

DEVELOPING LEADERS AMONG WOMEN RELIGIOUS IN AFRICA

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For many years African women religious have been responding to the desperate needs of their countries. These Catholic Sisters have made a significant impact on education, health care, and other social services. Nevertheless, their services are being stretched as more and more displaced persons enter their countries, many infected with HIV/AIDS. Although they have basic career skills, their work now requires proficiency in leadership to plan and execute projects, network for resources, and engage others in the transformation of Africa.

In 2007, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation awarded a two-million-dollar grant to develop leadership skills and strategies for women religious in the African nations of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana, and Nigeria. Known as the Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI), the program was initiated by Marywood University in Scranton, PA. Its goal was to develop in African women religious those competencies needed for leadership effectiveness, project management, and sound financial judgment. The program provides five two-week sessions over a three-year period. Participants were selected by their religious superiors to one of three tracks: administration, finance, and project management. Twenty women in each track, a total of 60 women in each of the 5 countries, are currently enrolled. Through a mentoring program designed as a required component of

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SLDI, an additional group of women are being trained by the enrolled participants.

By 2010, approximately 300 women religious will have completed the first phase of the initiative that fosters leadership skills through curricula designed to impart knowledge in basic project management, participatory leadership, strategic planning, financial management, human resource management, written and oral communication, fundraising, project evaluation, and information/communications systems, including computer tools and software applications for management. All these skills are planned to improve the socioeconomic well being of the people that the participants serve in schools, hospitals and clinics, refugee camps, community farms, and other social agencies.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the goals, processes, and early impact of the SLDI program on participants and their ministries. The authors consider five aspects: (1) leadership as understood in the context of African culture and history, (2) the design of the study, (3) the plan of the SLDI, (4) the application or internalization of concepts as articulated in case studies, and (5) discussion and conclusions drawn from the study.

LEADERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF AFRICA

African women religious have inherited both the cultural and historical concepts of leadership. To understand what motivates them in their service to the poor and to appreciate their need for leadership skills as opposed to proficiency in specific areas of service (nursing, teaching, and counseling), the authors provide a backdrop in the historical and cultural development of African nations.

Leadership involves the ability to inspire and influence the attitudes and behaviors of others (Adler, 1991; Bass, 1985; Bass & Stogdill, 1989; Nanus, 1985; Kotter, 1988). However, a leader in Africa, according to Masango (2003), is "someone who is a servant to the clan, tribe, community or group" (p. 313). This person may be treated as a king, priest, or ruler and exert great power among the people within the community or village, but he is also the one who protects and looks out for his people. Traditionally, in Africa, the villagers and community members share the role of leadership. Finally, the leader acts as a resource for the group and encourages movement to progress.

Today, however, the leadership style of the tribal villagers is no longer effective in the face of the magnitude of problems faced by the poor. It is not five or six individuals with malaria in the village; there are now hundreds of children who have been orphaned because of the prevalence of HIV/AIDS virus. The children themselves are also infected with the AIDS virus and have become blind, deaf, and physically disabled; traditional village leaders do not have resources to care for such large numbers of desperate people.

Missionaries from the United States and other countries of the West have served in Africa since precolonial times, but the decline of Catholic missionaries spurred the founding of indigenous African congregations with missions to serve the marginalized. However, these new religious congregations now recognize their inability to reach the ever increasing numbers of vulnerable people. To help the destitute people better, they are presently seeking to develop large-scale projects such as shelters for girls who are potential victims of human trafficking, dispensaries for the sick, schools for girls and boys, vocational institutions for the blind, deaf, and for those who have dropped out of school, as well as home-care and other facilities for the elderly.

In the African context, the family includes not only the immediate family, but also the extended family consisting of brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, and in-laws. Children are raised to think of themselves in relation to the group. Within the family structure, parents have obligations to their children and the children to their parents. The family as a whole has obligations to the extended family. Family values are focused on the concern for each other's well being, interdependence, helpfulness, and harmony (Gordon, 2002). However, because of the influence of other cultures, wars, and the consequences of HIV/AIDS, the family structure has been weakened significantly. No longer are the elderly dependent on their children for care. More often than not, the elderly parents are the caretakers of grandchildren who have become orphaned. African women religious see themselves in terms of several definitions of "family." As members of "families," they value their birth families, the tribal units in which they were developed, and their religious congregations. Their service to their people, seen as their family, is a major priority as they live their consecrated lives.

IMPACT OF COLONIALISM/CHRISTIANITY

The arrival of colonialism and Christianity changed traditional religious ways of leadership. Christianity sought to reform African styles of religious

leadership by preaching that Jesus Christ is the only leader to follow and one is guided throughout life by Christ's teaching (Masango, 2003). During this Christian era, methods of mentoring the youth for future leadership were quite different from the traditional ways of developing leaders through sitting around a fire listening to stories about warriors. Masango explains that the new concepts in African leadership under Christianity encouraged growth, justice, and peace, as well as promoted the golden rule – “Do unto others as you would have them do to you.”

The colonial take-over revolutionized the style of African leadership forever (Gordon, 2002). The continent was divided into 48 countries with each European force exercising its individual style of rule over the newly acquired territories. The response to colonialism was African resistance. Numerous battles erupted between regions over foreign domination, land, labor, and taxes. Colonialism eventually out maneuvered the Africans. The colonists then introduced Western styles of leadership and forced traditional tribal leaders to collaborate with their European rulers (Masango, 2003).

Many African leaders emerged during the end of the 20th century with the goal of ridding foreign domination and colonial rule over their nations. African nationalism liberated itself from colonial rule in less than one decade and gained independence in the 1960s. Gordon (2002) described the continent as being left with “a façade of democratic leadership with no roots, no precedence, and no people who understood it” (p. 22). The African infrastructure was in a state of religious conflict and political instability. The political system remained an authoritarian power with a lack of responsibility to improve the living conditions of the people. African leaders adopted ethnocentric attitudes from colonial rule, resulting in power struggles and cultural tensions.

Colonialism had destroyed the community style of leadership that had been practiced in Africa for centuries and forced Africans to exercise Western styles of leadership. In African cultures, values and leadership styles were passed down orally. Lacking written accounts of their religious practices and culture, many Africans adopted Western concepts, thereby abandoning their religious beliefs, values, and customs (Masango, 2003). Consequently, there were few dedicated African leaders who cared for their people. Some African-elected officials went so far as to dethrone leaders who resisted colonialism (Obiakor, 2004). Eventually, the negative effect of poor leadership and governance from the age of colonialism has had a negative effect in many African nations.

In the 1960s, Africa's future looked brighter with the end of colonialism and its newly rapid growth. However, during the 1970s, governance and

economy in many areas deteriorated, and leadership in many African nations formed single party rule and dictatorships. Since economies declined rapidly, the growth and prosperity of almost all the Sub-Sahara countries slowed significantly (Collier & Gunning, 1999). Therefore, African nations are now the least developed countries in the world with poor economic conditions, disease, poverty, tariffs, trade barriers, civil wars, and greedy leaders whose dictatorships are divisive and ruthless (Collier & Gunning, 1999; Spears, 2007).

The geographic size and excessive number of diverse groups in Africa may be related to its inconsistencies in leadership styles. There are numerous ethnic and political groups. For example, according to Spears (2007), colonial rule fragmented Africa into a multitude of political entities. When most African countries gained independence in the late 1960s, African leaders gained enormous territories that had not been created or defined by Africans. Consequently, as Spears pointed out, they were faced with new challenges such as human rights issues, democracy, legitimacy, and territorial control. Easterly and Levine (1997) claimed that the high levels of ethnolinguistic diversity within each country is the single most important cause for Africa's slow growth, which has led to numerous civil wars. Conversely, Collier and Gunning (1999) found that the ethnic diversity has not been the cause of the slow growth, but rather Africa's lack of democracy in the context of diversity.

The legacy of the colonists was a superficial appearance of democratic leadership. According to Gordon (2002), new political leaders initiated control by discharging opposition parties, looting the treasury, and relying on defensive radicalisms to rebuild the political system. Many regimes spawned dictators who murdered civilians supporting the opposition. Genocides in Rwanda, the Sudan, Uganda, the Congo, and the massacres in Kenya in 2008, as well as in present-day Zimbabwe, resulted from the cruel acts of their "leaders." Many of the leaders, who fostered terror strategies, felt justified in using coercive means because their tactics were similar to those exercised by Western governments during the violent years of state formation (Spears, 2007). As a result, Africa is perceived in the eyes of the world as a continent plagued with corruption, tyranny, dictatorship, administrative incompetence, and violence.

Although political independence freed Africa from European rule, it has negatively increased tribal, social, and economic struggles (Ayittey, 1992; Liking, 2000; Museveni, 2000; Obiakor & Maltby, 1989). However, scholars and politicians claim that state-making Africa is in its infancy and that violent processes are the norm in state reformation and the fight for justice, peace, and prosperity.

African leadership continues to be influenced by a colonial style that burdens its people. Traditional African-centered methods of education, diminished under colonial rule, were intertwined with the body, mind, and soul of the African people. Some scholars believe that by going back to traditional education and providing the youth with African ideas, cultures, and beliefs, a new generation of nation building citizens will emerge (Obiakor, 2004).

Historically in most African regions, traditional education was an integral part of culture throughout a community. Although it varied from one society to another, the goals were often strikingly similar (Nwomonoh, 1998). It was largely focused on learning practical skills that were useful to the individual and for the society as a whole. Traditional African education was generally passed down within a tribe from generation to generation through word of mouth and cultural rituals. The goal of traditional education was to yield complete individuals who were cultured, respectful, and responsive to the needs of the family and community (Obiakor, 2004). According to Obiakor, a new generation of leaders will emerge by going back to traditional education and providing young people with African ideas, cultures, and beliefs. "Saving Africa through Africans" appears to be the path to a transformed continent. In the schools, the women religious of Africa have taken up this cause – Saving Africa through Africans – and they have begun the process of providing educational opportunities to all children including those disabled. According to participants in the program, their style of school leadership has become more collaborative. They have adopted a form of "servant leadership." In most of their schools, their focus is that of traditional education, teaching practical skills that are useful to the individual and to the society as a whole, and that fosters national self-efficacy and economic independence. Since the goal of education is to yield individuals who are cultured, respectful, and responsive to the needs of the family and community, African-centered leadership and education may provide wisdom and values that are integral aspects of society. Obiakor's theory is supported by Omolewa (2007) who suggests that the traditional or holistic system education will prepare the young to take their role in society seriously and responsibly. Through passing on cultural values, both boys and girls will feel a part of their community and be willing to work for the common good.

The women religious of Africa have inherited the problems of a troubled political and economic past. They cannot depend on the government or nongovernment organizations (NGO's) to raise the standard of living among their people; they now look within themselves and toward their

coworkers for the resources to initiate, implement, and institutionalize comprehensive service projects. Turning to women religious in the United States for guidance, African Sisters sought direction in their goal to address the insurmountable tasks they faced in their countries. Although the Sisters in the United States were not able to send human and financial resources, they did, however, use their expertise in grant writing and networking to empower the African Sisters in solving their problems. Hence the SLDI program was funded through a grant from the Hilton Foundation for the purpose of educating these women in leadership skills.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This case study affirms the concept of *ubuntu* – translated as “I am because we are” – which is the daily African experience. A person is a person through other persons; Africans belong to a bundle of life, the spirit of collectiveness (Tutu, 2000). *Ubuntu* explains why the participants are eager to attend sessions in leadership training; they hope to improve the larger community to which they belong. For many of them, the costs in terms of time and travel to attend the five two-week sessions are great. They travel long distances by bus consuming two to three days over rutted roads and in danger of thieves and thugs along the way. But they believe that sacrifices they make are worthwhile. The knowledge gained is interpreted as beneficial to the community. The program has the potential for women to manipulate and sharpen their leadership skills to facilitate sustainable resource management and utilization.

Ubuntu explains the dedication of the African women religious and Hofstede’s (2005) theory “cultural software” frames this chapter. Much like the operating system of computers, culture determines how people operate in their societies and socializes people to act the way they do. Etounga-Manguelle (2000) defines culture as the cloth out of which all Africans are made. Although he recognizes the diversity among the more than 50 nations, Etounga-Manguelle feels that there is a common culture among the people who dwell in the south of the Sahara. That common culture lays emphasis on belonging, connectedness, and community participation – a culture that is people-centered.

Coming from a society that is people-centered, women religious quite naturally look for different venues to serve the people. They commit themselves through their religious congregations to alleviate the sufferings of their people in whatever condition they find them. They care for the sick and

elderly, educate both children and adults, operate kitchens, shelter street children, and supervise numerous refugee camps. They are also responsive to many current problems facing the continent, namely, drug and alcohol addiction, and human trafficking. These destructive forces have shattered many families and, consequently, have contributed to the political and economic crises of many African nations. According to Etounga-Manguelle (2000):

Our first objective is to preserve the African culture – one of the most, if not the *most* – humanistic cultures in existence. But it must be regenerated through a process initiated from the inside that would allow Africans to remain themselves while being of their time (p. 75).

Today, the focus is “Saving Africa through Africans,” connoting that the most effective way to transform the nations is through the work of the African people themselves. Social capital is at the heart of African transformation – recognizing their own resources and reaching out to each other to improve the economic and health concerns of today. Hence, the goal of African women religious is not only to transform their villages and cities into caring and safe havens for their people but also to preserve their African culture. To accomplish this monumental task effectively and efficiently, they recognize the need to develop skills that empower them to organize, network, and acquire resources. Their goal is to become competent in areas that will facilitate their services to the downtrodden of their countries. Leadership in Africa must be conceived and understood from the cultural norms of how the African women religious view themselves first as Africans and then as women serving the needy (Mkabela, 2005).

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

To determine the effectiveness of teaching leadership skills in five African nations, the authors employed qualitative methodology, drawing upon empirical data from participants in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana, and Nigeria. Two of the four authors, along with several Sub-Sahara instructors, taught formal classes in leadership skills under the SLDI program. Another author, a former director of leadership for women in Kenya, was responsible for the evaluation of the program. Her cultural and educational background enabled her to interpret more accurately the participants’ responses in the three concentration areas: Administration, Project Management, and Finance. The fourth author, a doctoral student, contributed her expertise

in African history and culture to develop the historical and cultural background provided in the chapter.

Data Collection

In Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, the authors conducted small group discussions, interacted with the participants, interviewed individuals, held focus groups, and engaged participants in conversations to encourage them to share their experiences in the program and in their work. In addition, several respondents participated in telephone interviews. All participants self-reported on their mentoring project, a vital aspect of the program, which provided a vehicle for including the people with whom the women religious worked. The case studies cited in this chapter were developed from the interviews conducted with three participants, one in each of the countries of Ghana, Uganda, and Tanzania.

Design of the SLDI Program

Started in 2007, the three-year program involves women religious in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria, and Ghana. African and American organizers collaborated in the design of the program. Together they identified the goals, objectives, and competencies of the leadership sessions.

The overarching goal of the Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI) is to deliver an educational program to cultivate critical competencies and to administer projects and programs that address human suffering and destitution more effectively. To realize the ambitious goal, seven objectives were delineated: (1) ability to transfer the skills and knowledge gained to more effective site management; (2) creative and effective leadership; (3) ability to identify and mobilize resources; (4) awareness of issues that impact the socioeconomic and political life of individuals and communities; (5) enhancement of human relations competencies; (6) development of a strategic plan; and (7) development of plans to ensure the sustainability of the projects.

The three tracks, administrative, financial, and project managements, include instruction in specific competencies. The participants are expected to develop proficiency in communication, team building, creative problem solving, interpersonal skills, self-direction, financial acumen, and technical

and leadership skills. Each track has specific goals and each two-week session focuses on explicit skills. For example, in the administrative track, the topics for instruction over the five sessions include leadership skills, marketing and grant-writing skills, human resource management, ethical leadership and team building, and strategic planning.

Instructors started by asking participants to share what they expected to gain in the five sessions. Since the 300 women religious serve in schools, hospitals, clinics, refugee camps, congregational offices as bursars, major religious superiors, etc., their expectations varied with their ministries, but they all sought specific leadership skills: effective communication skills, ability to resolve conflicts, change initiation and implementation, negotiation skills, proficiency in technology, team building, ethical and spiritual understanding of leadership, and strategic planning.

To connect their expectations to their culture and to better understand the participants' aspirations, the instructors asked participants to share their visions (Table 1).

The verbalization of vision statements enabled the Western instructors, not only to get a glimpse of the conditions of the African people, but also to clarify the direction of the leadership program from an African-centered perspective. That direction clearly indicated a desire to initiate, develop, and implement projects that would alleviate the suffering of the people, raise the level of consciousness among their people, and carry out a project effectively and collaboratively. The participants recognized from the beginning that, to move toward their vision, they needed specific skills as stated in their expectations: conflict resolution, change procedures, team building, negotiation skills, etc. The design of the SLDI program then included the facilitation of those skills while moving toward the development of the more specific mission statements, needs assessment, goals, objectives, and action

Table 1. Example of Participants' Dreams.

To educate women to read and write by providing them with evening classes.
To decrease the morbidity and mortality of the region.
To improve the lives of young girls who are prey of human traffickers.
To improve living standards of children in slum areas and refugee camps.
To enable hearing-impaired children to become independent by teaching the skills of carpentry and tailoring.
To teach the men and women of the village how to develop land and become self-sustaining.
To enable women to produce products to support their families.
To provide street children with food, shelter, and education.

plans. These components are integral parts in all leadership courses, but the difference in instruction lies mainly in getting a clear understanding of the participants' culture and visions first and then adapting instruction to assist in accomplishing their goals, in other words, stimulating their potential to implement change in their own settings.

Although they all knew about the Internet, many of the participants had never used a computer but were eager to learn computer skills. Since some of the participants live and work in villages that do not have electricity, they took advantage of the training sessions to learn data processing, email, and use of the Internet. Hewlett-Packard Corporation donated computers at each site. The computers and the Internet service enhanced the program with the capability to access information on grants to finance their projects. Grant writing then became an essential part of the program since without outside resources, the participants could not implement their plans.

A mandatory component of the SLDI design is the mentoring project, a strategy to sustain changes and encourage others to learn leadership skills. Since "mentoring" is a strategy to ensure the sustainability of the program, starting with Session 1, each participant was responsible for identifying three individuals to mentor. From the very beginning of the program to its conclusion three years later, each participant (mentor) regularly met with the mentees to share the knowledge and skills learned in the sessions. When the participants learned and practiced negotiation skills, collaboration, team building, etc., they brought the skills to the mentees who, in turn, practiced on others. As a result, new values were extended to their ministries and eventually a transformation occurred – a desired change. In addition to the sustainability of the SLDI program, the mentoring project provided a smooth transition for the implementation of their strategic plans. The participants recognized that they could not implement change alone. They were enthused about sharing what they learned in the workshops with their mentees. Because enthusiasm is contagious, the goals of the program reached out to many others joining in the vast web of change and transformation.

Strategic Plan

The strategic plan in Session 5 is the culminating project of the Sisters Leadership Development Project in all three areas (administration, project management, finance management). It is the summation of all the elements of the other sessions – not only the structure of a plan but also the skills needed to convince others of the need for change. The outcome is a detailed

strategic outline designed to implement their vision, mission, and goals. The following is an example of a strategic plan designed in the last session:

Vision:

A comprehensive, secondary education for teenage boys and girls.

Mission:

To improve the lives of young boys and girls by providing academic and vocational education in Omoro sub-county, Gulu District.

Needs statement:

For the last 20 years, the people of the Gulu District in Uganda have been victims of civil war and strife. Consequently, many young boys and girls have lost their cultural identity and self-esteem. These vulnerable teens are both helpless and hopeless. To provide a hopeful future with the opportunity to learn a trade to support themselves, we will build a coeducational, vocational secondary school.

Academic subjects will be taught to develop knowledge, behaviors skills, and values needed to restore both culture and structure. To earn a living, students will be offered vocational subjects such as agriculture, home improvement, woodworking, and computer skills. To promote positive attitudes, build self-esteem, and cope with the challenges in their society, the school will offer counseling services.

Goal:

To build a comprehensive, coeducational, vocational secondary high school for disadvantaged boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 20 in the Omoro sub-county, Gulu District by the year 2014.

Objective 1:

To sensitize the community of the need to establish a coeducational school offering academic and vocational programs.

Action steps:

1. Distribute information using pamphlets and banners to describe the school.
2. Direct mailings using community addresses.
3. Explain the projects at all church services.
4. Establish a development committee.

Objective 2:

To construct the building by the end of 2012.

Action steps:

1. Determine the budget estimates for the project.
2. Purchase land, survey it, and secure the land title.
3. Hire an architect to design the building, seek approval of the foundation body, Ministry of Education.
4. Contact district approved engineers.
5. Construct building.

Objective 3:

To furnish the building.

Action steps:

1. Purchase desks, chairs, equipment for vocational subjects.
2. Purchase school supplies – paper, pencils, chalk, etc.

Objective 4:

To recruit approximately 200 disadvantaged boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 20 by the year 2013.

Action steps:

1. Distribute information using pamphlets and banners to describe the school.
2. Direct mailings using community addresses.
3. Explain the projects at all church services.
4. Invite potential students throughout the district to information sessions.

Objective 5

To select qualified administrators and recruit faculty and staff; to organize school management committees such as the Board of Governors, the Parent Teacher Association.

Action steps:

1. Advertise positions.
2. Interview applicants.
3. Hire candidates.
4. Provide an orientation to internalize the mission of the school.
5. Develop curricula in academic vocational programs.

Interspersed in the lessons on strategic planning were simulations that helped to develop skills in conflict management, resolution of ethical dilemmas, networking, team building, etc. To be effective in their role of

instructors, Western facilitators did not impose their opinions about the content and format of instruction. Lessons evolved during the sessions; therefore, instructors could not go with predesigned lesson plans.

APPLICATION OF AFRICAN-CENTERED LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Significant case studies drawn from the participants explicitly demonstrate that empowering individuals with knowledge and practical skills leads to societal change from the grassroots level. The case studies reveal that given opportunity and practical skills, women of Africa can play a significant role in promoting development. The case studies highlight changes that have been facilitated by the skills the participants gained through formal instruction, which in turn helped to bring change in their ministries. Although the cases relate to the mundane of African life, it is imperative to note that most of the African nations depend on agriculture as the only source of employment: food for people, food for sale, and food for economic growth. Agriculture is the engine of growth and development. Most economies in Africa depend on farming as the backbone to generate income for the local people and the government. It is the means through which over half of the nations, citizens earn their livelihood. A few of the African nations depend entirely on agricultural products in the international markets.

Adverse climatic conditions affect food crop causing serious drawback to development and increased poverty level. According to New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD, 2003), decades of war, disease and poverty have resulted in a malnourished population. A fundamental agrarian agenda to strengthen farming skills would improve the health of Africans and enable them to assume an independent lifestyle. For the better part of their lives, women work on the farm because culturally the opportunity for school is dim (Maathai, 2006). Women religious have brought with them farming skills to the convents, and they have established projects to educate the local people in better farming methods to improve their livelihood. Women religious of Africa manifest the capability to utilize knowledge and skills to improve their ministries.

African literature shows that those who acquire an education utilize it for community development. For example, the Kenyan noble prize winner and founder of the Green Belt Movement, Wangari Maathai, is a clear example of how women have not been fully supported; however, with a clear vision and self-driven inspiration they can attain their goals through struggle (Maathai,

2006). In a research study conducted in the countries of Malawi and Uganda, authors, Kaaria, Njuki, Abenakyo, Delve, and Sanginga (2008), found that innovative farming strengthened social organization and industrial capacity of rural communities. The authors indicate that integrating a feminine approach to work had led to changes in women decision-making patterns.

In this chapter, we use three case studies to illustrate that women religious in Africa are forces of change and they have the capability to see what needs to be done and the determination to use what is available in their environments to enhance the living conditions of the people whom they serve.

Case 1: Improved Farming Methods in Uganda

A case study of women religious involvement in farming was elucidated by a participant in Uganda. Lucia (pseudonym) became engaged in farming to produce food for the community and to educate the local people in the use of more effective farming methods. The farm is situated on the shore of Lake Victoria – a fresh water body that could be tapped to irrigate the farms; however, the majority of the people in the area do not consider the farming option as a method of self-employment and the sale of produce as a means of income for their families. Lucia and her congregation started the farm where they worked side by side the villagers to grow and sell crops to sustain themselves and develop a sense of self-efficacy. She and seven workers have planted maize, banana trees, sweet potatoes, sugar cane, yams, papaya, bananas, and cassava. Lucia attends workshops on soil science, use of organic fertilizers and irrigation processes and meets the villagers twice a month to teach them how to grow and market their produce.

A drive to the farm leaves one in awe and wonder at how one person can transform a village. First, there was no evidence of a road leading to the farm. After driving along a rutted-dirt path for what seemed an hour, we arrived in the recently cleared area with plenty of fruit trees and vegetable patches. Lucia described the connection of the skills gained in SLDI program and the farm:

I gained the skills in communication, facilitation, teambuilding ... I realized the people in this area watched when I and my employees were working on the farm, yet their land had potential to produce the same food crops ... I have used facilitation, communication and teambuilding skills to educate the people on farming ... most of them can produce their own food crops ... there is much to be done.

Lucia utilized her abilities and skills to facilitate societal change by coordinating meetings with Ugandan villagers to improve their food

production. Lucia and other women religious are involved in grassroots efforts to increase food security and sustainability for the people they serve. She is convinced that ...

people here can grow crops for food and for sale to provide school fees for their children ... they have improved their families because they eat well plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables ... I am encouraging them to adopt the new methods ... their crop yield has increased and many more are eager to learn.

Although Lucia's dream is labor intensive – educating villagers in Uganda on how to increase their farm productivity – there is still much to be done to sustain the change. She described her challenge as lack of a financial base for the farmers to buy seeds and pesticides necessary to improve productivity:

I do not have money to help the farmers to buy the seeds for planting ... some are too poor to afford seedlings, plows to clear the land ... so it becomes difficult ... but we do not give up hope ... I hope some day we can be able to irrigate the land during the dry season from the waters at Lake Victoria ... there is need for pipeline to bring water close to the people-this would help to irrigate the farms ... I learned grant writing, and I hope to use the skills to find a source for funding to improve the land for the people of this area.

The vision of women religious to achieve development for the people of Africa is an indication that leadership education has stimulated innovative ideas for improvement. As Lucia explained, good farming methods would increase productivity, provide healthy foods, and, ultimately, alleviate malnutrition and poverty. Educating local people on better farming methods is one means to increase their capacity for a sustainable source of revenue. From an African perspective, enabling individuals to support themselves is part of sustainability, the potential to feed themselves and improve their standard of living. Lucia's access to the SLDI program supports Nuwagamba's (2001) theory that lack of education limits autonomy and independence.

Case 2: Palm Oil Project for Women Self-Reliance in Ghana

The palm oil project in Ghana exemplifies the inventiveness of women religious to augment change that will benefit their people. Palm oil is the product obtained from the fruit of a certain type of palm tree; the fruit is processed to provide oil for cooking and for making soap and candles; the residue is used as coal. A Ghanaian SLDI participant, who had the vision to enable the poor women of Ghana, described how she utilized her newly learned skills to raise money to support poor women. Teresina (pseudonym)

explained her struggle in initiating a project to empower the poor women who rely on less than one dollar a day for a living. At first, she attempted to educate women on poultry rearing and farming methods, a project she still foresees. At the time of poultry farming aspiration, the SLDI training program geared toward providing women religious with leadership skills was initiated. She never regrets her enrollment because her leadership and managerial skills expanded and enabled her to facilitate change for the community. She refers to her plan as the “Palm oil project for women self reliance in Ghana.” She describes how the thought of palm oil project was envisioned through a class assignment on “needs assessment” during grant-writing session:

we were taught to describe the problem as clearly and real as possible so that the funding agency can understand it as we on the ground see it ... the instructor explained the steps involved and told us to develop a grant proposal depending on the needs of the ministry. I knew what I needed and I followed the steps we had learned in class and wrote a grant to build a fence to stop intruders on the property that [sic] we have palm trees and orange trees ... I thought if the women learn to process palm oil they could use it for cooking, making soap, and soap to sell ... I explained the project clearly ... in a few weeks I got a reply with question[s] that needed clarification ... I was awarded the grant.

This became a springboard to achieve her goals. As a Project Manager, Teresina further explains:

The palm oil project came about because I am working to help the women in this area who are poor and lack basic necessities. I am responsible for the project to help these women to be self reliant ... and the processing of this palm oil that we are using has helped them a lot in that they have learned how to make this oil and the end product are used to make soap to wash their clothing, soap to take home to wash their family and soap to sell, at least they can get some money for their families. Economically we are helping to improve their lives by empowering them to become responsible of their lives. They are improving their way of living and hygiene ... I teach them cleanliness and even their diet by processing orange juice from natural fruits and vegetables – this is not just for sale but they eat them because it improves their own health. Through the skills we have gained we are developing the other people ... we share with other people. You know when people are poor they have a lot of conflicts [sic] we also help them to learn to solve their problems through conflict management skills that we have learnt.

Teresina, along with others in the program, exemplifies an agent of change. Transformation is unmistakable. The skills they acquire have facilitated the acceleration of an unexpected reality. Three concepts are evident in Teresina’s palm oil project: intellectual capital, strengthening networks and servant leadership. Supposedly, to bring about institutional change, intellectual capital is imperative since it helps to translate knowledge to reality by enabling the community to get involved in project initiatives

and development. As a result, participation strengthens networks that facilitate perseverance.

The training program has enabled other women religious like Teresina to make informed choices that help develop a sense of empowerment and new perspectives in skills implementation. Women religious, as change agents, seek to mobilize the community through problem solving. First, Teresina was empowered through skills development that enhanced creative ways to improve the ministry; second, through practical application of the skills, she wrote a successful grant; third, she implemented the grant to improve the life style for the poor women; lastly, she raised awareness of hygiene of the women and fostered dialogue on the issues that face women in Ghana, resulting in community transformation.

Case 3: Working with Deaf Children in Tanzania

Responding to the consequences of the HIV/AIDS on children of infected parents, women religious of Africa engage in programs that educate deaf, blind, and physically disabled children. They have established schools that provide specialized care to special needs children hoping that eventually the children will cultivate an independent lifestyle. Although inclusive education is advocated in many African countries, efforts to include special children are minimal. Women religious have assumed the responsibility to provide such education to promote skills leading to self-sustaining employment. Discussions with Marietta (pseudonym), a participant in Tanzania, revealed her passion to develop employable skills for children with disabilities. Marietta works as an accountant in an elementary school for deaf children in Tanzania. The school has a population of 200 hearing-impaired students. The women religious, teachers, and staff teach life skills and employable trades. For example, female students are trained in tailoring and dressmaking, while males are taught carpentry and farming. Their use of sign language is the only viable method of communication for the deaf culture in Africa. On completion of their vocational education at Marietta's school, some graduates advance to a higher level of education while others initiate self-reliant projects in tailoring, carpentry, or farming.

Marietta stated that she has utilized the skills acquired in the SLDI program, which has been instrumental in introducing carpentry and tailoring into the curriculum. The first hurdle was to secure the equipment and supplies to begin the program. She was convinced that skills in

carpentry and tailoring would contribute to these students' self-reliance, thus enabling them to earn a living beyond their small-scale farm.

In a telephone interview, Marietta shared her thoughts on the SLDI program:

The program has helped me to have confidence in communication, leadership and management ... with the skills I am able to encourage change in the community and society ... the skills have enabled me to discharge my duties and serve the deaf children in a better way ... though it is difficult ... I have learned to listen and to understand their needs as much as they express them ... I look forward to bring change in the school environment.

The training is providing me with leadership skills that I so much longed for ... as an accountant I need skills in communication, leadership, facilitation and management in order to communicate well with people because these people are the ones who support us to help these children ... skills in planning have helped to have better strategies to meet the needs of the children with disability. I was so glad to learn about strategic plan because it helped me to see things from a wider perspective than just day to day service to these children ... but also how to help them in future.

The leadership skills have widened Marietta's horizon in dealing with financial management; she hopes to extend her knowledge and skills to her staff and to the community.

Not all the projects were as extensive as those detailed in the three case studies. Two small undertakings made positive changes as a result of the leadership training. One successful project resulted in Consuela's (pseudonym) attainment of funds to purchase chairs and tables at a nursery school. The number of children at the nursery school had increased significantly and the need for furniture was evident. Consuela, a participant in Kenya, developed a proposal in one of the sessions and presented it to a funding organization. She was awarded with sufficient grant monies to purchase all the furnishings at the nursery school. Another participant, Madeline (pseudonym), recounted her application of leadership training giving further evidence of solving a problem in her institution

I did not know how to plan well when I was made head teacher in a nursery school. The school had run out of funds for supplies. After learning about budgeting and strategic planning, I was able to propose a plan to the school executive committee. We talked about a plan to develop a garden project to harvest maize for food for the children. The plan cut down on the cost of food so that we could use the saved money for supplies.

Madeline's self confidence in taking charge of a situation and the implementation of a plan for change are some of the by-products of the SLDI program.

As a result of the mentoring component, another small project developed from the weekly meetings of mentors and mentees. Edwina (pseudonym), a mentee in Uganda, was impressed with social mobilization as explained by her mentor. She initiated a small bread-baking project. Using her own recipe for sweet bread, Edwina distributed small loaves at the mentoring meetings. Several women who attended the meeting asked Edwina to teach them how to bake bread using her recipe. They then agreed to bake loaves to sell. Gradually the small-scale, bread-baking industry began to gain profits. The mentor's report of Edwina's project illustrates what can happen when people recognize an avenue to support themselves.

The above-described illustrations give evidence that the SLDI has given the participants the leadership theory and skills. The derivatives consist of self-efficacy and a sense of accomplishment.

DISCUSSION

Reflecting on leadership in general, the authors maintain that leadership education provides an opportunity for a better way of life. During sessions when "leadership characteristics" were described, the participants in the three countries invariably mentioned Wangari Maathai of Kenya, who championed the tree planting initiative that sold trees to people to improve the environment. What began as a local initiative has expanded to save the environment from dehydration. Today, the Green Belt Movement is known worldwide for its campaign to plant trees and encourage environmental change. Other great leaders whom they emulate are Nelson Mandela, a statesman who led the antiapartheid movement in South Africa, and Bishop Desmond Tutu, who promoted constructive engagement in opposing apartheid and was a voice for the voiceless. Outside of Africa, they identified Jesus Christ, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, and their own religious founders and foundresses. What is evident is that their examples of exemplary leaders are those who served the poor and sacrificed themselves to improve the lives of their people. So, too, the women religious of Africa, embodying the concept of *umbutu*, are moving forward to initiate, implement, and institutionalize plans of all sizes from clinics, schools, and shelters to bread baking, planting maize for school meals to a palm oil industry.

Greenleaf developed the term "servant leadership" in 1977, and it is the servant leader that the participants strive to become. In spite of all the horrendous difficulties faced by the people of Africa, it is inspiring to

witness many African women religious who have dedicated their lives in the service of the poor and want to lead their people out of poverty, disease, and hopelessness. The SLDI has given them a lifeline – skills in leadership to accomplish their dreams.

The literature on leadership has a plethora of descriptions: democratic, visionary, transformative, transactional, charismatic, etc. All the descriptions resonate with the concept of “change.” The program participants seek change to improve the standard of living in their countries through education and health care. Their perceptions of leaders are those of change agents. They view themselves as transformative agents whose lives witness a preferential option for the poor.

The foundation of their altruistic drive is indeed the culture of each nation, the customs of their ethnic groups, and their commitment to their religious congregations. Both their African culture and their culture as women have fashioned their awareness of “leadership” to nurture, to console, to free their people from violence, and, ultimately, to sacrifice themselves to transform conditions in their villages. Since many of the African leaders had been sidetracked by corruption and greed, they did not respond to the cries of their people. Corruption ran rampant on the continent and dictators such as Idi Amin (Uganda), Omar al-Bashir (Sudan), or Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe) brought untold suffering on the people of their nations.

In an interview published in the *Washington Post*, Wangari Maathai stated, “The people are learning that you cannot leave decisions only to [political] leaders ... Local groups have to create the political will for change, rather than waiting for others to do things for them. That is where positive, and sustainable, change begins” (Hoagland, 2005, p. 21). The women religious in the SLDI program recognize that there is a critical need to fix economic conditions. As women, they have assumed the responsibility to be the voice for the voiceless poor.

Are ideas and evidence of leadership the same or different across international, national, and cultural contexts? The conditions of poverty, oppression, and deprivation of human rights call forth a style of leadership that is of service to the poor. Whenever dictators (leaders) rule with violence and greed, self-sacrificing men and women are inspired to lead efforts to relieve the repressive conditions. Oscar Romero, Bishop of San Salvador, was murdered when his philosophy of speaking out on behalf of the people contradicted the goals of the Salvadoran political machinery. In Anapu, Brazil, Dorothy Stang led the Trans-Amazon development project, designed to generate jobs and income inside the Amazon region. It supported the

creation of a fruit processing industry, the construction of two small 500 kW hydroelectric power plants, and aided reforestation in degraded areas. Stang was murdered for leading efforts to help poor farmers and preserve the environment of the Amazon.

Under similar conditions in first world countries, when people are burdened with poverty and denied human rights, leaders emerge. Martin Luther King, Jr., was a leader who served the poor and disenfranchised, and died demanding rights for African American citizens. Other similar leaders in the United States are Dorothy Day who served the indigent in New York City, and Cesar Estrada Chavez who founded and led the first successful farm workers' union in US history.

Pedagogical Implications of Teaching in Another Culture

In designing a course of study for students in another culture, it is important to heed the advice of Toombs and Tierney (1991): "The curriculum is an intentional design for learning negotiated by faculty in light of their specialized knowledge and *in the context of social expectations and students' needs*" (p. 21) [italics added]. In offering leadership skills in a culture other than our own, we found that we needed to connect first with the culture and then design meaningful lessons. To do so, we used a variety of teaching strategies.

One such strategy was to ask participants to simulate difficulties in negotiating, resolving conflicts, introducing change, etc. We then understood the participants' perceptions of conflicts and other threats to their work. After discussing the weaknesses and strengths of the simulations, we introduced ways to facilitate collaboration. As a review, participants then "recapped" the lessons using scenarios or group discussions. The process enabled instructors to determine whether or not the participants understood the lesson and would be able to apply the skills in the contexts of their work.

The use of case studies was another pedagogical tool that was effective in our sessions. However, the prepared case studies found in textbooks used in our courses in the United States, do not relate to their culture. Instead of prepared case studies, one of the authors, a Kenyan, composed several case studies from her experiences. She then posed questions: "What would you do?" and "Is there a more benevolent way to deal with employee infractions?" Use of case studies often illustrates ethical dilemmas eliciting lively and challenging discussions. Two examples of creative case studies based on lived reality follow:

A vacancy has opened up in the school where you are the principal; the position requires a qualified candidate to teach business education and history. Your brother has been searching for a teaching position for more than five years without much success. His area of specialty is math and biology but with much reading he can teach business education and history. The protocol of the school is to advertise for the position; your brother sees the advertisement and decides to come for the interview. You are on the panel that is conducting the interview. What would you do?

Peter is employed at a school as an accountant. You are the principal and think very highly of Peter. He has worked in the school for seven years. He and his wife have five children, and he takes care of his ailing mother who lives in their house. Peter is known by everyone at the school. He is a very hardworking person who sometimes works late without expecting extra pay. You are pleased with Peter's self-giving and sometimes gives him small bonuses because of his extraordinary response to school needs. He fixes things, such as malfunctioning taps in the school. You are grateful when Peter repairs an overflowing bathroom over the weekend. The staff admires Peter's generosity and readiness to volunteer when there is a school event or activity. Others tease him for his unusual kindness. However, Peter has been taking items that belong to the school; he takes food from the school's store without permission. Several items in the consumer science building, such as crockery, cutlery, and laboratory equipments, have disappeared but no one would ever think that Peter was stealing. The staff members in these departments have been forced to pay for the lost items because they are responsible for the equipment in their departments. Often they are angry and accuse each other of theft.

Peter's wife has recently been diagnosed with brain tumor; everyone is sympathetic of Peter's situation: a sick wife and five young children to take care for. Time and again he has had to leave school early or take sick days to take care for the wife who is undergoing chemo therapy in the past few weeks. To express their support, the staff planned to visit Peter's wife at home and express their solidarity with Peter and the family during these difficult time.

The staff discussed and agreed to be transported by the school bus to Peter's house in the vicinity of the city. They arranged that the staff spokesperson speak on their behalf and present to Peter and the wife some money the staff had contributed as a gesture of their solidarity. Some of the staff had even offered to help take care of Peter's youngest children during their off-day. On arrival, Peter who welcomed them; he looked worn out and tired. On entering the house the staff was stunned to find in Peter's house all the items that had been lost in the school's consumer science building and laboratory. Mrs. Kiptanui was visibly upset because she had been forced to pay over \$400 to replace the items that were stolen during her shift in the consumer science. The table linens spread on the tables bore the school's name and consumer science record number. Everyone began talking in whispers; some staff members were furious particularly those who had been charged for the missing items in their departments. During the visit, a couple of staff members had taken pictures of the items to exhibit so that they could take legal action against Peter. The visit at Peter's house was tense although the spokesperson strained to make the staff focus on the reason for their visit. Others whispered they wanted the money they had contributed given back because Peter did not deserve more money after stealing all these items. On their way back to school there was a heated

discussion on the bus of how you, the principal, would proceed. However, you did not respond quickly and in your mind you juggled the trust you had in Peter and his betrayal of that trust.

If you were the Principal of the school:

How would you handle the case? Would you take Peter to court, why and why not? The staff members are angry because the principal made them pay for the lost items – should you pay the staff back their money? Support your answer.

The cases are typical of ethical dilemmas faced by school leaders. They based their responses on responsible and ethical leadership.

Small group discussions proved to be another effective teaching strategy. Since the participants came from different parts of the country, they did not know each other before the first session. The small group discussions led to shared ideas and a better understanding of conditions in other parts of their country. For example, in Uganda one participant works with the refugees near the Sudanese border and lives in danger from attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda. Her stories differ from those of participants who live in the safer areas of southern Uganda. Some live in villages where there is no electricity; others live close to the capital city of Kampala where they have access to electricity and water.

The participants were united by a sincere desire to bring help to their own people through healing, peace education, and a determination to bring financial and sustainable developments to the villages. Common challenges also united them: poverty, lack of materials such as mosquito nets to prevent malaria, and no medicine for the countless number of people suffering from HIV/AIDS. The small groups, thus, provided a mechanism for discussion and sharing of ideas.

CONCLUSIONS

The program has the potential for leaders to manipulate and sharpen the identities for their communities. Also, leadership skills facilitate sustainable resource management and utilization, a method of building self-efficacy among women religious.

Gibson and Marcoulides (1995) found that there was no variance in leadership styles across countries. In their quantitative study, culture was not a significant variable in managerial styles across the United States, Australia, Norway, and Sweden. We, however, conclude that traditional African culture influences the leadership style of the 300 participants in the

5 African countries. These women respect the norms and values upheld by the community they serve in hopes of bringing about change and improvement. Although there has been a cultural evolution in Africa, much of the socialization still holds onto African norms and values. Culture shapes a sense of community responsibility and relationships. For example, the participants were more comfortable in group discussions than working alone – the community aspect was evident in their sharing. Their shared African culture has taught them that everyone belongs to a community. Now they have rallied under the cry “Save Africa through Africans.” Understanding African culture, therefore, is essential for Western teachers who hope to teach leadership skills effectively. From this perspective, Western faculty *cannot* intentionally plan learning experiences. They can only provide the scaffold and allow the participants to build up “competencies including communication skills, critical thinking and leadership that form the basis of program and course outcomes” (Jones, 2002, p. 39).

This research has also shown that leadership education is an investment in the culture. In a short period of time, several of the participants brought about significant changes in their communities. Change was prevalent in their ministry and resource mobilization. The strategic plans and the grant-writing lessons empowered them to seek funding for their projects. They had internalized the skills, identified the needs of their communities, and embarked on the execution of their plans. Through the mentorship component of SLDI, others became constructively involved in community projects, a necessary ingredient for sustainable development. The level of dialogue within communities had a transformative effect. Leadership education is an investment that may be used to lead Africa out of poverty and malnutrition.

An outcome of the SLDI program is a new sense of accountability, development, and community participation. In a short period of time, it has become apparent that, if leadership training is expanded to more people in Africa, individual nations may become transformed positively within a couple of decades. Women religious of Africa have a way of reaching out to their communities and the people they serve. They have the experience of women being marginalized, but they know how to practice an inclusive leadership style that energizes the communities for change. The case studies illustrate that women religious are capable of transforming their societies through involving their people in a change agenda. They view power and knowledge as interchangeable and expandable, and they are willing to involve the community to explore viable opportunities together. As a result,

changes have been implemented that have already improved the standard of living. From this perspective, leadership education seems to be a viable and an essential contribution that may transform the countries of Africa.

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