Archives Workshop Benefits 55 Women Religious in Africa

As the numbers of missionaries who have served Africa in the last century continue to dwindle, more and more African sisters are taking on responsibilities to fill the shoes of the missionaries who were well qualified to administer schools, hospitals, social welfare homes, and pastoral care institutions before them. Congregations started by these missionaries are reaching silver, golden and platinum jubilees and archiving their histories is becoming increasingly important. In May of 2012, ASEC sponsored an Archives Workshop in Kenya. The workshop was delivered by certified archivists, Sister Mary Maher and Sister Mary Sebarcki. It was attended by 55 participants from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia.

Thank you and Welcome to ASEC Board of Directors

The ASEC board sends best wishes to Sister Nora Sweeney, SHCJ, who has served so dedicatedly on ASEC’s board for six years. Sr. Nora has moved on to serve in Cape Coast, Ghana. The ASEC Board welcomes Sister Mary Ann Knaigle, SHCJ, who takes the place of Sr. Nora on the Board. Sr. Mary Ann brings a wealth of skills after serving for years in Africa.

Welcome to New ASEC Staff

ASEC is growing and expanding initiatives in order to meet the educational needs of women religious in Africa. Join me in welcoming Christina McDonald, HESA Program Coordinator. Christina joined ASEC in August, 2012. She brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise in working with international organizations. We also welcome Sister Maureen Murashya, SHS. Sr. Maureen is the Coordinator of the SLDI Program in Zambia. She is a beneficiary of the SLDI program, and she is making full use of the skills she has gained through that program.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

The African Sisters Education Collaborative continues to provide increased access to education for women religious in Africa.

As we come close to the end of 2012, my heart is filled with gratitude for significant milestones attained this year. We have journeyed together to achieve the ASEC mission. Thank you for your passion, time, gifts and services that you have donated to ASEC this year. Your help has created educational opportunities for women religious in sub-Saharan Africa, support of the church in Africa, and the people these women so willingly serve.

I am grateful to the very dedicated ASEC staff in the USA and Africa, who tirelessly gives of their time without counting the cost. I would like to share with you some of the accomplishments and milestones we attained together.

Thank you!
ASEC, Executive Director
We are grateful to the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI) Program continues to offer the much needed skills and competencies to women religious in Africa. Catholic sisters in Africa continue to dedicate their lives to serve and improve the cause of the poor and vulnerable people by helping where the needs are greatest and by giving visible witness to the most marginalized. In the face of desperate needs in Africa, sisters continue to emerge as a solid source of hope for the future of the church and society. Sister beneficiaries to the SLDI program continue to engage in programs that alliguate the plight of the people, providing humanitarian assistance, medical services at schools, hospitals, and dispensaries in rural outreach hospitals, and in programs for HIV/AIDS patients, unwed mothers, youth, street children, and orphans.

Conrad N. Hilton Foundation SLDI Site-to-Visit to Kenya

The miracle of “Feeding the Multitude” at Kibagare Slum, Nairobi, Kenya. In July-August, 2012 a delegation from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation visited with the SLDI alumnae in Nairobi, Kenya. The purpose of the visit was to assess and witness the impact of the SLDI program initiative led by Sr. Steven M. Hilton to benefit the sisters in Africa. The delegation witnessed first-hand the work of the SLDI alumnae who had shared their stories and experiences in their communities, as well as among the people they serve. The team was led by Mr. Steven M. Hilton, President & CEO, Edmund J. Cain, Vice President, Shakhem Kassim-Lakha, Director, International Programs, and Brad Myers, Program Officer. Also present were Sr. Anne Mundy, IHM, President of Marywood University and ASEC, Vice Chair and Sister Jane Wakatsi, LSCOF, ASEC Executive Director. The team visited more than 10 different projects run by the sisters among the poor people of Kenya.

Among the many very touching stories, I would like to share with you one which I visited with the Kibagare slum where the Assumption Sisters of Nairobi have a running center for underprivileged children. The Kibagare slum is situated in the western part of the city of Nairobi and is home to over 10,000 people. This slum, like many others across the city, is located in a source of temporary shelter for the poorly paid families, unwed mothers, the widowed, and those with other social and economic problems. The feeding program was started in 1980. Today Kibagare is a place where over 1,500 children come from within a 3 to 5 kilometer radius to get a hot meal. The Center comprises of a nursery school that caters to children from the age of 4, a primary school that currently holds 625 pupils and an all- girls secondary school with 250 students. Sister Catherine Njoroge, principal of the Kibagare SLDI Administration Track, took us on a brief tour and turned her learning into a mentorship that benefited three of her community members who have gone on to replicate the learning in different places. Phenomenal growth was evident in the motivation among the staff at Kibagare, with so little they are giving new life to these children.

Moreover, Catherine went full steam in project management, wrote proposals to numerous potential partners, and the response resulted in partnerships with organizations such as the Christian Fund for Children - Africa (CFCA), Good News Community and the World Food Bank. She also forged partnerships with well-to-do schools in Nairobi like the Strathmore School, Saint Mary’s School, and the Saint Nicholas and Wardy nursery school.

The delegation also held meetings with stakeholders and partners including the Association of Sisters ofSTITuents of Kenya (ASSK), the Association of Consecrated Women in East and Central Africa (ACW-ECA), Deans at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa and Tangaza College, respectively. They also met with the instructors who have been teaching in the SLDI program. Visit accsl.org/home/sldi/ for more information.

New Partnerships

ASEC recognizes the power of working together to provide the much needed skills to the SLDI alumnae. As a result, ASEC has initiated partners and partnering the University of Chicago, Northwestern University, the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA). Similar partnerships are being pursued between Choufouin Hill College and the Catholic University College of Ghana (CUCC), Sr. Anne Mundy, IHM, PhD. together with the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), signed the Memorandum of Understanding between the Catholic University College of Eastern Africa (CUEA) and the University of Chicago, on August 1, 2012.

Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA)

ASEC has inaugurated a new initiative - the Higher Education Support for Sisters (HESA) that offers sisters a path to expanding their educational and professional credentials in their home countries. HESA aims at providing the SLDI alumnae and their beneficiaries to the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation SLDI alumnae who show promise of leadership. HESA offers access to a high quality, four-year bachelor’s degree university program for Catholic sisters in the African continent.

Through innovative design and institutional partnerships, HESA overcomes the limitations of geographic distance and creates new opportunities for educational advancement. HESA offers sisters two years of undergraduate study at the Catholic University College of Eastern Africa (CUEA), followed by a U.S. institution, which prepares sisters with skills with which to undertake studies in person at a partner African University. This partnership guarantees sisters’ a spot at the African University, while completing their degrees there ensures they meet professional requirements in their home countries so that sisters can best serve their communities and ministries. The HESA program is timely, given governments in Africa are requiring individuals working in educational, healthcare, and social services to have relevant credentials.

There are several benefits of such partnerships. One, it will help ensure that sisters have the opportunity to enhance their knowledge and skills and gain exposure to international perspectives. Two, it will provide a pathway to matriculate at a university in Africa or in the U.S. Three, it will provide a pathway to complete one’s degree there. The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation recognized the power of working together and in order to help provide secondary education for several hundred sisters, ASEC has established a scholarship program to support the education of these sisters. In 2012 ASEC awarded eleven, two-year scholarships for sisters to acquire a high school diploma. One of the sister-students who was 49 years old said, “It has been my dream to gain education, and one day, becoming a reality. I want to be a nurse to bring healing to the people in the remote regions.” When these sisters graduate, their secondary studies they will be eligible for higher education.

Scholarship Program for Women Religious

According to the Tanzania Catholic Association of Sisters (TACAS) there are 11,000 women religious serving in that country. Over 4,000 entered religious congregations have completed primary education and then spent time in initial formation and in ministry before starting secondary education. Specific recommendations have been made to meet the needs of the sisters. ASEC is committed to supporting the Bigwa Sisters Secondary School in Tanzania in order to help provide secondary education for several hundred sisters. ASEC has established a scholarship program to support the education of these sisters. In 2012 ASEC awarded eleven, two-year scholarships for sisters to acquire a high school diploma. One of the sister-students who was 49 years old said, “It has been my dream to gain education, and one day, becoming a reality. I want to be a nurse to bring healing to the people in the remote regions.” When these sisters graduate, their secondary studies they will be eligible for higher education.

Service Learning Program

ASEC believes in providing global experience to students. Between May-June, 2012 thirteen students from three faculty chaplains spent two weeks at the Bigwa School in Tanzania tutoring students in English and visiting an orphanage. Upon their return, the students reported a life changing experience that was academically, professionally, and personally enriching. One student said, “We were able to grow in understanding diverse cultures and communities. It was an opportunity to learn about social issues and their root causes and to improve on their ability to handle ambiguity and be open to change, as well as becoming more flexible.” This was true when they did not have water for two days, they adjusted accordingly to life situations.

Sister Margaret Gannon, IHM, PhD, the lead chaplain, expressed gratitude for the all financial support received from congregations, colleges, universities. Sister Muneke to the USA students took action to educate their colleagues. One of the students donated $1,000 to purchase a cow so that students at Bigwa School can benefit. The local community and students at the Bigwa School expressed gratitude for the support provided to them through tutoring and for the gift of cows. Students have plenty of milk.

The provision of water has been a great challenge at the Bigwa Secondary School. Through the support of the GHR Foundation, a borehole was drilled in March, 2012. Now there is plenty of water to serve the needs of the students and community. A fish pond has been erected; fish raised here will be used to improve the students’ diet. Thank you to our funders and partners to the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation who helped us to make a difference - a science laboratory with three well equipped labs, a full-time teacher, Mr. Nevil Kasivu, a borehole, textbooks and a tutoring program. The support students learn English, have all been accomplished to support the students at the Bigwa School.

The first HESA cohort of 18 sisters gather at Cheni Chemi ya Uzima, Nairobi, November-December, 2012 for orientation.

Standing from left: Angela Katheke, Rebecca Makunga, Lydia Apiti, Susan Ntaba, Regina Omwamba. Dennisa Lume, Annet Namara, Lukan Oguta, Adekete Abudoraha, Maryanne Kach, Margaret Nangiro. Sitting from left: Marie Thembe, Elizabeth Nekile, Patience Kinyanjui, Margaret Gannon, WM Fatchery, Catherine Ndalikwa, Anna Kikilwa and Jane Watenga.

Presenters were Sister Margaret Gannon, IHM, PhD, Marywood University Faculty and Sr. Kathleen Burns, IHM, taught online via WebEx.

A total of 254 women religious from Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zambia successfully completed a three-year SLDI program and graduated after gaining competencies in leadership, human resource management, financial management, and teaching and learning skills. These women are actively engaged in bringing change to their ministries. It was all publication at the graduation ceremonies in each of these countries.

The Hilton Delegation, together with Reverend Dr. Pius Rutechura, Vice President and Sr. Margaret Ann, IHM, PhD, President of Marywood University and Rev. Dr. Leonard B. Williams, III, president of the Christian Faculty and Students in Africa (CFS), signed the Memorandum of Understanding between the Christian Fund for Children - Africa (CFC), Good News Community, and the World Food Bank. She also forged partnerships with well-to-do schools in Nairobi like the Strathmore School, Saint Mary’s School, and the Saint Nicholas and Wardy nursery school.

There are several benefits of such partnerships. There was an overall consensus that the Service Learning Program for Sisters in Africa (HESA) program is becoming a reality for sisters to acquire the dream of higher education. The HESA program offers the unique opportunity to sisters that include:

• Access to international faculty, the best teaching materials, and the most up-to-date library resources;
• A global experience and interaction with peers and faculty from diverse cultures and countries;
• Opportunity to matriculate at a university for sisters who otherwise would not have the chance;
• Technological expertise by sharpening software skills and computer use and;
• Preparation to meet professional qualifications in their home countries.

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