

Institutional Capacity Building (ICB) Learnings from Year 1 Implementation

The purpose of the Institutional Capacity Building (ICB) program is to strengthen and/or develop internal systems and structures that will improve the capacity, and enhance the vitality, of institutes of Catholic sisters. The ICB program grew out of an identified need to develop the capacity of congregations and National Conferences or Associations to function as sustainable entities, building on the impact created by ASEC alumnae and the organizational strengths already in existence.

The ICB Program completed its first year of capacity building in September 2020. In ICB Year 1, ASEC partnered with consultants in Ghana to primarily focus on building the vitality and internal capacity of the Conference of Major Superiors of Religious in Ghana (CMSRGH), a national institute/conference of women and men religious. Key learnings from Year 1 are shared below.

Internal Systems:

- governance
- strategic planning
- human resources management
- asset/financial management
- data management



ICB PROGRAM YEAR 1: KEY LEARNING POINTS IN BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL VITALITY



Committed & Knowledgeable Partners

Collaboration with dedicated, engaged partners (i.e., consultants) who are knowledgeable about their areas of expertise, as well as religious life, were integral in making institutional changes. It is also important that consultants are able to adapt the approach and methodology to suit the local context.



Participatory, Transparent & In-Depth Organizational Assessments

Assessing the organization from multiple stakeholder perspectives, with trusted relationships in place, can reveal significant issues within the institution and areas of potential growth.



On-Boarding of Stakeholders (i.e., Generating Buy-In & Trust)

Allocating time to engage the leadership of the institution to buy into and appreciate the need for organizational assessment and development is crucial. In Ghana, acknowledging and gaining permission from the Bishops, including the Chairperson and the In-Charge of Religious Life, was a key ingredient in not only accessing CMSRGH but also facilitating ownership of the capacity building process and contextualizing the ICB program. Awareness of stakeholders who are invisible yet serve as gatekeepers in determining the acceptance of the ICB program (i.e., Ecclesial Leaders) is essential, and helps facilitate trust between all parties involved in the program.



Improved Communication and Relationships

Regular meetings among CMSRGH executive leaders were put in place to discuss internal systems issues. One executive leader commented that over the past four years, there was a struggle to come together to legally register the National Conference. However, within several months of beginning the capacity building process, legal registration was achieved. There is also more communication among the congregations of women religious.



Building Capacity Can Create a Ripple Effect

Building organizational capacity in certain areas sometimes revealed new opportunities for further capacity building within, and outside, the institution. For example, once the institution obtained its legal status, it became possible to build a registered member database, gain land rights, improve financial management systems (including discovery of unused assets) and work with large-scale funders. There were also ripple effects outside the institution. As Superiors of congregations were able to work with the consultants through training workshops, congregations sought assistance from the consultants to help with their own legal registration, strategic planning, and/or other internal system needs.



The Need for Individualized Processes and Goals

Each institution has unique needs, challenges and strengths, and there may be new discoveries about the institution throughout the capacity building process. The ability to remain flexible, adapt the capacity building plan and creatively problem solve were very important in achieving milestones with CMSRGH. The process also revealed that sensitization on best practices should be done to support institutions in initiating a path towards capacity development.

ICB YEAR 1 TIMELINE: BUILDING VITALITY WITH CMSRGH

 **KEY LEARNING POINT**  **BENCHMARK DATE**  **IMPORTANT DISCOVERY**  **EXPECTED OUTCOME**  **UNINTENDED OUTCOME**

