters in Africa and gave each one a Hilton Foundation Legacy Book personally signed by Steve himself.

The lessons learned throughout this amazing journey were numerous. I'd like to cite just four.

- The sisters are a powerful force for human development and accomplish so much with so little.
- The opportunity for education is the most strategic and systemic way that the Hilton Foundation can mobilize and deepen their impact and influence.
- The advancement of the sisters has a much broader impact on the cultures of the nations because it is very aligned with the advancement of all women.
- Getting into the field is essential for grant makers; otherwise you are isolated from all that you need to learn.

On a personal note, I was so pleased that my niece, Jennifer, joined us. I was proud of her as she fully entered into every experience and became known as "Sister Jennifer." There were times when I felt that I was the one who accompanied Sister Jennifer throughout Africa.

One of the amazing aspects of this journey is that it worked, given the complexities of the continent and the complexities of our itinerary. This could not have happened without the impeccable and strategic planning and coordination of Sister Jane and the regional coordinators, Sisters Clementina, Bridgid, Francisca, Bonita and Lina as well as many, many others. The hospitality and security that we experienced in the midst of fragility and precariousness were testimonies to their careful planning and watchfulness. It is also indicative of the strength of the ASEC network among the sisters and the respect they have for all that ASEC is achieving with and for them.

This was truly a "bold adventure" of a lifetime that will continue to evolve in terms of all the ways I have been touched and all I have learned. My gratitude is unceasing and continues to grow!

Sister Rosemarie Nassif, SSND, Ph.D. is the Director of the Catholic Sisters Initiative at the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.

HIGHLIGHTS

Sisters Leadership Development Initiative Expands to Serve 756 Catholic Sisters in Nine African Nations

In 2013 the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation awarded \$4.5 million to support the SLDI program in nine countries in Africa. SLDI Phase III successfully commenced in eight countries. SLDI has expanded to benefit Malawi and South Sudan, while also continuing the program in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia. Altogether, 240 sisters are participating in Web Design and Basic Technology Workshops



Sisters in deep discussion at an Alumnae Meeting, July in Nigeria.

In 2013. In 2014-2015, a total of 756 sisters from nine countries, that will include Cameroon and Malawi will participate in Leadership and Financial Management training. SLDI is growing each day to empower sisters in Africa. The power of networks and sisterhood keep Alumnae Associations thriving and growing.

Sisters who finish the SLDI program have been strengthened by their experience. They have learned so much, have created new bonds with their sisters, and relish the shared creativity



SLDI students pose with ASEC partners after a Technology and Web Design training in Nigeria, July 2013.

that takes place in such an environment. The SLDI Alumnae Association was created in order to continue the creative nurturing and power of networking long after the end of SLDI training. Sisters exchange experiences so that they can share concrete issues and ways to deal with those issues. The SLDI Alumnae Association was created in 2010 and operates in each of the countries participating in SLDI. Its infrastructure is becoming stronger with alumnae meetings being held once a year for three days to network and to support and encourage each other in their ministries. The number of sisters attending the alumni meetings has grown exponentially from serving just over seventy women annually in 2010 and 2011, respectively, to serving 114 in 2012 to 233 in 2013! Sisters meet to take advantage of this life-long learning opportunity, as each meeting has a theme. Sisters have learned on topics as varied as Spirituality and Leadership, Managing Leadership Stress to Global Awareness. Alumnae workshops are facilitated by renowned experts in leadership and development. Presenters range from Superior Generals, Counselors, and University Professors.

Dreams of Higher Education Come True for Women Religious in Africa

Access to higher education in sub-Saharan Africa still has many challenges. Women have traditionally not had the same equal access to education as men, in all areas from early childhood education to tertiary education. Although this trend is changing with the introduction of the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All initiatives, much work still needs to be done. For Catholic sisters who commit to a life of servitude and poverty, the demands on their everyday lives are so great, that dreaming of

accessing higher education seems just that, only a dream. The Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA) program wants to change that. Through creative engineering and proactive recruitment, HESA is offering the opportunity of a lifetime to women religious in Africa: an opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree and to take on the much-needed leadership role that is so much in demand of sisters as traditional missionaries depart Africa, leaving vacant positions and a dearth of leadership in their wake. As Sr. Clementina Obembe says, HESA is the icing on top of the cake. With the implementation of



First Cohort of sisters entering the HESA Program.

the HESA program, many sisters cannot wait for their turn to come as this program will give them the opportunity to compete with the rest of the world. It will increase their morale and help them to believe in themselves that they can go higher." By January 2014, a total of 84 sisters will be enrolled in one of HESA's many partnership institutions. Thanks to the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and all our partners for making this a possibility. The HESA Program, after its initial pilot year of 2013, is now in full operation.

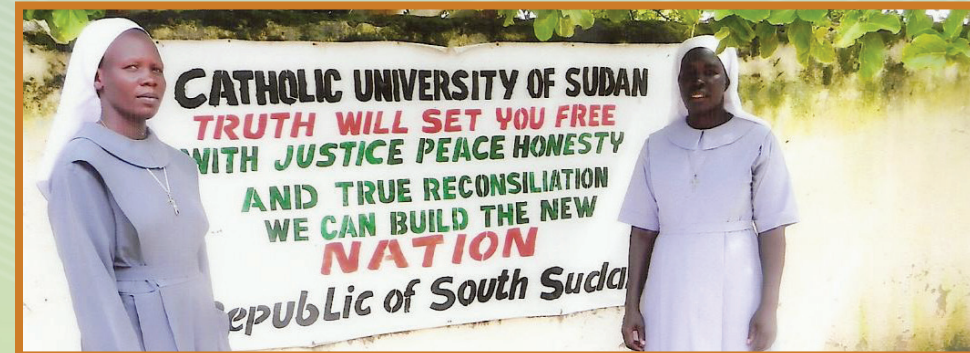
Big Goals for SLDI

The Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI) is an innovative program with the overarching goal to increase access for management and leadership skill-building for African Sisters through training and education that are adaptable to the specific needs and contexts in which the Sisters are working. Since inception in 2007, SLDI has benefited over 800 sisters and over 1,600 of their colleagues and co-workers have been mentored. Using their newly acquired skills, SLDI alumnae have raised over \$4.6 million through grant writing and fundraising initiatives. Sisters use their newly acquired knowledge and skills to effectively serve their people in schools, healthcare facilities, social service ministries, rehabilitation centers, supporting people with disabilities, training people on arable farming, and other development and pastoral oriented projects. Impacts created by sisters in their ministries are a testimony that Catholic sisters, the workforce of the Catholic Church in Africa, are working



Sisters attending SAUT stand proudly with their laptops.

tirelessly to bring change and meaning of life to underprivileged persons in Africa. Sisters express immeasurable gratitude to SLDI, which has created untold benefits including self-confidence, self-awareness, ability to navigate complex environments, and technology skills. Truly, education is the best investment to unlock individual talents! Education has provided new perspectives to look for a future that is full of possibilities. Sisters continue to use the newly acquired knowledge and skills as well as to mentor their colleagues and coworkers.



Two sisters from South Sudan joined the HESA Program in September 2013.

Innovative Higher Education Models Enable Catholic Sisters to Acquire Credentials at Home

HESA, in just a short time, has begun to expand to meet the needs of the realities of active and working sisters in Africa. Originally conceived as a hybrid, online, face-to-face bachelor's degree-granting program (which began implementation in 2013 with the first class of sisters entering Marywood University in January, with plans to transfer to the Catholic University of Eastern Africa in January 2014 after one year of online learning), the reality quickly became clear that the demand was so great for entry into higher learning, but the conditions for the hybrid approach did not always exist. For sisters with limited knowledge of English, or who lived in areas where internet connection simply was not a reality, other solutions had to be found. Beginning in the autumn of 2013,

HESA has expanded to include two modes of implementation to allow for even more access to education for sisters in Africa. A second mode of implementation was included which allows sisters to study in person for the full duration of their university studies. The institutions that ASEC has already partnered with in 2013 to deliver this latter approach are Saint Augustine University – Tanzania (SAUT) and the Catholic University of South Sudan (CUofSS). In September 2013, eight sisters from Tanzania were successfully admitted into SAUT and are pursuing bachelor's degrees in Education and Business Administration, and two sisters were admitted into CUofSS and are studying Education. A host of other partnerships following this model will begin in 2014, including: The Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA, Kenya Tangaza University College – Kenya, Veritas University Abuja – Nigeria, Kisubi Brothers University College – Uganda, and the ChemChem Institute in Kenya. A second hybrid partnership will begin between Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA and the Catholic University College Ghana, slated to begin in fall 2014.

learn about the learning platform Moodle, how to communicate using chat tools, Skype, how to utilize electronic resources, and so much more. In fact, sisters are becoming quite the experts at their new skills! According to Sr. Bonita, OSB, Ph.D. – Chair, Department of Mathematical Sciences at Mount Marty College, South Dakota, and multi-time trainer to sisters in technology and web development, "We live in a digital age and it is



Sisters are becoming technological geeks.

crucial for the religious sisters of East Africa to have access to the Internet and the World Wide Web and to have the necessary skills to utilize digital information and to function effectively in a digital environment. The sisters participating in these courses were eager and grateful learners. They worked hard and they put in long days. It was not uncommon to find sisters working in the computer lab as late as midnight after being in class all day."

Water is Life!

A borehole at the Bigwa School has provided the so much needed water for the school and locals. Thanks to the GHR Foundation for their support! Because of the borehole, Bigwa is now able to supply clean running water not only to the students attending the school, but to supply irrigation to the garden, and water for cattle and a fish pond.



A borehole has enabled sisters to grow food crops that provide a supplementary diet for students at the Bigwa School.

Revitalizing Higher Education: Cross Border Experiences of Two Catholic Universities

International higher education continues to grow necessitated by multiple factors at work within the dynamics of contemporary society. The growth, better still, revitalization of higher education is shaped by various models, highly dependent on resource availability and stakeholder support. For more than one year now, CUEA has revitalized its model of higher education to one group of students, African Sisters primarily those drawn from the East Africa region to start with. Through collaboration with the African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC) under the leadership of Sr. Jane Wakahiu, the ASEC Executive Director and a CUEA Alumna, The Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) is currently in partnership with Marywood University (MU) offering a joint Bachelor's degree in Education to 18 sisters, the pioneer cohort in the partnership. Following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between MU and CUEA in August 2012 by the Presidents of the two universities, the sisters started their higher education journey in November 2012, through an orientation workshop held in Nairobi that prepared them for the higher education experience. The induction workshop specifically prepared them for the online learning experience, a critical component for their first year of learning at MU. January 2013 marked the beginning of the online sessions at Marywood, which end in December 2013, paving the way for the students to transfer to CUEA for the blended experience of face to face and online learning sessions.

Scaling the heights

Though just a year old, this partnership is promising to deliver impact within a short period of its being, largely because of the "teamness" exemplified by the various stakeholders. It is always a pleasure working with the entire team that supports the programme, mainly the ASEC leadership in the United States



Dr. Rita Njageh and Dr. Peter Gichure from CUEA discuss partnership with Sr. Lina Wanjiku.

and the coordinator in East Africa, Sr. Lina Wanjiku, the Marywood team, as well as the various staff members of CUEA drawn from the Faculty of Education, Registry, Library, Faculties of Arts and Social Science, Commerce, Science and Directorate of Academic Linkages. The programme has continued to receive the support of the senior university management, especially from the Vice Chancellor, Rev. Msg. Pius Rutechura and the DVC Academic Affairs Prof. Justus Mbae. Though always expected in programme implementation, stakeholder goodwill and support is not always the case. However, the

case of this partnership is promising and brings the vital lessons for any development partner to embrace. Through use of open communication and decision making paradigm, the programme has succeeded in realizing a supportive working environment among the stakeholders involved in service delivery, and most importantly provision of exceptional service to the students, creating in them a yearning to complete their studies and move on to be of service to others. One of the students in an e-mail communication to the Directorate of Academic Linkages indicated "Thanks for the information you have been updating us with about the university and making sure that we are all okay". Similarly, the ASEC Executive Director in one of her e-mail correspondence indicated, "I want to thank you for what you are doing to make the HESA program a success! Certainly it takes a village to raise a child. Thank you for all meetings we held during my recent visit. They were all very informative in strengthening our partnership". This is a testimony that all stakeholders are valued and greatly impact on realizing the partnership deliverables.

The sisters have received both moral and material support, aspects that are rare for many students pursuing undergraduate education. Thanks to the support of ASEC, and its financial partner, The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, each of the sisters was provided with a laptop, a webcam, modem, core course textbooks and airtime for the modem, among other material provisions. In regard to moral support, the ASEC regional coordinator and the CUEA team, specifically the Directorate of Academic Linkages and CUEA's e-learning coordinator, Mr. Edward Ombajo are available to provide the much needed moral support. Mr. Ombajo is always on call to assist the students when

faced with technical challenges as they go through the online classes at Marywood. A rare component of the programme is the induction and self reflection workshops, opportunities that even graduate students do not have access to in various funded educational programmes due to scarcity of funds and goodwill, among other reasons. Through these opportunities, the students are exposed to the rigour expected of scholars in a university environment. Drawing from the experience of the June 2013 reflection exercise, a majority of the sisters appreciated the session on time management indicating their

wish to have the session presented during the orientation workshop to equip them with skills early enough for their use in the programme.

The ease with which the majority of the sisters are now able to use technology, to not only prepare their course assessments but to search for material and actively participate in the online learning strategy is another first for the programme. Looking at the age of the sisters participating in the programme, their adaptation to technology contributes to demystifying the perception that technology is the domain for Generation Y. We are optimistic that the sisters will be able to make use of the opportunities brought about by technological advancements beyond the course and create programmes and various innovations for adoption by their local communities, congregations, and the larger society.

Futures

Our SWOT analysis shows that the partnership has more strengths and opportunities than the weaknesses and threats in place. As the first year of the pilot phase comes to an end, and we anticipate the orientation workshop of the second cohort, we are optimistic to make use of the lessons learned from the pilot group to provide a more enriching learning experience for the students. At the same time, it is our hope to open up more ground for partnership between the two universities. While much of the activities during the first pilot year have largely concentrated on student learning and the administrative front, we anticipate mutual partnerships among the MU and CUEA faculty especially those teaching in the programme. These could yield to collaborative research, chiefly comparing and constructing new educational experiences based on what is available from

the two institutions which are founded and based in two different world zones, yet serving the same group of individuals. As we continue to draw lessons from the partnership and roll out the best practices to other initiatives, CUEA looks forward to initiating similar partnerships as the current one with Marywood University to include the other universities under the ASEC umbrella.

CUEA appreciates the partnership and we promise our commitment to its successful implementation. We thank ASEC and Marywood University for choosing to partner with CUEA, a world class university producing transformative leaders for Church and Society through excellence in research, teaching and community service. We are happy to be able to work with one of our alumni, Sr. Jane Wakahiu, towards development of capacity for African Sisters and the world at large, where the sisters serve.

SISTERS IN ACTION!



Sr. Generosa, Headmistress at the Bigwa School. Their borehole funded by the GHR Foundation provided clean water with which to irrigate their crops.



A group gathers behind Sr. Carol Jean Vale at Chestnut Hill College to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Catholic University College of Ghana on October 31, 2013.



Sr. Jane demonstrates at a technology training in Nigeria in July.



Evangelizing Sisters of Mary in Nairobi who support an HIV/AIDS program that supports vulnerable children and provides voluntary counseling.



Farming is one of the key areas that sisters engage in to support their ministries.



Collaborative partnerships lead to the success of SLDI. Represented in the photo are the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation CEO (kneeling center), SLDI instructors that include CORAT Africa, EMD and Mungai Wainaina Co., together with ASEC representatives.



Sr. Kathleen instructs sisters at an SLDI web design workshop in Uganda in early July.

SISTERS IN ACTION!
CONTINUED



New Computer Lab in Ghana.



Sisters at the Bigwa School pick vegetables at their farm. This would not have been possible without the support of the GHR Foundation for the borehole project!



Nigeria Conference of Women Religious (NCWR) after the meeting at Jos, Nigeria outside the formation center of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.



Making a Difference - four girls are attending the Bigwa Secondary School because of the generosity of faculty at Marywood University. Thank you!



A fishpond provides protein supplements to the students of Bigwa.



Beautiful tomatoes as a result of the borehold project at the Bigwa School.



(from left to right) Ms. Sofiya, Abraham, Sr. Jane, Sr. Rosemarie and Ms. Helen Abraham – SLDI Instructors in Nigeria.



Sr. Lina (center) stands committed with representatives from SAUT and Sr. Rosemarie from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation to educating sisters in Africa in July 2013.



Partnerships are at the core of HESA. Representatives of CUEA meet with ASEC and Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.



ACWEA Representatives together with the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation with ASEC in Nairobi, Kenya



Sr. Rosemarie cradles a child in Ghana



Sr. Clementina distributes laptop to sister Chritiana Baba at the SLDI Technology Training Workshop in July in Nigeria.



Sr. Henrietta from Ghana created a juice processing plant. She teaches women in the community on wellness and good nutrition.



Sr. Lisa Olivieri (second in from right) sits with Jennifer Alexander, Esq., Sr. Rosemarie and Sr. Jane. Sr. Lisa was the lead trainer at the SLDI Technology Workshop in Nigeria in July



Sr. Rosemarie at the Bigwa School with 29 sisters who have benefited from the ASEC Scholarship Program.

Congratulations

The following Sisters are SLDI alumnae and were elected to serve in the leadership of their congregations. Sisters you are in our prayers!

- Sr. Christy Kure, SSL, Sisters of St. Louis, Nigeria Province
- Sr. Josemaria Anyawu, HFSN, Holy Family Sisters of the Needy, Nigeria
- Sr. Justina Ijeoma Elom, SJGS, Vicar General, Sisters of Jesus the Good Shepherd from Abakaliki, Nigeria
- Sr. Consolatrice Onyeluka, HFSN, Regional Superior, Eastern Region, Holy Family Sisters of the Needy
- Sr. Angelina Mulani, DSH, will serve in General Council, of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart, Malta
- Sr. Pauline Wairimu, DSH, Regional Council, Daughters of the Sacred Heart, Kenya
- Sr. Wilfrida Adero, ESM, Vicar General, Evangelizing Sisters of Mary
- Sr. Martha Wanjiku, MIS, Principal/ Administrator, Maria Immaculata Education Center
- Sr. Susan Njoroge, ASN, General Bursar, Assumption Sisters of Nairobi, Kenya
- Sr. Theresa Nakamya, DM, Regional Superior, Masaka Region, Daughters of Mary, Uganda
- Sr. Susan Tibasiima, LSOSF, Regional Bursar, of Central Region, Uganda
- Sr. Eutropia Nduye, FSC, Superior General, of the Franciscan Sisters of Charity, Tanzania
- Sr. Plaxidius Chola - Little Srs of Saint Francis - the Clinic Administrator at Mukunka Rural Health Clinic
- Sr. Dorica Kavimba - Teresan Sisters - has been deployed by the government at Tivyilane Community School
- Sr. Gertrude Daka - Daughters of the Redeemer - a Headmistress at Lukamatano Basic School in Chilanga
- Sr. Constanca Nzowa Lungu - Little Srs of Saint Francis - Local Superior Mukuka Community

UP CLOSE



Sr. Margaret Kiria John

Against All Odds – Perseverance and Desire Create Miracles

Meet Sr. Margaret Kiria John, one of 8 students attending St. Augustine University – Tanzania as part of the HESA program. Sisters had been anticipating the HESA Orientation meeting, which took place on September 6 and 7, 2013, with great excitement for weeks. On the first day of the session, however, Sr. Margaret was not feeling very well at all; despite that, she fully participated in the program without complaint. The next day, however, all of a sudden, she became seriously ill and had to be rushed to the hospital, which was more than 12 hours from the workshop site by bus. She had a serious pain in her chest and could not sleep or eat. She was to stay in hospital and not to travel for a second day in order to rest. Sr. Margaret had other plans, however. After taking her medication, she managed to travel and to report to SAUT on time so as not to miss a moment of the orientation and beginning of the semester. HESA Program Coordinator in Tanzania, Sr. Tryphina Burchard says, "From that event, I learned a lesson on how she desired so much not to miss the chance provided from the HESA program. I admired her perseverance and commitment to not miss even a day for reporting to school." Sr. Margaret is a sister with high determination towards success. Many sisters are not able to have the chance at education, and Sr. Margaret was; she is a hard worker with a lot of determination. Sr. Margaret's health is now in order, and she continues well with her studies at SAUT.

African Sisters Education Collaborative PARTNERS IN AFRICA AND USA

WEST AFRICA

1. Ghanaian Conference of Religious (GCR)
2. Nigerian Conference of Women Religious (NCWR)
3. Conference of English-Speaking Religious (CESR)

EAST AFRICA

4. Association of Sisterhood of Kenya (AOSK)
5. Association of Religious of Uganda (ARU)
6. Tanzanian Catholic Association of Sisters (TCAS)
7. South Sudan Sisters Association (SSA)

CENTRAL AFRICA

8. Zambia Association of Sisters (ZAS)
9. Association of Women Religious of Malawi (AWRIM)



ASEC PARTNERS

U.S. UNIVERSITIES AND CONGREGATIONS

Chestnut Hill College and Sisters of Saint Joseph of Philadelphia
Marywood University and Sisters Servants of the Immaculate
Heart of Mary, Scranton
Neumann University and Sisters of Saint Francis, Philadelphia
Rosemont College and Society of the Holy Child Jesus
DePaul University
Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati

AFRICAN PARTNERS

Associations of Women Religious

Association of Sisterhood of Kenya (AOSK)
Association of Religious of Uganda (ARU)
Ghanaian Conference of Religious (GCR)
Nigerian Conference of Women Religious (NCWR)
Conference of English-Speaking Religious (CESR)
Tanzanian Catholic Association of Sisters (TCAS)
Association of Women Religious of Malawi (ARIMA)
Zambia Association of Sisters
South Sudan Sisters Association (SSA)

Colleges and Universities

Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA)
Catholic University College of Ghana (CUCG)
Saint Augustine University, Tanzania (SAUT)
Chemchemi ya Uzima Institute, Kenya
Tangaza University College, Kenya
Catholic University of South Sudan, South Sudan
Veritas University, Nigeria
Kisubi Brothers University College (KBUC), Uganda

Instructional Partners

Hobatta Globe Nigeria Limited (HGNL)
Christian Organizations Research and Advisory Trust
(CORAT Africa)
Mungai Wainaina Company
Global TELCOM Zambia
EMD Organization
Capricorn Software Technologies
Faculty from colleges and universities in the USA and Africa.

Final Word

Jeremiah invites us,

“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, which was the good way? Take it and you will find rest for yourselves”

Jeremiah 6:16.



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A Word from Diane Keller, Ph.D., LSW

I have been involved with the SLDI program as the evaluator since the program began. It is exciting to be part of the program and witness the change in ministries and communities through pictures, videos, and reports of their projects, mentoring, grant writing, etc. I have been very impressed by the individual success of the participants. Sisters have become leaders in their congregations and in their ministries.

I am dedicated to the process, it has been a wonderful experience. This has given me opportunities to share evaluation skills and knowledge with students and give them opportunities for scholarly work. Many thanks.

Diane Keller, Ph.D., LSW

Director, School of Social Work

You are welcome to choose to support ASEC during this festive season.