ASEC 2020: STRENGTHENING CAPACITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS IN AFRICA
MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS IN AFRICA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction
   Letter from ASEC Interim Executive Directors
   Mission, Vision, Core Values
   ASEC Then and Now
   Listening for the Emerging Future of ASEC

II. Statements of Strategic Direction
    Reading the Statements of Strategic Direction
    1. High Quality, Sustainable, Educational Programs
    2. Diversified Funding Sources
    3. Expanded and Diversified Board
    4. Success in Getting Our Story Out
    5. Infrastructure Development
    6. Systemic Sustainability of Sisters In Africa

III. Supporting Documents
     ASEC Programs
     ASEC Board of Directors
     ASEC Associate Members
     ASEC Partners
     Strategic Planning Steering Committee
     United Nations Sustainable Goals
     Glossary of Terms
I. INTRODUCTION

LETTER FROM ASEC INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Dear Colleagues, Stakeholders, and Friends of ASEC:

In the spirit of collaboration and following the footsteps of our founders, we are delighted and honored to present the African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC) strategic plan, ASEC 2020: Strengthening Capacity and Sustainability of women religious in Africa. We believe the plan will serve as the strategic compass to advance our support for Catholic sisters and the continent of Africa.

The plan provides a strategic framework containing mission, vision, values, and six strategic directions to guide ASEC in the next three years. It is the result of a highly collaborative process that began in 2016 and involved both qualitative and quantitative planning process including, program information, interviews, board and advisory board focus groups, board retreat and staff and partner interviews.

Our plan for the future of the African Sisters Education Collaborative is based on six strategic directions:

1. High Quality, Sustainable, Educational Programs  
2. Diversified Funding Sources  
3. Expanded and Diversified Board  
4. Success in Getting Our Story Out  
5. Infrastructure Development  
6. Systemic Sustainability of Catholic Sisters in Africa

These are our collective aspirations. Key to attaining them are our dedicated staff, board directors and partners located across ten countries in Africa and the United States. Together, we commit to strengthen sustainable human development in Africa.

In this plan, ASEC is dedicated to supporting and contributing to the UN’s 2030 transformative agenda, articulated in its Sustainable Development Goals. Selected targets and indicators, together with how ASEC programs are meeting these targets, are measured annually. The spirit of collaborative partnership that will help to attain the specific goals continues to define ASEC’s mode of operation.

A detailed programs analysis is provided, and a summary of our recent successes, as well as the expected future growth in our programs, are included. Please take the time to read it and think about your role in reaching our goals.

We are deeply indebted to the five-member Strategic Plan Committee for their commitment and time in planning, data gathering, making sense of data and meticulously crafting strategic directions and accompanying strategies. Thanks to the ASEC Board of Directors and staff for their talents and investment of time to review and to shape this document. It was a highly collaborative process that speaks of ASEC’s value of collaboration to transform our society.

We are committed with your support to provide leadership, but the desire to bring it to fruition must come from within each individual person. I believe this strategic plan is a significant step of the many we plan to take together for ASEC’s mission to flourish.

Sincerely,

Sister Margaret Gannon, IHM  
Dr. Jane Farr  
Interim Executive Directors
MISSION
ASEC’s mission is to facilitate access to education for women religious in Africa that leads to enhancement and expansion of the education, health, economic, social, environmental, and spiritual services they provide.

VISION
ASEC’s vision is to be a sustainable organization with a proven capacity to collaborate, develop and deliver collaboratively educational programs that strengthen the capacity of women religious in Africa.

CORE VALUES

TRANSFORMATION
ASEC provides educational opportunities for women religious in Africa in order to facilitate attainment of their human potential, as well as that of the people in the communities and societies they serve, with special concern for persons most in need.

COLLABORATION
ASEC nurtures multi-layered partnerships that further its mission in accordance with the gospel call to unity and solidarity. Recognizing the shared goal of furthering educational opportunities for women religious in Africa, ASEC works together with partners in the spirit of global sisterhood to support the personal and spiritual growth of sisters in Africa.

SERVICE
ASEC cultivates an environment of service among its stakeholders by promoting social responsibility and community engagement to meet the needs of society. ASEC recognizes that women religious in Africa devote their lives to service in a spirit of compassion, humility, love, and protection for all of God’s creation.

LEADERSHIP
ASEC fosters the leadership capacity of women religious in Africa to leverage their strengths and those of their sisters, staff, students, and others they influence, to achieve common goals while developing their individual gifts and talents.

CAPACITY-BUILDING
ASEC is committed to strengthening skills, competencies, and credentials of women religious in Africa, by transferring capacity of experts through training to increase their ability to build sustainable programs and organizations that address the social, human, and spiritual needs of their societies.

REVERENCE
ASEC respects the special value, unique talents, and gifts of each person created and sustained by God. To revere life is to act and respond with deep respect and compassion for the dignity and diversity inherent in humanity. ASEC extends services across multiple cultures and communities, to the global north and south, operating with an appreciation for the uniqueness of people and their worldviews, by listening, reflecting, and promoting communication that is meaningful, honest and inclusive.

40,000 SISTERS IN ASEC REGIONS

4,500 SISTERS SERVED BY ASEC TO DATE

80% DEPRIVED OF HIGHER EDUCATION
ASEC BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

While Africa is a continent of vast potential, it currently faces serious obstacles of poverty, chronic hunger, disease, ecological degradation, and violence. Catholic women religious are a strong force in harnessing that potential, addressing these issues and offering hope for the future. These women, who are deeply trusted by their societies, work to improve life at the community and national level by leading and serving where the needs are the greatest - in schools, in healthcare facilities, and in human service, environmental, and economic projects across the continent. Although, the impact of sisters on society is significant, many lack higher education credentials or professional preparation; some lack even the secondary school qualifications required for entry to higher education.

The African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC) recognizes that women religious in Africa profoundly impact their communities and society. The services they provide are making a significant contribution to the advancement of sustainable human development and to addressing the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). To advance these efforts, ASEC provides educational opportunities for women religious in Africa so that they may further develop their talents and potential, build their education credentials, and enhance the leadership and ministerial roles they assume at all levels of society.

The history of ASEC dates back to 1995 when growing solidarity among women religious in Africa and the United States sparked a commitment to work together to address the issue of educational access. As a result of needs assessment and careful analysis, ASEC, a 501(c) 3 organization, was inaugurated in 1999 by leaders of four congregations of women religious in Pennsylvania and the presidents of the colleges and universities founded by their congregations for the purpose of providing educational opportunities for women religious in Africa.

Recognizing the need for new and creative ways to provide African sisters with education in the context of their own countries and cultures, ASEC began by developing a technological base to open various opportunities for working collaboratively with women religious in Africa toward this goal. The initiative began with sisters in Africa going to the U.S. for technology skills training and was followed by technology workshops held in East and West Africa. Since then, ASEC has grown into an organization that is providing women religious in Africa with opportunities for further education through five different programs: Higher Education for Sisters in Africa program (HESA), Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI), Scholarship Project; Service Learning, and Dissemination of Best Practices, including training in research and evaluation. The geographic area where these programs are offered has expanded from the initial five countries of Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, and Tanzania, to ten, including Cameroon, Lesotho, Malawi, South Sudan, and Zambia.

As of 2016, ASEC has served over 4,500 sisters through its programs, and that number continues to grow. Graduates of ASEC’s programs demonstrate that educating a sister can result in rippling, far-reaching impacts that significantly contribute to sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa. From improving healthcare and access to clean water, to building infrastructure and initiating income-generating projects, educated and empowered sisters are key players in overcoming many of Africa’s biggest development challenges. Among the accomplishments of sisters benefiting from ASEC programs are: over $10 million raised by them for projects focused on areas of human development and social impact, 1.7 million people served by graduates and mentees, and over 2,000 jobs created.

ASEC estimates that there are 40,400 women religious in the region served by ASEC. Although the accomplishments to date are spectacular for so short a time, with approximately 80 percent of sisters in need of further education, much remains to be done. The numbers of women religious participating in ASEC programs are expected to more than double in the 2017-2020 period.
LISTENING FOR THE EMERGING FUTURE OF ASEC

In early 2016, ASEC launched an ambitious, nine-month comprehensive planning process to provide direction for the organization for the next three years and beyond. The planning process was designed to be inclusive of the many important voices that together constitute ASEC and to uncover what was needed to bring ASEC to its next stage of development.

ASEC 2020: Strengthening Capacity and Sustainability of Women Religious in Africa is the result of many months of listening deeply and of having important conversations for the future. In a process that was broadly inclusive, we sought input from staff in the U.S. and Africa, Board directors, Advisory Board members, ASEC partners and other stakeholders, incorporated their feedback into the plan and elicited agreement of the major stakeholders at each stage. We are most grateful to all those who participated in this process; your contributions are deeply appreciated. Special thanks to our dedicated planning committee, who devoted significant time, energy, and enthusiasm to develop the strategic directions of the plan.

Six important strategic directions emerged as essential to continuation and growth of ASEC, and these have served as the core of our strategic plan. Over the course of the summer, the plan took shape as the committee worked intensively to develop and elaborate the ideas generated at the retreat. The development of six statements of strategic direction, together with an explanation (The Big Idea), a series of strategies designed to accomplish each one and metrics to measure the extent of achievement are the results of this process. Feedback from the Board and other stakeholders was incorporated at each stage.

ASEC has grown at an accelerated pace over the last three years, exponentially and successfully developing, implementing, and expanding critically-needed programs and benefiting previously unimagined numbers of sisters. While creating educational opportunities for women religious in Africa continues to be our central focus in this plan, the emphasis on stepping back to focus on organizational development is intentional and designed to allow ASEC to build organizational structures to sustain its current level of operations as well as those envisioned for the future.

As we proceed to implement the plan in a spirit of collaboration and service, we hope it will serve as our guide for the next step forward in our evolution as an organization that has taken the lead in providing women religious in Africa with opportunities for the education that is essential for their role in reducing poverty, hunger, illiteracy, malnutrition, and environmental degradation. The next step is the transformation of this plan into action. Our stakeholders are committed to its success, and we know that their ownership of it will be reflected in the energy, enthusiasm and initiative they will bring to its implementation.
II. STATEMENTS OF STRATEGIC DIRECTION

READING THE STATEMENTS OF STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

ASEC has identified six major strategic directions as the basis for this strategic plan. Each strategic direction is expressed in a Statement of Strategic Direction and each statement is presented in five parts:

- Each **bold statement** represents an ideal for which we are striving.
- A **big idea** follows each statement, describing changes that need to happen in order for ideals to become reality and why change needs to occur.
- **Strategies** to achieve change provide a broad design for how we will move forward.
- **Metrics** (How will we measure progress?) to assess change provide a broad design for how we will measure progress.
- **Success indicators** (How will we know we have achieved the strategic direction?) highlight what our experience will be when we move in the direction of change.

A glossary is provided afterwards to help readers better understand key terms.
ASEC offers high quality, sustainable, educational programs that expand the capacity of women religious in
Africa to contribute to advancing human development through their education, health, economic, social,
environmental, and spiritual ministries and to furthering progress toward the realization of UN Sustainable
Development Goals (SDGs).

WHAT’S THE BIG IDEA?
Women religious who are beneficiaries of ASEC programs dedicate their lives to service by improving
the social, healthcare, educational, environmental, and economic conditions and spiritual enrichment of
communities and society in Africa. The majority of them, although in professional positions, lack the relevant
higher education credentials, training, and/or resources they need in the global environment of the 21st century to
achieve the fullest impact with their essential ministries. ASEC programs fill this need by providing support for the sisters
to acquire education credentials and training and by providing them opportunities for further education through the
following programs: Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA) program, Sisters Leadership Development Initiative
(SLDI), Scholarship Project; Service Learning, and Dissemination of Best Practices, including training in research and
evaluation. Each program focuses on growing in its contribution toward realization of the UN sustainable development
goals (SDGs).

STRATEGIES FOR STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1
A. Continue to innovate and implement HESA, SLDI, Scholarship Project, Service Learning, and Dissemination of
   Best Practices.
B. Cement strong and productive partnerships among groups, institutions, organizations, and individuals that are
   committed to advancing ASEC mission and SDGs.
C. Provide appropriate, cutting-edge resources and technologies to ASEC program participants to support ongoing
   skills building and mentorship.
D. Develop organizational capacity for impactful research on women religious and relevant programs in Africa.

HOW WILL WE MEASURE PROGRESS?
• Monitor and evaluate individual ASEC programs as part of a larger organizational evaluation plan.
• Collect data through qualitative and quantitative methods, from sister beneficiaries, instructors, ASEC staff,
  partners, and other stakeholders to determine program outcomes and program effectiveness.
• Use the framework of United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to highlight ASEC’s
  program outcomes.
• Produce annual progress and summative reports to assess progress towards programmatic and
  organizational goals and objectives.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE HAVE ACHIEVED STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1?
• Increased skills and knowledge in the curricular areas in which participants receive training or education.
• Meet or exceed projected number of participants and alumnae engagement in long-term planning for their
  ministries and/or congregations.
• The majority of sisters/alumnae engage in mentorship of other sisters and/or lay people.
• Sustained or increased funds raised through grants, fundraising, and donations to support community projects
  and sustainability of ministries and organizations.
• The majority of alumnae engage in ministries or projects that are contributing to the UN SDGs.
Expand and diversify funding streams to solidify and strengthen the continuation and growth of ASEC programs, and ensure ASEC’s ongoing viability through reliable, flexible, and diversified funding resources.

WHAT’S THE BIG IDEA?
As a grassroots organization providing leadership, education, and development for women religious engaged in human development in Africa, ASEC must build, expand, and strengthen its financial portfolio to meet evolving program needs for women religious in Africa as they continue to transform their society towards meeting SDGs in Africa. ASEC must build the financial capacity to receive large grants directly, diversify its sources of funding to strengthen the reliability of resources to continue its programs, and ensure financial investment in ASEC’s internal infrastructure and operations.

STRATEGIES FOR STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2
A. Develop a viable financial model to support ASEC’s strategic plan through increased revenue from broadened philanthropic and volunteer support and a growing investment portfolio.
B. Strengthen existing strategic partnerships and collaborations with foundations, and institutional and individual donors for sustainability.
C. Initiate an annual giving campaign and other fundraising activities, engaging partners, associates, Board Directors, and friends of ASEC.
D. Execute a robust digital plan integrating all forms of web and social media into the cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship process.

HOW WILL WE MEASURE PROGRESS?
• Development of a fundraising plan and sustainability model.
• Partners’ level of engagement and satisfaction in ASEC educational projects.
• Usage of online and social media fundraising strategies.
• Established benchmarks for fundraising efforts.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE HAVE ACHIEVED STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2?
• Operationalized financial plan and sustainability plan.
• High levels of partner engagement in support of ASEC projects and high levels of partner satisfaction.
• Increased donations from online and social media platforms
STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3

EXPANDED AND DIVERSIFIED BOARD

Expand the Board of Directors to represent diversity of gender, race, geographic location, financial potential, age and areas of expertise.

WHAT’S THE BIG IDEA?
The Board consists of Members (sitting Presidents of colleges and congregations), at least one director of each Member college/university, additional elected directors, associate directors, and directors emeritus. Directors possess experience and/or areas of expertise that assist ASEC in fulfilling its Mission; these include financial, legal, cultural, marketing, administrative, entrepreneurial, and other related areas. Potential directors exhibit commitment to the Mission and Vision of ASEC, willingness to attend meetings and serve on committees, ability to provide financial support with a minimum annual contribution (to be determined), and openness to identifying potential financial supporters and people of influence.

STRATEGIES FOR STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3
A. Engage partners and other stakeholders to identify possible candidates for Board directorship.
B. Actively seek to create a diverse pool of individuals who are committed to ASEC’s mission and meet the criteria for election to the Board.
C. Encourage all board directors and other stakeholders to nominate candidates.
D. Increase the number of institutional memberships to include additional Catholic colleges/universities and/or religious congregations.
E. Expand Associate Membership.

HOW WILL WE MEASURE PROGRESS?
• Number of institutional Associate Members and Friends of ASEC.
• Diversification of board directors and advisory board.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE HAVE ACHIEVED STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3?
• Increased financial resources due to increase in Associate Member and friends of ASEC donations.
• Increased capacity of the Board to offer expertise in diverse areas of knowledge, skills, and lived experiences.
Transform ASEC into an organization known locally and globally for its expertise and best practices in educating women religious in Africa to become leaders who are creating sustainable development on the ground, at the policy level, and in other decision-making groups.

**WHAT’S THE BIG IDEA?**

Too few people are aware of the extraordinary achievements of ASEC, its valuable programs, its success in obtaining funds for these programs, and its far-reaching impact on women religious in Africa and the society in which they work. To support both the transformation of ASEC into an organization that is known locally and globally for its excellent programs, and the diversification and expansion of its funding streams, it is vital for ASEC to tell the story of its accomplishments, the needs that are met, the transformational impact of the services provided by women religious in Africa, and the vast gaps in their education that still remain. A variety of resources will be developed and media used to promote ASEC’s message and its work.

**STRATEGIES FOR STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4**

A. Communicate ASEC’s impact to a global audience, including its contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

B. Create a marketing and public relations plan using various online and offline platforms.

C. Develop a message for a variety of audiences through talking points, focusing on the significance of the work done by women religious in Africa, the importance of educating them, and the power of partnerships in achieving ASEC’s mission.

D. Identify higher level decision-making bodies where ASEC beneficiaries might influence local, national, and global policy.

**HOW WILL WE MEASURE PROGRESS?**

- Progress made toward developing a marketing plan.
- Engagement in social media, and production of visual and print stories about ASEC’s work.
- Use of videos and other marketing material to communicate ASEC’s work and impact in Africa.
- Level of relation of UN SDGs to ASEC impact in publicity materials and stories about ASEC.

**HOW WILL WE KNOW WE HAVE ACHIEVED STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4?**

- Increased visibility and awareness of ASEC’s work in the public domain.
- Increased awareness of UN SDGs among ASEC stakeholders and our audiences.
- Expanded use of UN SDGs in communicating how ASEC contributes to sustainable development in Africa.
Build the appropriate operational infrastructure for human resources, finance, governance, and program delivery, to support growth and ensure stability for growing impact.

**WHAT’S THE BIG IDEA?**

The development of structures for human resources, finance, governance, and program delivery is a priority to meet the needs of ASEC as a growing organization. ASEC is working toward holistic infrastructure development at the administrative and board level, creating structures at all levels to develop policies and procedures for board members, administrators, partner institutions, funders, and sister-students, as well as to establish clear expectations. Exploratory research on the question of independence, or semi-independence, for ASEC beyond 2020, with the intention of understanding its benefits and drawbacks, as well as necessary processes and legal implications will be included.

**STRATEGIES FOR STRATEGIC DIRECTION 5**

A. Strengthen and develop administrative structures for program delivery.
B. Strengthen infrastructure for ASEC’s two largest programs, SLDI and HESA.
C. Build infrastructure for ASEC’s Scholarship Program, Service Learning Program, and Research Initiative.
D. Continue to develop policies and procedures for ASEC Board, administration, and partnerships.
E. Streamline communications and processes among USA office and country offices in Africa.
F. Implement succession planning for board members, administrators, and staff in the USA and Africa to ensure sustainability of the programs in the long term.
G. By 2020, after ASEC has been implementing its programs for 15 years, assess organizational growth, challenges, success, human resources, finances, and then map out the future.

**HOW WILL WE MEASURE PROGRESS?**

- Creation and operationalization of an Intranet.
- Creation and distribution of program manuals and written procedures/policies.
- Board and staff succession planning, program delivery, staff, and internal communications.
- Conduct self-study of ASEC and its constituents.

**HOW WILL WE KNOW WE HAVE ACHIEVED STRATEGIC DIRECTION 5?**

- Updated communication, expectations, and documentation regarding staff policies and program implementation.
- Board members and staff have shared understanding of Board and staff succession planning procedures.
- Increased understanding of organizational goals and processes.
Support systematic sustainability of congregations participating in ASEC programs to insure continued resourcefulness and vitality into the future. Facilitate the growth of inter-congregational partnerships to improve the professional and apostolic preparedness of women religious in each country of Africa where ASEC serves.

WHAT’S THE BIG IDEA?
ASEC’s programs are developed and implemented with the purpose of fostering professionalism among women religious in Africa so that they can expand and sustain their ministries to improve the quality of life in their societies. To achieve this goal, ASEC works in partnership with the institutes of women religious and individual congregations in each country where it operates to ensure the activities of ASEC are promoting the sustainability of the congregations.

STRATEGIES FOR STRATEGIC DIRECTION 6
A. Develop a data collection platform to assist congregations in identifying goals for sustainability measures, including the future education of their members, and in assessing progress toward meeting them.
B. Strengthen the congregations’ capacities to make data-based decisions by providing research training.
C. Support inter-congregational initiatives such as conferences, and research activities that help to build congregational capacity.
D. Develop a plan to expand degrees earned through ASEC to include the doctorate.

HOW WILL WE MEASURE PROGRESS?
• Creation of a plan for creating a Data Center to be located in Africa.
• Level of resources needed to assist sisters in obtaining doctoral degrees.
• Number of research/evaluation capacity building trainings with sisters and other stakeholders.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE HAVE ACHIEVED STRATEGIC DIRECTION 6?
• Increased understanding/awareness of a timeline, goals, and resources needed to create a Data Center.
• Plan developed with timeline, goals, and resources needed to incorporate doctoral degrees into ASEC programming.
• Improved capacity among sisters and stakeholders to conduct research and evaluation.
III. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

ASEC PROGRAMS

SISTERS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (SLDI)

The Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI) program, the largest program run by ASEC, provides leadership and technology training to Catholic sisters in Africa. The following are the SLDI overarching goals:

1. Improved ability to transfer effectively the skills and knowledge gained for more effective site management
2. Improved creative and effective leadership
3. Increased ability to identify and mobilize resources
4. Expanded knowledge of development issues that impact the socio-economic and political life of individuals and communities
5. Enhanced human relations competencies
6. Improved ability to engage in strategic planning
7. Improved ability to explore and develop plans to ensure the sustainability of ministries and congregations
8. Increased ability to practice sound financial management for increased effectiveness and efficiency
9. To attain the overarching goals, five specific attainable objectives include:
   a) To increase leadership and technology competencies of the participants;
   b) To assist SLDI alumnae to become lifelong learners, educators, and leaders;
   c) To support the development and continuation of participant mentoring relationships to broaden the impact of the program;
   d) To assist participants and alumnae to use acquired skills and knowledge to enhance and sustain their ministries;
   e) To disseminate best practices and models of innovative access to education

Program Design

In the SLDI program, sisters complete workshops in technology and leadership over a three-year period: Year One: A month-long technology workshop in the Basic Technology or Web Design track; Year Two: A month-long leadership workshop in either the Administration or Finance track; and Year Three: A month-long leadership workshop in either the Administration or Finance track.

Since the program’s inception in 2007, over 2,300 sisters have benefited from technology and leadership development workshops. SLDI Alumna and their mentees have raised over $10M in grants for their communities. In Phase IV, we expect to serve at least 1,300 more sisters and stakeholders.
HIGHER EDUCATION FOR SISTERS IN AFRICA (HESA)

The goal of the HESA program is to provide opportunities for Catholic sisters in ten countries in Africa to access higher education, both through online distance learning and onsite in Africa. HESA empowers women religious to become responsible leaders and citizens in their communities and in society through acquiring quality, affordable higher education leading to a bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, or college diploma. It is delivered through partnerships with 23 higher education institutions, 20 in Africa and three online in the USA. SLDI and the Scholarship programs are pipelines to the HESA program for many sister participants.

In 2013, the HESA program began with the purpose of supporting sisters in obtaining higher education credentials. HESA’s program structure is designed to provide multiple options for study that meet the unique needs of women religious in Africa, including options for: (a) study at the level of a college diploma, bachelor’s degree, or master’s degree; (b) online-onsite hybrid study, to accommodate congregations and provide a transition period for sisters who are nontraditional students; (c) entirely onsite study at colleges/universities in Africa. Although with multiple points of entry, other structures are built to ensure students success and degree attainment. All HESA students enter a partner college/university as members of a cohort of five to 20 sisters, with whom they participate in orientation upon entry and meet annually for reflective learning or alumnae workshops. ASEC also provides each HESA student with a laptop and stipend for textbooks.

Since the program’s inception in 2013 over 500 sisters are enrolled for diploma, degree and master’s programs at 23 partner colleges and universities. In HESA Phase II (2016-2020) we expects to benefit over 1,200 sisters at partner colleges and universities, including nearly 400 who will have completed a portion of their studies online.

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

ASEC’s Scholarship Program provides two-year scholarships for women religious to complete high school or a college diploma. Since inception in 2012, nearly 200 women have benefited who otherwise would not have had an opportunity to access post-secondary education. The Scholarship Program was initiated in 2012 to meet the unique educational needs expressed by sisters in Tanzania. Over 60 percent of Catholic sisters lack secondary and postsecondary credentials. The stringent requirement to enroll in four-year colleges and the high costs of education is are barriers for many.

Scholarships provide an excellent opportunity for sisters to upgrade their credentials and to learn skills to serve their ministries and communities more effectively and/or acquire qualifications for university entrance.

Specific attainable objectives for the scholarship program include: a) to provide opportunity for sisters with no high school credentials to return to school and obtain high school diploma in Tanzania; and b) to support sisters with no or some college to attain a two-year college diploma.

In addition to Tanzania, in 2016 ASEC expanded the Scholarship Program to Malawi and Zambia to fulfill the need for secondary and diploma level education among women religious in those countries. Over 90 sisters are enrolled for college diplomas in the following programs of study:

- Education
- Social Work
- Nursing
- Medical Laboratory Science
- Business Administration
- Accounting
- Finance
ASEC administers a spirituality-based global immersion experience that enables students and sisters from partner U.S. colleges, universities, and congregations to travel to one of the 10 countries served by ASEC for two weeks of Service Learning during the summer. ASEC’s Service Learning program promotes global leadership, a key attribute in building the next generation of leaders. Participating students and sisters engage in:

1. Tutoring English as a second language (ESL) to students in the host schools;
2. Providing hands-on service at orphanages, schools, healthcare centers, and social welfare programs in ministries run by Catholic sisters;
3. Engaging with the local people, environment, and culture, including visits to a variety of historic sites, national and game reserves, museums, and ASEC partner colleges and universities.

RESEARCH INITIATIVE
Catholic Sisters are playing an integral role in creating sustainable change in Africa, but their work is not well-documented or widely known. Very little scholarly research has focused on Catholic sisters in Africa, creating a literature gap that ASEC’s research initiative seeks to continue addressing. ASEC is committed to increasing the capacity of sisters to conduct research, evaluate ministry projects, and collect congregational-level data. Formally initiated in 2015, ASEC’s Research Initiative provides opportunities for women religious in Africa to engage in capacity building workshops and opens pathways to publication of research. Evaluation and evidence-based strategic planning are also built into the SLDI program curriculum. Most recently, ASEC:

1. Published a book in 2015, *Voices of Courage*, to share the work and lives of sisters in Africa.
2. Delivered two research training workshops for sisters and religious life scholars. Over 60 participants from East, Central, and West Africa engaged in two workshops on qualitative research and data gathering during 2015-16.
3. Partnered with the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University in 2016 to link with its Visiting Scholars Fellowship Program. CARA will host a sister from Africa for a six-month fellowship at its office in the USA, training her in data collection and analysis. ASEC will help to identify and mentor the sister, also linking her with a network of alumnae and partners.
ASEC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MEMBERS

Sr. Carol Jean Vale, SSJ, Ph.D.
(Board Chair)
President,
Chestnut Hill College
Philadelphia, PA

Sr. Ellen Maroney, IHM
President,
Congregation of the Sisters,
Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
Scranton, PA

Sr. Mary Ann Buckley, SHCJ
Province Leader,
Society of the Holy Child Jesus
Rosemont, PA

Sr. Kathryn Miller, SSJ, Ph.D.
Assistant to the President for
Administration and Special Projects,
Chestnut Hill College
Philadelphia, PA

Jane Farr, Ph.D.
Retired Professor,
Marywood University
Clarks Green, PA

Sr. Florence Nwaonuma, SSH, Esq.
National President,
Nigeria Conference
of Women Religious (NCWR)
Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria

Sr. Margaret Gannon, IHM, Ph.D.
Professor Emerita,
Marywood University
Scranton, PA

Sr. Anna Mary Henrietta Nyangoma, ESM
Superior General,
Missionary Congregation
of the Evangelizing Sisters of Mary
Mbagathi, Nairobi, Kenya

Sr. Florence Hee, OSF, Ph.D.
Charism Coordinator / Facilitator,
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Philadelphia, PA

Pius Ojara, Ph.D.
Director,
NGO Secretariat NGO Forum
Liverpool, UK

Sr. Mary Anne Heenan, CSJ, MA
Associate Members Board
Representative Province Director,
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
Albany, Latham, NY

Terri Peters, Ph.D.
Dean, Reap College of Education
& Human Development
Marywood University
Scranton, PA

OTHER DIRECTORS

Brighid Blake, MA, H.Dip.Ed.
SLDI Instructor,
African Sisters Education Collaborative
Philadelphia, PA

Sr. Kathryn Miller, SSJ, Ph.D.
Assistant to the President for
Administration and Special Projects,
Chestnut Hill College
Philadelphia, PA

Sr. Mary Anne Heenan, CSJ, MA
Rev. Dennis H. Holtzscheider, C.M, Ph.D.
William J. Lennox, Jr., Ph.D.

Sr. Louise Lears, S.C.

Sr. Mary Persico, IHM, Ed. D.
President,
Marywood University
Scranton, PA

Sr. Anna Myers, SSJ, Ph.D.
Congregational President,
Sisters of St. Joseph of Philadelphia
Philadelphia, PA

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

Sr. Mary Persico, IHM, Ed. D.
President,
Marywood University
Scranton, PA

Sr. Marijane Hresko, OSF, BA, MA
Risk Management Specialist,
Neumann University
Aston, PA

Sr. Barbara Spears, SNJM, Ph.D.
Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary
Silver Spring, MD

Sr. Carol Ann Knight, SHCJ
Academic Counselor,
Rosemont College
Rosemont, PA

Marie T. McCormick, MBA, Ph.D.
Partner,
Insyte Partners
Vilanova, PA

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS OF ASEC

Sr. Mary Anne Heenan, CSJ, MA
Sr. Louise Lears, S.C.

Sr. Mary Persico, IHM, Ed. D.

STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE

Brighid Blake, MA, H.Dip.Ed.
Sr. Kathryn Dougherty, OSF, MA
Sr. Jane Wakaihu, LSOSF, Ph.D.

Sr. Kathryn Miller, SSJ, Ph.D.
Terri Peters, Ph.D.
Marie McCormick, MBA, Ph.D.
The Catholic University of Malawi (CUNIMA)
Association of Women in Religious Institutes of Malawi (AWRIM)
Management and Organization Development Resources

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), Georgetown University, Washington, DC
At the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September, 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change.

17 GLOBAL GOALS

SDG 1: No poverty
SDG 2: Zero hunger
SDG 3: Good health and well-being
SDG 4: Quality education
SDG 5: Gender equality
SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation
SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy
SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth
SDG 9: Industry, innovation, infrastructure
SDG 10: Reduced inequalities
SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities
SDG 12: Responsible consumption, production
SDG 13: Climate action
SDG 14: Life below water
SDG 15: Life on land
SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions
SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC)
UNSDGs - United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
Women religious (Catholic sisters, nuns)
Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA)
Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI)
Catholic Sisters (women religious)