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

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
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 efforts in an attempt to accomplish the mission of ASEC, which is to facilitate educational opportunities for religious women 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 in Tanzania, and the Service Learning Program. Education is an investment in human and social capital. ASEC continues to support Catholic Sisters in Africa. Empowerment is a process that enhances the capacities 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 also are taking meaningful actions to create and run projects that are transforming lives and society in Africa.

In this year, we 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. Sr. Bonita Gacnik and Sr. Jane Koech were part of the Bigwa School. Sr. Margaret Gannon, IHM, Ph.D. is a Professor in the Social Science Department at Marywood University. Sr. Kathleen Burns, IHM, Ed.D is the Director of Web Development at Marywood University.

Sisters Proudly Share their Ministries and Congregations through Web Design

Sr. Rosemarie admires a sister’s work at an LSOM Workshop at the Tanzania Centre, Nairobi, Kenya in July 2013.

Sr. Bonita Gacnik teaches technology at the Holy Cross Center, Moreso, Tanzania.

Sr. Bonita Ganick, OIB, Ph.D. had already been in Africa to conduct Web design training for the Higher Education for Sisters in Africa program in Kenya. Sr. Bonita decided to take advantage of being in Africa to donate her time as a 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 there while, 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 Ann Namar, 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 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 bachelor’s programs. The bridging course was held at CUEA.

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 for them to get to leave the classroom late in the evening.”

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

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

Welcome and Send Off to ASEC Board Members and Staff

Thank you to Sr. Mary Paul Wanatu, CPS and Sr. Brigid Andoh, SSI, 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 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.

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 for them to get to leave the classroom late in the evening.”

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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 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 consortium colleges travel to the Bigwa School in Morogoro, Tanzania to provide English tutoring and to have a cultural experience in Tanzania. Over 18 students and four faculty members 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 $5,000 of her graduation money to buy a cow for the Bigwa School so that students there can have milk to supplement their diet.

Sr. Carol Jean Vale, SSJ, Ph.D, Vice Chair from 2013 to 2015.
Sr. Carol is the President of Marywood University, Scranton, PA.
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Sister Kathryn reflected on her first class with the sisters in Africa: “You never know where the process shines through the process. What a privilege it is to engage with them in this mutual learning experience. For this I am very grateful.”

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

Major Events

- 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.

- ASEF 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, SJ, President, Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia and Professor James Hawkins Ephraim, Vice Chancellor of the Catholic University College of Ghana (CUCEG), signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work together to offer online distance learning classes to women religious in Africa starting in the fall, 2014. In 2013, 18 sisters from Ghana and Nigeria will begin the program. Representatives of the ASEF 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. The program 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. ASEF’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 Tanga University College in Kenya. These partnerships focus on educating sisters in-country.

New Missionaries to Africa: Teaching Online Courses to Women Religious in Africa

When missionaries arrived in Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries, they started by educating children. Missionaries believed that the ability of the African peoples to read the Bible in their own language was important to the conversion process. However, most mission societies were not wealthy, and they could not support the number of schools that they really wanted. From the 1970s many religious congregations did not have the personnel to send to Africa as missionaries. Consequently, indigenous religious congregations were founded and many African women took up the work of the Western missionaries. New ministries were developed according to the needs of the people and African sisters needed more advanced education to serve their people.

Teaching the African sisters via distance learning (internet) has brought about a new type of missionary – the online teachers who teach college courses thus enabling the African sisters to complete a college education. Senators Mary Ann Zimmer, N.D., Ph.D. Sister Kathryn Claus, IHM, Ph.D. and Sister Mary Salvaterra, CSJ, Ph.D. share their reflections on teaching online courses to African women religious.

Sister Mary Ann teaches a course entitled, Introduction to the Bible to 18 sisters in Kenya and Uganda and one student in the United States. According to Sister Mary Ann: “It is a gift for me to see how they encourage one another and how motivated they are to learn. They are invested in the course on many different levels including intellectual curiosity, preparation for sharing their knowledge in ministry, and deepening their own spiritual lives. They also contribute to the class from their own cultures, as they did when they were studying Genesis and examining creation myths. One sister used her own experience of sorting through options and making decisions with her religious congregation to help describe the process by which the early church accepted certain writings as authentic revelation.”

Sister Mary Ann’s students were visionaries and in many ways the sisters were learning from the mission education program while teaching it. In Fall 2013 one sister in Zambia who was a nurse was awarded a scholarship which allowed her to take two courses: History of Education and E-learning. After completing the courses she was able to use the knowledge she acquired in her work with the sick and dying.

Sister Kathryn reflected on her first class with the sisters in Africa: “You never know where the process shines through the process. What a privilege it is to engage with them in this mutual learning experience. For this I am very grateful.”
such that I can use Word, Excel and Power Point.

In the training, I had no knowledge of the use of computer. I started working with ASEC in August 2011 on a project that involved 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 thrust 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 and web sites.

Grace Lines, Administrative Assistant, ASEC/SLDI

I have worked my entire professional life finding creative ways to ensure that all students have equal access to a quality education for those who are underserved, overworked, or barred from opportunity for a slew of structural or cultural reasons. When I began to work with ASEC in August 2011 on a project that involved developing the HESA program, I saw an honor and continued opportunity to empower others to make changes in the world through that lens. It has been an opportunity to work on an 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 Malasyha, SLDI East Africa Assistant Project Coordinator – Zambia

This is a program that cannot be measured. Yes, education can be achieved, there is no question. 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

In my six years with this organization I have seen our program has blossomed and grown through a strong source of hope and enlightenment to religious institutes who carefully select sisters to participate in the SLDI Program have learned mentoring skills. All the sisters that have participated in the SLDI Program have learned the value of sharing knowledge. The sisters in the training sessions 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 had an impact that brings together several priests and men religious across Africa. The Sisters have a compelling presence in Nairobi and are very influential across diverse ministries. The Holy Child Integrated Agriculture Center in Abebuka, Nigeria incorporates organic farming to teach and empower the community toward better health. The Hospitaller Sisters clinic in Domopoa, Ghana serves 90 patients daily and their day care center serves 40 mentally disadvantaged children and adults. The Beggars Secondary School in Morogoro; Tanzania, 29 sisters are earning their high school diplomas. The students’ and sisters’ song and dance were superb. I planted my first tree in Africa at Jigani.

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 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 of their career. Many could not or would not follow through. The meetings with the Chairpersons 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’ll like to cite just four:

• The sisters are a powerful force for human development and accomplishing so much with so little.
• The opportunity for education is the most strategic and systematic 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 was worked out in each of the four countries. In each of the four countries, the sisters were able to touch the hearts of the people and be a part of the fabric of the community.

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 we took over eight hours to drive from Dar es Salaam to Arusha to visit the program there. We had a deeply difficult coming together and connecting as a unit.

In Kenya, the lip your project is very strong. One of the amazing aspects of the Eastern and Central Africa (ACREWA) network is strong and organized. Each of the leadership conferences with whom we met seeks to construct buildings as hospitals and/or conference/recreation/formation centers. They also identified “formation” as a high priority, both initial and ongoing. It seems they are 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 education 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 ensure that the hospital is able to provide care for its baccalaureate degree in nursing at Aga Khan University. I was thrilled that we are able to support this program.

In Zambia have played just a little part in furthering their education and growth. It has been such a pleasure to work alongside the wonderful people I began to work with ASEC in August 2011 on a project that involved 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 thrust 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 and web sites.
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 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.

First Cohort of sisters entering the HESA Program

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 will enable Catholic Sisters in Africa in the most creative, engaging and proactive recruitment, helping them to identify and develop the potential in their youth, especially those who have been deprived of accessing education by virtue of the circumstances of their upbringing. HESA is a program that SLDI alumnae created to address these challenges. 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 possible. HESA, in just a short time, has begun to serve our people in schools, healthcare facilities, social service ministries, rehabilitation centers, supporting people with disabilities, training people on 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 with perseverance day in and day out. It was not uncommon to find sisters working in the computer lab as late as midnight after being in class all day.

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 800 sisters and over 1600 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 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 with perseverance day in and day out. It was not uncommon to find sisters working in the computer lab as late as midnight after being in class all day.

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

In 2013, 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 program, hybrid, full-time distance learning was added in 2013 to 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 exist always. For sisters with limited knowledge of English, or who lived in areas where internet connectivity 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 for the full duration of the 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 (CUSEA). In September 2013, eight sisters from SAUT were successfully admitted into SAUT and are pursuing bachelor’s degrees in Education and Administration, and two sisters were admitted into CUSEA 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, Kibabii Brothers University College – Uganda, and the ChemChemi 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.
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 Alumni, 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 institutions, 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 began in December 2012, paving the way for the students to transfer to CUEA for the blended experience of face to face and online learning sessions.

Sealing 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 and the coordinator in East Africa, Sr. Lima 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 MU President, Rev. Dr. Neil Theopold, the EMD and Mungai Wainaina Co., together with ASEC representatives.

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 more 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 semester, 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 rigor expected of learning in a university environment. Drawing from the experience of the June 2013 reflection session on time management indicating their 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. This 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 the implementation of its vision, mission and values. We are happy to be able to work with you. On behalf of our students, Sr. Lima Wanjiku wishes to have the session presented during the orientation workshop to take them with us early enough for their use in the programme.

The ease with which the majority of the sisters are now able to use technology, 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 programmes. This 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.

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

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

Sr. Rosemarie cradles a child in Ghana.

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

Sr. Clementina distributes a laptop to Sister Christiana Baba at the SLDI Technology Training Workshop in July in Nigeria.

Sr. Lisa Olivieri (second 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 2013.

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

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

Sr. Rosemarie makes a child smile in Ghana.

St. Rose Marie creates a juice processing plant. She teaches women in the community on wellness and good nutrition.

New Computer Lab in Ghana.

A fishpond provides protein supplements to the students of Bigwa.

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

A field provides protein supplements to the students of Bigwa.

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

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

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Against All Odds – Perseverance and Desire Create Miracles

Meet Sr. Margaret Kira 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.
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.