

The Prophetic Witness

A PUBLICATION OF ASSOCIATION OF RELIGIOUS IN UGANDA (ARU SECRETARIAT)

Issue 15

Volume 7

July - Sept 2024



The members of ARU General Assembly on the opening day of the Assembly at ARU Secretariat on June 4, 2024. Photo by ARU repoter.

By Sr. Specioza Kabahuma, DST

Continuation of ARU Profile

CATHOLIC SISTERS HEALTH PRACTITIONERS NETWORK

In low social economic setting quality, healthcare for all is nowhere to be obtained. For example;

i.) Obstetric birth injury remains a major public health problem. Many women deliver at home and eventually sustain birth injuries including fistulas which is highly stigmatizing and afflicted women often become socially outcasts. The study has revealed that two out of three mothers who delivers at home, suffers from this problem.

ii.) COVID 19 pandemic effects, has increased the number of teenage mothers who suffer from birth injury as a result of Traditional Birth

Attendance, HIV/AIDS, and other prenatal and post-partum conditions and are vulnerable to early onset of such chronic diseases as cancer and diabetes, whose co-occurrence with pregnancy has always posed a serious threat to women's health.

iii.) The rate of Traditional Birth Attendance (TBA) services in the society increased during COVID-19 pandemic compared to other periods. - this tendency has continued to date as the economy continue to suffer the effect of Covid-19 pandemic. as a result, the number of injured mothers has continued to increase.

iv.) The effect of traumatized mothers affects the marriage and as a result, increases the number of children being brought up out of marriage. In addition, the stigmatized and afflicted mothers often become

social outcasts and this also affects their productivity in the society.

v.) With the support of the partners especially Hilton Foundation ARU mobilized funds to help women out of these problems and revive their lives, the joy of the family and improve productivity as well as the living standard in the society.

With all the above and more others ARU has established a Health Practitioners Network in Uganda to respond to the challenges of:

- i) Poor maternal health and the increasing number of teenage mothers who suffer from birth injuries, HIV/AIDS, other prenatal and post-partum conditions.
- ii) Non-communicable diseases like Diabetes and Hypertension
- iii) Chronic diseases like uterine and breast cancers
- iv) Children with congenital problem.



The team of facilitators of the cervical and breast cancer together with the diocesan coordinator share a light a moment.

To be continued in the next issue.

Former Assistant Secretary General of ARU becomes ACWECA President



The newly elected president of ACWECA, Mother Grace Kyomugisha - OLGC. Photo by Sr. Stella Watsema.

By Sr. Stella Watsema - OLGC

The former assistant Secretary General of the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU), Rev. Sr. Grace L. Kyomugisha, was elected President of the Association of Consecrated Women in Central and East Africa (ACWECA) during the Plenary Assembly that took place on 19th of August, 2024 in the Capital of Malawi, Lilongwe.

In an interview with ARU Communication Network, she shares how the election came as a surprise which she had not counted on. "At first, I took it as a joke. But when they asked us to talk about ourselves and move out to have our votes cast, that is when I came out as the president of ACWECA," She recalls. She expresses her gratitude to God and hopes to use the position for collaboration and networking among religious women.

Sr. Kyomugisha's election to ACWECA is a milestone that makes her follow in the footsteps of two other sisters from Our Lady of Good Counsel; Sr. Cecilia Nibyobyonka who was once ACWECA president, and Sr. Romina Nyemera who also served ACWECA as Secretary General. This is how she speaks of them;

"These women have given their lives to the good cause of ACWECA region and its member institutes. Stepping in their shoes allows me to tap into their values and see what can help me individually to steer the organization forward." Sr. Kyomugisha remarked.

As the Superior General of Sisters of Our Lady of Good Counsel Mbarara, together with the many other positions she has held, Sr. Kyomugisha believes that her experiences have helped her to take up this new role which she never prepared for.

She reflects; *"my previous experiences have shown that anytime I can be asked to do something different from what I have been used to."*

She believes that God has given her a chance to use the ACWECA platform to unite 10 countries under the organization in sharing the experiences and ideas of having congregations within and moving forward in terms of sustainability and formation.

When asked whether she has any fears, she affirmed that generally, she is not scared at heart since she is standing on the promises of God. "I am looking at how God does His things. He leads the blind to show them the way and where there's darkness, He is there to bring light. It excites me and now to see that I am the president of ACWECA region, it is so exciting," she emphasized.

She appeals to ACWECA members to get together, walk, and work together in the ministry of Jesus Christ.



Sr. Rosalia Sakayombo (R) handing a candle to Mother Grace Kyomugisha as an instrument of power.

In her line of service, she served as the administrator of Ibanda Hospital for 10 years before becoming the formation coordinator, ARU Assistant Secretary General and now superior general of sisters of Our Lady of Good Counsel of Mbarara.

Sr Kyomugisha reveals that her religious life helps her find meaning in the suffering of Jesus Christ.

"I find any depth of suffering, tragedies, sickness and diseases, poverty, domestic violence, and human trafficking an opportunity to embrace the cross of Christ. I find fulfillment in living the reality of the poor, their struggles in life, and the uncertainties and insecurity they face in life," she observed.

ARU is privileged to have her as the President of ACWECA and wishes her well on this new journey that she has begun. Congratulations again Sr. Grace Kyomugisha!

"In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths."

- Proverbs 3:5-6 -

Pictorial highlights



ACWECA @ 50 AND THE 11th ACWECA SECRETARY GENERAL



The 11th ACWECA Secretary General, Sr. Romina B. Nyemera - OLGC.
Photo by ARU.

By Sr. Immaculate Tusingwire - MMS

As we looked forward to celebrating 50 years of ACWECA, we caught up with the 11th former Secretary General of ACWECA, Sr. Romina B. Nyemera who belongs to the congregation of our Lady of Good Council (OLGC), Uganda.

It had just heavily rained when we arrived at Sr. Romina's community. Soon after welcoming us, we dived into the ACWECA story.

Story continued to pg 4

Sr. Romina started by narrating the history of ACWECA to us especially the transition of Sisters' East Africa Study Conference (SEASC) to The Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA). She narrates,

"I first went to ACWECA meeting in August 2002 representing my superior who was not able to make it that time. That time, ACWECA was still called SEASC, referring to Sisterhoods of Eastern Africa Study Conference. It started like that from 1973 and continued to 2003. It was during that assembly when a question arose, 'for how long are we going to be a study conference?' In addressing this question, the name ACWECA started forming for the very 1st time. And it was this same assembly that elected me a secretary general of ACWECA for 3 years; 2002 – 2005."

What Sr. Romina sees as ACWECA achievements @ 50

One of the ACWECA achievements that Sr. Romina celebrates at its Golden Jubilee is the growth in staff especially religious staff. She cannot believe that right now ACWECA has about 10 Religious sisters on the team yet during her term, she was the only sister and was being helped by an administrative secretary and accountant who were both lay people.

Sr. Romina also celebrates the fact that ACWECA now has its own home. She recalls how previous Secretaries general first worked from their communities which meant that only sisters from Kenya could be secretaries general. When Sr. Romina was elected a Secretary General,



From the left (2) is Sr. Romina when she was still the Secretary General of ACWECA. From the archives.

she was from Uganda without a community in Kenya, and so they had to rent an office in the bishop's premises and a hostel where she stayed for 3 years.

For Sr. Romina, the reasons to celebrate are many as she also adds with a cheerful face;

"We should celebrate because we started as a study Conference and developed into an Association"

With gratitude, she recalls the 2005 assembly which made a decision to give the in-coming and out-going teams of superiors general, courses to prepare them to lead well. This assembly also decided that sisters should be trained in chapter facilitation, a decision that led to getting facilitators from Ireland who first trained sisters in Kenya and later in Uganda. *Since these trainings begun, Sr. Romina has seen the air and atmosphere in the chapters changing drastically. She sees this as a big achievement of ACWECA.*

Sr. Romina further expressed her joy about how the associations have come to know each other, share resources, share courses, understand each other more deeply and share personnel. She smiles as she says;

Sr. Romina's personal Contributions during her term as ACWECA Secretary General

When asked what her unique contribution at ACWECA was, Sr. Romina said,

"I found ACWECA still a study conference and I had to sit down and come up with the vision, mission and objectives which we could follow. And this is something I put down in a document called 'ACWECA light'"

ACWECA Light explained everything and addresses many questions that the sisters had about ACWECA. Among other topics, it explained the historical background of SEASC and what ACWECA is, the relationship of ACWECA with other Religious Associations, office bearers of SEASC and ACWECA from 1974-2005. Each National Association received 100 copies of ACWECA Light.



From the archives when Sr. Romina was still the Secretary General of ACWECA.

During her term, Sr. Romina was the first secretary general to visit the National Associations, a visit that was meant to establish a good relationship between ACWECA and the associations. She visited each association twice, apart from South Sudan where she was denied entry at that time.

Sr. Romina did face challenges during her term, and she had ways of overcoming them;

"Living in a hostel and working in a rented office without having a community in Kenya was very challenging and it got lonely at times. But what helped me to be in terms with that are the friends that would come to see me". Sr. Romina recalled.

She is especially grateful to mother Gina, Sr. Gashambi, Sr. Edel Bahati and Sr. Katherine Okali and her sisters from Uganda who took it upon themselves to be checking on her all the time.

Apart from friends, prayer also kept Sr. Romina going. This was not only at home or in the office, but whenever Sr. Romina went out to give a workshop, she initiated having an adoration early morning with the participants as she strongly holds that we cannot do anything without our relationship with God.

Sr. Romina always looked at ACWECA as a beacon that should be a light to all associations.

It is in this line that she expressed her desire to see ACWECA coming up with messages to National Associations that can help sisters to grow in religious life apart from the other many things they are doing which are also very good. In her own words, Sr. Romina said, "ACWECA should address a question of who a consecrated person is and how she should live. This should be a number one priority for ACWECA"

Memorable experiences

When asked what her memorable experiences are, Sr. Romina smiled and looked like she was re-living the moment. And she responded;

"Getting to know different cultures is an experience that is very memorable from my time of leadership in ACWECA. I found that people are not different from others, we are human, sharing the same humanity and the same God, having the same aspirations and we are people who can together build a society of love"

Sr. Romina's message to the current secretary general.

"I congratulate the current secretary general and also the previous ones for accepting to lead such a big entity and for taking on such a responsibility. Sr. Bridgita Nsamba, the current ACWECA Secretary General is a hero for having said yes and I congratulate her congregation for giving her to ACWECA" And to all the sisters celebrating the 50 years of ACWECA, this is her word of wisdom, "Consecrated life should pay more attention on not running faster but growing deeper. And not in words but in action"

Sr. Romina who has had several years in the leadership of her congregation, is now working on the formation syllabus of her congregation.



The representation of the 10 countries in the ACWECA region during the 19th Plenary this year, 2024 in the Capital of Malawi, Lilongwe. Courtesy photo.



From the archives when Sr. Romina was still the Secretary General of ACWECA.

Interview with Sr. Lilly Driciru, out-going Communication Manager

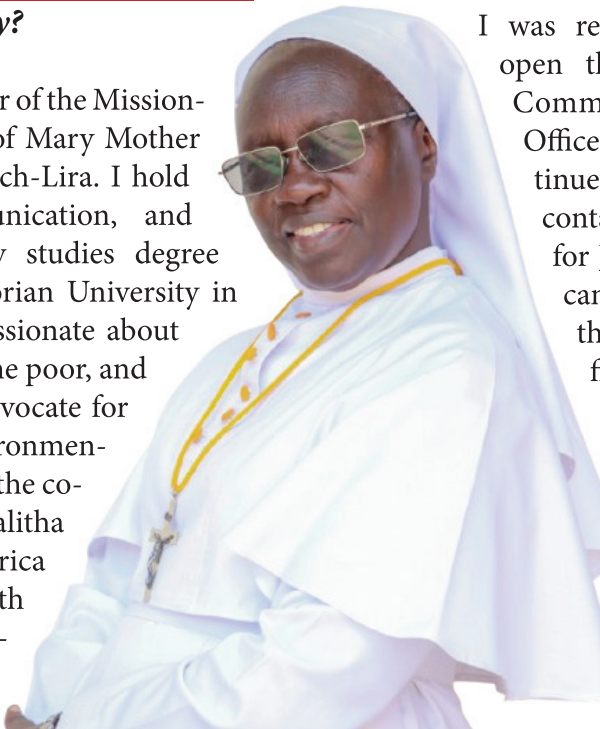
By Sr. Immaculate Tusingwire - MMS

Who is Sr. Lilly?

I'm a member of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church-Lira. I hold Social Communication, and interdisciplinary studies degree from the Gregorian University in Rome. I am passionate about the option for the poor, and that is why I advocate for Social and Environmental Justice. I am the coordinator for Talitha Kum East Africa and Africa Faith and Justice Network Uganda, platforms that help advocate against trafficking in persons and other social evils in the society.

What were the conditions surrounding your becoming the ARU Communications coordinator?

Before I became ARU Communications Coordinator, in 2013, while working with Leadership Magazine as the Editor, ARU invited me to be part of the Committee Member for the then Justice and Peace, JP, which eventually became Justice Peace and integrity of creation, JPIC. This interaction with ARU made us acquaintances. Later, in 2019, Sr. Margaret Kubanze, LSOF, the then Secretary General surprised me through our Congregation leadership when I was requested to become a full-time member at ARU.



I was requested to open the maiden Communications Office and continue as ARU's contact person for JPIC. I also came to learn that the office was created in collaboration with Uganda Episcopal Conference, UEC, and AME-

CEA, when I was sent to Nairobi for orientation. ARU's communication Office was meant to work and it has indeed worked in close collaboration with UEC and AMECEA especially when it comes to sharing articles towards achieving common goals.

What attracted you into journalism/ communication work?

I was indirectly attracted to Social Communication when our Founder, Bishop Caesar Asili RIP, offered me career guidance. I thought of being a sister catechist and happy to share my faith with the people I serve.

This idea suddenly came after the experience of religious call, that shattered my wild dreams of desiring to be a successful pilot or some other prominent self-motivated and self-driven figure in the society! However, the conversation with my founder led me to embrace this profession. When I expressed my desire to become a catechist, the Founder said, "there are very many catechists instructing the young ones, you could become an advanced catechist for the relapsed Christians who are facing faith crisis.

When I expressed my desire to become a catechist, the Founder said, "there are very many catechists instructing the young ones, you could become an advanced catechist for the relapsed Christians who are facing faith crisis. And social communication which is one of the means of your apostolate can help you achieve this goal; you may not understand this now but it will become clearer as you pursue further studies." This encounter changed my vision and sense of direction and his spirit still guides me on...

Over the years, what were your main responsibilities at ARU?

While at ARU, I made the communication office functional and as I was told to carry on with JPIC, I represented ARU in some national and international conferences and I also developed passion for social and environmental justice and so communicate justice which is a missing link in our society today.

Story continued to pg 07

What is the biggest achievement you delight in as you finish your term at ARU both as a communication and Justice, Peace and Integrity of creation coordinator?

I really don't see the biggest achievement as such but some people often referred to me as "Talitha Kum" because of the love I had for the international network of sisters on Trafficking in persons. Otherwise, the use of communication as an interdisciplinary tool gives me joy.

What were the challenges that you faced and what helped you overcome them?

Among the challenges faced were the inadequate attention given to communication office. From my diverse experiences within the Church, communication is often treated like a supplementary department. Actually, many friends quitted the profession out of frustration of receiving little or no attention. You know one of the principles of a journalist is to "insist" to get what you must. So, I insisted many times and my creative thinking led me think outside the box... Self-care helped me overcome some of the challenges.



The outgoing and incoming communications coordinators of ARU Sr. Mary Lilly (R), and Sr. Immaculate Tusingwire (L). Photo by ARU.

Were there fun moments? Share an experience

Sure, I had a lot of fun moments. Production and beating deadlines often caused crisis and I would have a background music and where need be I would leave my desk and twist around and enjoy some strokes!

Who were the partners you mostly worked with, any message to them as you leave this role?

AMECEA, UEC, JPIIPC, Santa Martha Group, AFJN, Talitha Kum Network, ACWECA, Line Ministries like Ministry of Internal Affairs, African Union Chaplaincy, etc. I take this opportunity to appreciate all of them for the collaboration we enjoyed together as well as unity in diversity. I beg your pardon for the times when things did not go according to your expectations. My door remains open for further interactions... Out of site is not out of mind and heart.

How have the last past 5 years contributed to your growth as a person?

Wow, a good one! This office made me encounter various personalities, nationalities backgrounds and build my experience. It was in this office when I chose to be positive whatsoever. It was a hard decision for me and likeminded friends and we have lived to enjoy the fruits of this tough decision.

Any recommendations for ARU?

ARU should remain our lovely home away from home.

Let those who have just joined the 'club' make it ever an enjoyable place and a conducive working environment. If possible, let the system work for you!

What are you looking forward to as you leave ARU? Aspirations, next mission, desires and hopes...

I have been told to standby for a future mission. I called off my sabbatical year to implement a PAX Christi International Project of promoting non-violence and peace building in northern Uganda. I look forward to continue with advocacy and making the world a better place where we can enjoy our hundred-fold here on earth as the scriptures promised us.

What is your word of wisdom and encouragement to your successor?

Keep the candle burning and remain positive as you tread the thorny grounds...



Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru, handing over instruments of power to Sr. Immaculate. Photo by ARU.



ARU National Inter-Congregational Course for Junior Religious Professed



The Junior religious professed pose for a group photo with ARU administrative staff at St. Mbaaga's monument on the opening day shortly after the Holy sacrifice of the Mass. Photo by ARU.

By Benedict Mukoni

More than 90 junior Religious Professed from 17 Congregations across the country attended the inter-congregational national course organized by the ARU at St. Mbaaga's Major Seminary, Ggaba on July 7, 2023.

This course takes place every year as a preparation of the junior consecrated men and women before pronunciation of their Perpetual Vows. This year's course ran under the theme "Consecrated life, a journey of commitment." Among participants who reported were 81 sisters and 7 brothers.

ARU president, Mother Dr. Speranza Namusisi, IHMR, during the inauguration of the program encouraged participants to share their different experiences so that they

enrich one another and appreciate their charisms since they come from different institutes. She added that all charisms are inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Mother Speranza also cautioned participants to exercise humility because it is key for any consecrated person who would want to be anywhere. They should always come down under the feet of Christ and ask, who am I? Because there are very many people that are much better. She further urged them to grow more in the positive direction, in the love of God, of one another and in the love of ARU.

The vice president of ARU, Rev. Fr. John Bosco Kamoga, who presided over the Holy Sacrifice of Mass during the inauguration, for his homily used

"prophecy" as his primary. He revealed to the participants that a prophet is a forgiven sinner.

He said that the mercy of God is highlighted in the forgiven prophet because He comes out of his own mercifulness and reaches out to this human person and forgives them and consecrates them for the purpose of the kingdom of God. Because whoever has been forgiven is given a ministry of going and becoming a messenger to the people of God so that they too can be forgiven.

"We as religious men and women, it's not because we are the most perfect around, but because we are the ones who have been first forgiven to go out and proclaim the goodness and mercy of God to other people"



The vice president of ARU, Fr. John Bosco Kamoga, presiding over the Holy Mass. Photo by ARU.

Story continued to pg 09

Present was also the Secretary General of ARU, Sr. Lydia Apili Bwor, LSMIG, who welcomed the participants and appealed to them to be humble because many at times, when people are young and full of energy, they can easily make mistakes.

She told them (participants) to look at Jesus as the exemplary priest and be under the cross to understand it if they are to sanctify and prophesy. This will help them not to prophesy their own things, but the mission of Christ.

The One-Month long inter-congregational national annual course that touched a variety of topics concluded on August 3, 2024 with the awarding of certificates and the commissioning ceremony.

Pictorial of the Opening Holy Mass



National Day of Prayer against Trafficking in Persons 2024



Group photo of all stake holders during the national day of prayer on human trafficking at Old Kampala S.S.S. Photo by ARU.

By ARU reporter

The Uganda Episcopal Conference (UEC), together with John Paul II Justice and Peace Center (JPII/PC), Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU), Mwagale Foundation and St. Bakhita Network Uganda, in collaboration with other partners, held a National Day of Prayer to raise awareness on Trafficking in Persons on September 13, 2024 at Old Kampala Senior Secondary School Play grounds.

The prayer was presided over by the Most Rev. Paul Ssemogerere, the Archbishop of Kampala Archdiocese who also doubled as the chief guest. The day was guided by 2024 Theme for World Day Against Trafficking in Persons; *“Leave no child behind in the fight against human trafficking.”*

The Most Rev. Paul Ssemogerere noted that religious leaders are deeply troubled by this injustice of human trafficking in Uganda and the world at large. He said that millions of people are trapped in modern day slavery, forced into labor,

prostitution and other forms of exploitation and children as young as five years old are being exploited and abused.

The Archbishop appealed to the public to stand firm and fight against this evil on behalf of the country and on behalf of God and reminded them that as people of faith they are compelled to act and to stand in solidarity with the victims and survivors.

"I would like to encourage our offices and the organizations that are advocating against Human Trafficking not to be discouraged but to continue doing this and let people reawaken the society. We should not give up, because I think by coming together and praying, God is on our side and we shall have fruits of our efforts," he proclaimed.



His Grace Paul Ssemogerere addressing the congregation on the day of the National prayer on trafficking in persons. Photo by ARU.

Present also was the Secretary General, UEC, Mgrs John Baptist Kautu, the vice president of ARU, Fr. John Bosco Kamoga, Representative Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Nambalirwa Azena and Mr. Basaalirwa Mugenyi Derrick,



Consecrated women and men together with other guests march with band on the national prayer day on human trafficking at Old Kampala S.S.S. Photo by ARU.

the Deputy National Coordinator in the office of prevention of trafficking in persons, who represented the minister of internal affairs in Uganda.

On behalf of ARU, Fr. Kamoga condemned the abhorrent crime against humanity, which according to him has unfortunately been normalized, institutionalized, systematized, and economized in Uganda by even the structures of power.

He called upon everyone to be the voice of the voiceless and to amplify the cries of those persons who have been dehumanized and have found themselves victims of this unfortunate business. He also observed that beyond prayers, as church leaders, as faith organizations and as ministries, there is need to stand and speak about the push factors or aspects that make the young people, even after hearing ordeal stories of survivors and victims, continue to pursue this path.

"We need to stand as prophets to denounce the rampant levels of youth unemployment in our country, the shameful cases of corruption at different levels of society, the rising attitudes of apathy at the suffering of others, the normalization of cases of dehumanization and excessive levels of greed in our country," Fr. Kamoga vehemently stated.

In a hopeful statement issued by the ministry of internal affairs and presented by Mr. Basaalirwa, it was revealed that the 2023 Counter-Trafficking in Persons Report indicated a decline in the number of cases as compared to the year 2022 from 1,200 to 1,006 and this, he emphasized was a very tremendous result that came out of all efforts by parties involved in combating trafficking in persons.

He (Mr. Mugenyi) also pointed out that 97.86% of the cases happen within the country and only 2.14% represent the transnational or the cross-border cases of trafficking in persons. He then called for more effort within the country, more attention to everyone within the country to create awareness of the reality that most of the cases are domestic.



Mr. Mugenyi from the ministry of internal affairs presenting a report on Trafficking in person. Photo by ARU.

Highlighting on international trafficking in persons, Mr. Mugenyi disclosed that most Ugandans end up in the Middle East, Asia and with the recent attention through the help of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Organization for Migration, 23 Ugandans were repatriated from Myanmar as victims of trafficking in persons and these were brought back home safely.

"Leave no child behind in the fight against human trafficking"

The National Day of Prayer against Human Trafficking was Ecumenical in nature and saw different leaders from other faiths join to pray against this issue that affects everyone. Among the faith leaders present were; Mr. Kasule Moses from Bahai, Pastor Kamiza John from the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Reverend Christopher from the Church of Uganda, Sheikh Hamid Sserwadda Busungu who is the Regional Assistant Mufuti Kampala and Captain David Ssentongo from the Salvation Army Church.

Trafficking in Persons Through the Lens



Government official pose for a group photo with religious leaders after closure of national prayer day on human trafficking. Photo ARU.



Organizers of national day of prayer on human trafficking share a lighter moment with Religious leaders. Photo by ARU.



Religious leaders march with the band during the opening ceremony of the national prayer on human trafficking. Photo by ARU.



His Grace Paul Ssemogerere, shares a memorial photo with consecrated women and organizers of national day of prayer on human trafficking shortly after the vigil Mass to the day. Photo by ARU.

Bakhita Partnership for Education School Administrators empowered with various skills



Participants with facilitators share a memorial group photo with the national coordinator of BPE at ARU secretariat shortly after a successful completion of the workshop. Photo by ARU.

By Sr. Scovia Kiconco - MMS

School Administrators and their senior women teachers from the 16 targeted Bakhita Partnership for Education (BPE) Schools in Uganda, convoked a four days empowerment workshop at the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) Secretariat from August 12 – 15, 2024.

BPE is a program under ARU in partnership with the Jesuit Justice and Ecology Network of Africa (JENA). It aims at ensuring 100 percent retention and improvement of access and quality of education for girls in the targeted countries and schools.

The workshop was conducted under the theme “Conducting school-based workshop on leadership development, like skills and gender-responsive methodologies for personal formation and school change culture.”

According to the national coordinator, BPE, Sr. Scovia Kiconco - MMS, head teachers and senior women teachers were invited because they are in direct contact with BPE students every day. They are responsible for journeying with 20 students in each school among the 16 targeted ones. **“We want our 16 targeted schools to be equipped with leadership skills and other skills to continue supporting girl child education.”**

The two facilitators; Sr. Specioza Kabahuma, DST who is the former BPE coordinator and Mr. Vincent Freedom Kaheeru, the National Director of Profiles International, Uganda facilitated the participants with the following; leadership skills, communication skills, public speaking, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, organizational and personal administration, gender-mainstreaming, child safeguarding, among others.

The knowledge and skills imparted will help participants in their respective responsibilities. Though they are the ones responsible for BPE students, they want them to share the knowledge they have gained with their fellow teachers and the communities that they represented. This is because BPE students come from the community and therefore, they need to be aware of the skills in order to support the girl child education. This will be done in their respective targeted schools.

Sr. Hellen Lamuno, a participant and head teacher of Saint Theresa of Calcutta in the archdiocese of Gulu, Omoro district said that the training helped her to learn more on how to manage BPE program and other institutions. She also got skills in financial management, human resource management, among others. **“After empowering us, we shall do much better than before. Some things are new because we keep on learning. One cannot know everything 100%.”** Sr. Hellen disclosed.



ARU administrative staff addressing participants before commencing the workshop at ARU Secretariat. Photo by ARU.

Story continued to pg 13

Deputy Head teacher of Mother Kevin Comprehensive Secondary school in Tororo Archdiocese, Mrs. Arionget Anne Grace, also a participant, commended the workshop for its uniqueness due to the very interesting topics and guidelines it had. She revealed that she learned a lot, especially in her position as deputy head teacher and doesn't regret coming to attend the workshop.



In the photo above is the group class discussion during the workshop to ascertain the effectiveness of the workshop. Photo by ARU.

The overall objective of the programme is to ensure 100 percent retention and improvement of access and quality of education for girls in the targeted countries and schools. The Bakhita Partnership for Education works to ensure that every girl child receives quality basic education, prioritizing the poorest and the most vulnerable in these countries. The 16 selected schools are from 16 different Districts in Uganda.

SISTER LED YOUTH INITIATIVE UGANDA REGISTERS SUCCESS AMONG THE YOUTH



In the shot, is phase II graduation ceremony at Bishop Angelo Vocational Training School in Kwanja district. Photo by SLYI team.

By Sr. Caroline Bacia

More than 60% of the youth aged 15 – 25 in the selected 16 training institutions of Sister Led Youth Initiative Uganda (SLYIU) in Northern and Eastern Ecclesiastical Provinces secured employment, economic empowerment or started their own business after successful completion of training.

Through the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU), SLYIU was implemented by the National Conferences of Major Superiors in a bid to connect and collaborate in the interest of supporting training, livelihood, physical and psychosocial welfare of the most vulnerable youth in Uganda. The intent was to make them employable or self-employed, live improved lives and be agents of positive social change in Uganda.

The program trains the youth in vocational skills such as; tailoring, salon and hairdressing, catering and hotel management, sustainable agriculture, among others and it takes only six months for one to complete.

According to the National Coordinator of SLYIU, Sr. Caroline Bacia, the program has economically and greatly improved the livelihoods of the youth with most of them earning a monthly income of UGX 200,000, 340,000, 350,000 – 500,000.

“This demonstrates the relevance of the skills provided for the job market, and the graduates who started their own business, highlighting the program’s success in fostering entrepreneurship to positively impact the community.” Sr. Caroline noted.

Story continued to pg 14



Cake cutting during the second phase of the graduation ceremony at Bishop Angelo Vocational Training School in Kwanja district. Photo by SLYI team.

The success stories were captured during a workshop for the administrators and the field mobilizers, the on-site visits in the training institutions and the monitoring and evaluation in the selected 16 training institutions in Northern and Eastern Ecclesiastical Provinces which indicated tremendous successes.

Sr. Caroline told this publication that through these activities, the program's plans were evaluated against the initial objectives, and findings were very encouraging that the program achieved its intended goals, registered tremendous success stories indicating strong recruitment and retention efforts with positive impact on both the beneficiaries and the community at large.

She added that the baseline survey done in Karamoja Sub-region aimed at gathering information to inform the design and implementation of the program in the region, demonstrated a very positive perception of vocational training with 84%, viewing the program as having the potential to improve the livelihoods of the youth and the

community at large through vocational skills training and sustainable agriculture.

One of the beneficiaries, Mr. John K from Adraa Agriculture College – Nebbi testified that ***“The training I received in sustainable agriculture changed my life. I can now support my family through the income I earn from my farm. The mentorship provided by my trainers helped me overcome challenges and grow my business.”***

“I have opened my own workshop at our trading centre with four machines. I’m training five youths. I am also selling materials like kitenge and ready-made clothes from the workshop. I am now able to earn some good money and support my family. I appreciate ARU for supporting me. I am praying that you work hard to continue supporting many youths” Ayoo Rackelly from Bsp. Angelo Vocational Training School – Kwanja – Lira, attested.

The program is overwhelmingly positive according to Sr. Caroline, with 93.9% of beneficiaries expressing

satisfaction in terms of trades, which were their own choices and 97.5% rating the trainers’ knowledge and delivery as excellent.

“The interesting success focused on is the inclusion of marginalized female group in the program who have made choice in the non-traditional fields such as Building and Concrete Practice (BCP), Motor Vehicle Mechanics (MVM) and solar technology. Also included a female with disability trained in salon and hair dressing.” Sr. Caroline testified.

Phase II Year II trainings ended successfully with Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) examinations. The National Program Coordinator keeps getting many messages from the youth, expressing appreciation to ARU for the support given to them. It has given them high hope of living improved and transformed life after.

SLYIU was first piloted in Northern Uganda in 2021 – 2022. It is now spreading to other parts of the country.



One of the priests blessing the graduates during the second phase of the graduation ceremony at Bishop Angelo Vocational Training School in Kwanja district. Photo by SLYI team.

Religious Nuns continue to embrace the Theological course



Catholic Sisters during the 2024 graduation ceremony in introductory courses in theology. The graduation took place in Kenya. Courtesy Photo.

By Sr. Immaculate Tusingwire - MMS

Conrad N. Hilton Foundation is supporting Catholic Sisters in pursuing introductory courses in theology, in addition to its network of over 700,000 of them who are rooted in their profound faith and belief in the dignity of the human person.

According to the coordinator, HUC Scholarship program, Sr. Gladys Ndege, the number of applicants has continued to rise steadily over the last three years since the inception of the program in 2021. This year 2024, the program hit 195 sisters from 19 countries in Africa; Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Ethiopia, Ghana, Benin, Nigeria, Lesotho, South Africa, Namibia, South Sudan, and those living in Italy, France, Canada, Congo, and Scotland.

Among other beneficiaries, the former Communications Manager, Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU), Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru, MSMMC, was happy to be part of the third cohort of 162 sisters. She enjoyed introduction to theology course despite her tight schedules at ARU and beyond. "This course has helped me to broaden my scope of apostolate and widen the sphere of interaction," Sr. Lilly observed. "I encourage sisters to register for introduction to theology because of its relevance to the religious vocation. We are experts of pastoral work with basis in theology. Professional courses are but not the original field of expertise though some consecrated persons excel in secular studies," Sr. Lilly added.

Catholic Sisters appreciate Hilton Foundation for the ongoing support through their ministries and partnerships, where sisters help to transform the lives of children, youth and families in disadvantaged conditions.

Theological studies form part of the religious formation. It's long overdue when the male counterparts dominated the academic sphere of theology and key positions in the Church. The integral pastoral approach has enhanced sisters in promoting self-sufficiency, independence and contributing to the vibrancy of their communities. The providential legacy of Conrad N. Hilton blends well and adds value to the deep respect and admiration for the work of Catholic sisters.

Sisters through their hands-on ministries at local, national and global partnerships, transform the lives of children, youth, families and communities around the world; particularly those suffering from structural disadvantages. The partnership between Hilton Foundation and Hekima University that offers an online (zoom) distance learning theology programme for Catholic Sisters across Africa is timely. The course enhances Catholic sisters to become committed leaders and advocates for the communities they serve to foster peace, equity and justice.

The objective of introduction to theology is to promote spiritual and human development of the participants – particularly Sisters of the various religious congregations across Africa. The purpose of the programme is to help participants grow in their vocation and mission through the spiritually and theologically rich courses. It recognizes the interrelatedness of theological education, human maturing, and the universal call to holiness.

The participants attend evening classes (after work) or on weekends and in the comfort of their convents. The program lasts 1 year. Hekima University College coordinates it and oversees the implementation processes in collaboration with Hilton Foundation that support the programme through grants.

ARU-CCCU Accelerates Child Protection and Safeguarding for Children with Disabilities in schools.



Child care staff attending the workshop on Accelerating Case Management, Child Protection, and Safeguarding Best Practices at ARU Secretariat. Photo by ARU.

**By Caroline Nansukusa Ssebakijje,
Mrs, ARU-CCCU-CMO**

In a bid to expand its child care best practices adherence, Catholic Care for Children in Uganda (CCCU), a program under the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU), hosted a transformative training at the ARU Secretariat from May 14th to 17th, 2024 for 17 special schools across the country.

This workshop, titled *"Accelerating Case Management, Child Protection, and Safeguarding Best Practices,"* brought together 37 child care staff caring for children with disabilities in the 17 special schools.

Led by Dr. Ronald Luwangula from Makerere University, the training aimed at strengthening participants' skills in child protection, safeguarding, and case management. Participants were equipping with essential knowledge and practical tools to ensure enhanced care and protection

for children with disabilities who are orphans and other vulnerable children, within their communities.

Knowledge was gained and a renewed commitment to transform their approach to caring for children with special needs through enhanced care management practices.

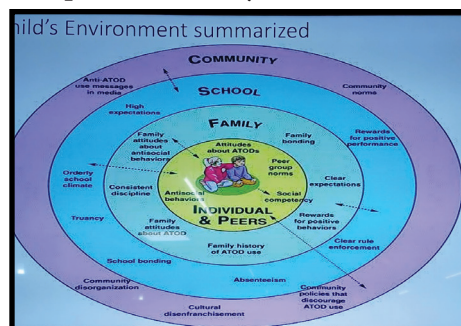
The training sessions were structured to foster an engaging and collaborative environment. Each day began with prayers and recaps of the previous sessions, setting a reflective tone and moment for the learning activities ahead. The program covered fundamental concepts such as child protection, children's rights, and the unique challenges faced by children with disabilities.

Interactive discussions, self-introductions, and other activities were used to encourage participant engagement and the sharing of experiences. This approach helped build

a sense of community among the participants, reinforcing the importance of collaboration in addressing the needs of vulnerable children.

As the training progressed, the focus shifted to practical skills in case management, including the essential processes of gatekeeping, case planning, implementation, monitoring, and closure. Special emphasis was placed on developing child safeguarding policies to protect children from harm.

The program concluded with an action planning session, equipping participants with the tools and strategies needed to apply in the attained knowledge in their roles. The training is expected to have a lasting impact on the welfare of vulnerable children in these special schools, ensuring that they receive the care and protection they deserve.



ARU-CCCU staff, facilitators plus participants share a group photo during the workshop. Photo by ARU.

Mapping New Institutions in ARU-CCCU's Mission to Protect Uganda's Vulnerable Children



From left is ARU-CCCU national coordinator, (second) is the director (ICT manager) and on the extreme right is ARU-CCCU case management officer. Photo by ARU.

By: ARU-CCCU Team

In the heart of Uganda, a quiet yet powerful change is unfolding, bringing hope for a brighter future to the country's most vulnerable children. The ARU-CCCU (Association of the Religious in Uganda-Catholic Care for Children in Uganda) has embarked on an ambitious country-wide mapping exercise, a mission driven by hope and compassion to ensure that no child is left behind.

From August 6th to 21st, 2024, the ARU-CCCU team journeyed across Uganda, from bustling cities to remote villages, with a single goal: to identify Child Care Institutions and Programs (CCI/Ps) that had not yet registered under their program. This effort was not just about compliance with national child protection standards set by the Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development (MoGLSD); it was about extending a hand of support and ensuring that more vulnerable children and households registered with

ARU-CCCU receive the knowledge, mentorship, improved care and protection services they deserve.

The task was overwhelming where the team faced rugged terrains, battled unpredictable weather, and navigated through communities where the need for support was tremendously required. Yet, with every step, they were driven by the stories of hope and resilience they encountered.

In some corners of Uganda, CCCU Staff discovered institutions that were struggling—schools where children paid fees in installments as little as 200 Uganda shillings, special schools for children with disabilities that lacked trained staff, and places where access to medical care was a distant dream. The road infrastructure was often challenging, and during the rainy season, floods wreaked havoc, making even the simplest tasks monumental challenges. At Kyankanda Primary School in Buhweju district,

for instance, it was discovered that floods cut them off during the rainy season.

But even in these challenging circumstances, hope shone brightly. Some institutions, though not yet registered with ARU-CCCU, eagerly sought knowledge and support in care reform, child care best practices, and child protection. They longed to learn, to grow, and to become candles of hope for the children in their care.

The mapping exercise revealed more than just gaps; it uncovered a deep-seated desire among these institutions to do better, to be better. Initially, the ARU-CCCU team identified 16 CCI/Ps that were not yet registered, but as the days went on, three more institutions were uncovered, bringing the total to 18. Each of these institutions, whether a newly established home or a special school for children with disabilities, represented a unique challenge—and a unique opportunity.

As the ARU-CCCU moves forward, the information gathered during this exercise will guide the registration and support of these institutions, ensuring that they operate legally and provide the highest standard of care. But more than that, it will help build a network of support, where institutions are not just meeting legal requirements, but are flourishing—creating safe, nurturing environments where children can thrive.

This initiative is a testament to the power of collective effort and unwavering commitment. It is a reminder that even in the face of great challenges, hope can be found, nurtured, and spread. As the ARU-CCCU continues its mission, it carries with it the hopes and dreams of Uganda's most vulnerable children, working tirelessly to secure for them a future filled with love, care, and endless possibilities.

Together, We Build a Future Where Every Child Thrives."

WUCWO Intensifies Networking among Member Organizations



Catholic Sisters and representatives of religious women in Africa share a lighter moment with Mgr. John Baptist Kauta, shortly after the closing Holy Mass of the workshop at Ulrika, Kisubi. Photo by ARU.

By Benedict Mukoni

More than 25 countries under their umbrella body organization of World Union of Catholic Women Organization (WUCWO), Africa region convened a four days workshop of women Catholic leaders on the project of World Women's Observatory at Ulrika, Kisubi in Kampala Uganda from Sept 16 – 19, 2024.

Under the theme “Merciful parents, peaceful families,” the workshop was held with the cardinal intent to empower and widen networks of Catholic women, both lay and religious.

Sr. Maureen Ogundefu, Sacramentine Sister of Bagamoyo, residing in Kenya, is the community manager in English speaking Africa who acts as a link from grassroots. She gets in touch with Catholic women, both lay and religious, and performs activities basing on their mission of listening and transforming the life

of the women, especially the invisible and the vulnerable.

“We listen and where possible try to assist them through supporting them, emotionally and where possible materially.” Sr. Maureen noted.

According to Sr. Maureen, the organization does a lot of networking, collaborating, and being in touch with one another and to empower one another. Catholic women and Religious Sisters also learn from one another in the process, take on good practices so that they can adapt them.



Sr. Maureen Ogundefu, community manager in English speaking Africa. Photo by ARU.

“This meeting has been very instrumental, very empowering, very enriching, and I can say that we are not going back the way we came. We have learned a lot.” Sr. Maureen observed.

The National programs coordinator, Family Office at the Ugandan Episcopal Conference (UEC),

Mrs. Florence Kevin, revealed that they shared, mostly about the violence and discrimination about women, what they can do and how they can improve homes to avoid violence and discrimination against women and children.

“The workshop has been specifically on a world women observatory project, sharing outcomes, the results. We have done it successfully. Much of what others are talking about, is already being practiced in Uganda.” Florence disclosed to the prophetic witness.

Now, the vice president, WUCWO, Region of Africa, Mrs. Evelyn Melissa Tega, lauded the joint efforts established between Catholic Women Associations and Religious Sisters Associations. It will help them reach more women, heads and people.

When His Grace Paul Semogerere, the Archbishop of Kampala asked them what support they need from the church and their message was very clear that they cannot do it alone. They need serious support from the Church.

"If we need to end this violence and discrimination against all forms of violence, and of course among all races, we really need to be one family." Melissa observed.

Funded by Hilton Foundation at WUCWO, the project started in Latin America and later moved to Africa in 2022 with the first meeting in Nairobi and later collected data tailored at listening to the crime of the women in Africa, their inner voice, challenges that they are facing around discrimination and gender violence. The project will extend to other continents with time.

Currently, WUCWO has over 8 million members in over 15 countries and have about 80 member organizations. It trained over 400 women across all our organizations in 2022 to be able to take lead on the Synod and the conversation in spirit and capacity building is key to them, because people have different understandings, talents, and trainings.

*"Merciful parents,
peaceful families"*



The vice president of WUCWO, Mrs. Evelyn Melissa. Photo by ARU.

Highlights of the Workshop



The Joy of Celebrating gradual but transformative success of ARU-CCCU's Repurposing Program Initiatives.



In the photo is the ARU-CCCU case management officer inspecting an extra structure that is being constructed at Kankobe babies' home for repurposing. Photo by ARU-CCCU team.

By: Caroline Nansukusa Ssebakijje (Mrs) - ARU-CCCU-CMO

ARU-Catholic Care for Children in Uganda (CCCU), is overjoyed to witness the significant though gradual transformation of residential child care facilities into programs that are geared towards supporting more children within their families and communities rather than in institutional care.

A prime example is St. Martin de Porres – Kankobe Children's Home, which has been repurposed into a day-care, nursery, and primary school, while maintaining a small section for emergency support. This transformation aligns with CCCU's mission to see all children supported in family environments and CCIs (Children in Care Institutions) repurposed into family/community-based programs.

The unveiling of St. Martin de Porres – Kankobe Children's Home's repurposing model was a joyful moment, marking its evolution into a dynamic educational and emergency child-care institution. This transformation goes beyond structural changes; it creates an environment where vulnerable children can thrive academically, socially, emotionally, physically and spiritually. A dedicated team of educators, including a qualified Head Teacher from the Good Samaritan Sisters, boldly embarked on this new chapter.

The emergency childcare section is also staffed to provide immediate support. During the stakeholder's engagement meeting together with the CCCU team and the facilities' management plus other relevant duty bearers, the enthusiasm and commitment from the local church and community further strengthened the efforts,

promising a supportive and nurturing environment for every child. This education initiative addresses the needs of the broader community, particularly those who cannot afford school fees and requirements

In the stakeholders meeting held at the facility as the year 2024 begun, majority community members were in agreement that their progress is evident not just in the upgraded facilities and structured educational programs, but in the smiles on the children's faces and the renewed hope in their eyes.

Quoting from some stakeholders submissions "The collaboration between our staff, the local church, and the broader community underscores our shared belief in the transformative power of education and care. This program aims to build a foundation that addresses immediate needs while preparing young individuals for a brighter future, instilling confidence and self-worth along the way. The moral guidance provided further enhances this holistic approach, ensuring that each child is supported in every aspect of their development. However, to fully realize this vision, we need your continued support. Financial contributions are crucial for completing necessary renovations, acquiring up-to-date educational materials, and enhancing healthcare facilities".

As CCCU, we dearly appreciate any support that can directly impact the lives of these children and more in their transitioning process, providing them with the resources and opportunities they need to succeed. Join us in this vital mission to support more CCIs in repurposing and having more children enjoy family environments.



Dring one of the stakeholders meeting.

Together, we can ensure that the fruits of our repurposing efforts continue to grow, creating a lasting legacy of hope and transformation for the children of St. Martin de Porres – Kankobe and other CCIs- Child Care Institutions towards creating more programs that are family and community based.

Pictorial of Kankobe Children's Home



Established structures where children play were purchased in preparation for an acceptable ground at Kankobe. Photo by ARU-CCCU.



A moment between ARU-CCCU director and the staff in one of the Children facility at Kankobe. Photo by ARU-CCCU.



This is a chicken project established to support feeding and extra finances at Kankobe babies' home. Photo by ARU-CCCU team.



Here is a locally crafted fenced of the teachers' quarter at Kankobe. Photo by ARU-CCCU team.

ASEC CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF EMPOWERING AFRICAN SISTERS



ASEC Alumnae share a memorial light moment during the Silver Jubilee celebrations, the graduation of 116 Sisters and the launch of the campaign dubbed "Educate a Sister." Photo by ARU.

By Benedict Mukoni

The African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC) marked a significant milestone on September 28, 2024, celebrating 25 years of unwavering dedication to educating and empowering Catholic sisters across Africa at St. Peter's Catholic parish, Nsambya in Kampala, Uganda.

During the silver jubilee event whose theme was "Igniting hope: Building bridges; Creating Impact", 116 sisters graduated at the 6th graduation of Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI). Among them were 49 sisters who received certificates in financial management, 51 in administration, and 16 in web design.

The event drew thousands of guests, including ASEC alumnae, partners, and church leaders from various parts of the country.

In her keynote address, the chief guest Dr. Brigid Blake, reflected on the organization's remarkable journey: "From humble beginnings to impacting over 10,000 sisters, ASEC's commitment to education and empowerment has transformed lives, communities, and the Church."

According to Dr. Blake, ASEC has served 400 congregations and 10,000 Sisters in Africa. Close to 4,500 have graduated from SLDI, High Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA) and scholarship programs. Over 1,000 Sisters have completed bachelor's degrees, 300 master's degrees, over 600 diplomas and certificates, and one PhD, she added. This will foster a cadre of educated, confident leaders capable of addressing Africa's complex challenges.

CORE VALUES

Transformation, Collaboration, Leadership, Service, Capacity Building, Reverence

She highlighted that in Uganda specifically, a total of 591 Sisters have completed SLDI, including a few Sisters who graduated on that same day of the silver jubilee. 72 Sisters have completed master's degrees, 129 bachelor's degrees, 53 diplomas, and 61 more Sisters from HESA are set to graduate this year. "Uganda's Sisters have much to be proud of."

The celebration started with a thanksgiving Holy Sacrifice of the Mass presided over by Bishop Sanctus Linos Wanok who appealed to sisters to serve in humility, obedience with faith and courage and to witness with love. He congratulated ASEC for providing critical education and leadership development opportunities and empowering Catholic Sisters to make significant contributions to their communities and to tackle various developmental challenges across Africa.



The president of the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU), Mother Dr. Speranza Namusisi, congratulated ASEC for the great milestone achieved noting that being in the field for 25 years is not only a blessing, but a great achievement. She thanked Conrad Hilton Foundation for the support offered to sisters in different parts of the world and various disciplines, mostly in education, since it was education being celebrated in addition to the silver jubilee.

"We are glad that we are selected among many countries to benefit from the education collaborative. I know some countries are not there, but we were part of the first group to benefit from this." Mother Speranza noted.

At the same event, a campaign dubbed Educate a Sister project was launched, spearheaded by Centenary bank with a contribution of UGX 10 million which was handed to ASEC by the head of commercial banking, Mr. Jingo Micheal.

The ASEC Country coordinator, Sr. German Keneema, expressed gratitude to Hilton Foundation for putting a big smile on the faces of the many sisters who have benefited from HESA and SLDI programs.

She assured them that the impact of ASEC's work will continue to ripple out through ASEC's beneficiaries, touching hearts and minds of many generations to come.

She added that educated sisters serve essential roles, acting as leaders, teachers, healthcare providers, and advocates for the marginalized in society. The fruits of this educational endeavor have extended beyond expectations, citing the report released by ASEC office. "ASEC beneficiaries in 10 countries have collectively raised over 19 million for community projects, positively impacting over 200 million people." Sr. Germina revealed.

"We are grateful to God for entrusting to us the mission to plant seeds of hope and to build bridges of opportunities. As we embark on our next chapter of ASEC, let us work together with renewed energy and determination to ensure that the vision of empowered women of faith continues to flourish." Sr. Germina noted.

Alumnae shared powerful testimonies, highlighting ASEC's profound impact, stating that it has enabled most of them to pursue their dreams and serve their community with dignity.

ASEC's silver jubilee marks a new chapter in its mission to educate and empower African sisters illuminating the path toward a brighter future for all.

Congratulations, ASEC on this remarkable achievement!

The mission of African Sisters Education Collaborative, or ASEC, 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.

Pictorial highlights of ASEC@25



Pictorial Highlights of the Major Events



The delegates who represented Uganda at the golden jubilee at 19 Plenary Assembly.



ASEC Alumnae in a group photo during the silver jubilee.



The junior professed attending Mass on the opening day.



National day of prayer on human trafficking.



WUCWO representatives in session at Ulrika, Kisubi.



A group photo shortly after Sr. Mary Lilly's thanksgiving Mass at ARU Secretariat.



Moment of celebration by SLYIU beneficiaries at Bp. Angelo Voc. institute.



The national Coordinator, BPE addressing participants.