



The Prophetic Witness

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Health Network Group in a general meeting at ARU Secretariat, Nsambya Kampala. Photo by ARU Reporter.

By Sr. Specioza Kabahuma, DST

ARU PROFILE ON ANTI-TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS NETWORK CONTINUED...

- iv. To enhance continuous education to families and communities on the misuse of workforce and human trafficking
- v. To facilitate the generation of collective data that will demonstrate and display collective impact of the sisters' ministries.
- vi. To empower survivors of human trafficking/trafficking in persons
- vii. To promote awareness creation through available media network to prevent the gaps that facilitate labour exploitation and human trafficking.

a. To amplify the advocacy voice of the sisters and their beneficiaries on critical elements of human development.

3) **The results from this project will lead to;**

- i. Mobilized and sensitized religious Institutes in Uganda towards the interventions of combating human trafficking and/or Modern Slavery in many parts of Uganda.
- ii. In total, 30 out of 113 religious institutes will be brought on board to build synergies in combating the vice of human trafficking. This number will add to the already

active 6 institutes making the number to 36 Institutes coming together to cause change among the communities toward combating the vice of human trafficking and/or modern slavery in Uganda. The 04 Ecclesiastical Provinces of Uganda will determine the selections.

- iii. Out of 30 Institutes, 07 will be selected from Gulu, 07 from Tororo and 08 from Mbarara and 08 from Kampala Ecclesiastical Provinces. The selection will be inclusive of the all the dioceses in the specific Ecclesiastical Province.
- iv. The 30 selected and trained religious institutes will have their capacities build from which they will take the mantle of training other religious institutes in Uganda. This project will therefore be tailored towards mobilization and building the capacity of the 30 religious institutes.

“When Cobwebs unite, it can tie out a lion.” African Proverb

To be continued in the next issue please.

The Editorial



**Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru,
MSMMC**

Dear reader, welcome to this second last edition of the year. We presuppose that it is fine with you by God's grace. In this edition, our peak is the Synod on Synodality which kicked off with blessings of St. Francis of Assisi, October 4, 2023.

We are called to go on our knees and plead to God with uplifted hands as Moses did: Ex. 17:11-12. This Synod is unique as it puts into consideration diverse opinions. Most of them are sensitive issues like blessing of gay marriage, ordination of women and the like. We pray that the Holy Spirit prevails over the discussants.

In another development, our beat this time round is all about the saga of Human Trafficking or Trafficking in Persons (TIP), as the UN refers to it. The month of September was punctuated with interventions pertaining to TIP. First of all, as Catholic Church, the annual event derived from the international day on Trafficking in Persons

(July 30), is commemorated on September 09, on the Feast Day of St. Peter Clever, who left a legacy of rescuing slaves.

This edition brings you how the vice of TIP is being tackled through the synergies of various church institutions. Much as the perpetrators of TIP use internationally organized criminal networks across the globe, on the other hand, the synergies of those combating the vice are building up too!

The September TIP event started with a vigil Mass on the 8, while interreligious prayer was on the 9. From 21-29 September, ARU, Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN) and team reached out to the Karamojong community in Kampala and Matany to address the issue of internal trafficking. **(Find in the next issue).**

The degrading TIP episodes send negative signals from neighborhoods to the entire global community.

We are called to be vigilant towards this phenomenon. One cannot turn a deaf ear or blind eye to such unacceptable acts of the perpetrators. We ought to be careful since the attackers are unsuspecting till gripped!

We are urged to send warning alarms to the neighborhoods especially to the youth who are preyed upon by the perpetrators.

Think and act outside the box of your routines and join the coalition of Catholic institutions on trafficking in persons.

Some of the articles are based on the strides ARU is making towards holistic formation and networking among her members. This is the best way ARU chooses to attain integral human development and to meet the demands of contemporary times. Gone are the days when one could struggle singled handedly! Today we say, ***"if you want to move fast, go alone but if you want to go far, move with others!"***

The formative arm of ARU seeks to build the capacity of the consecrated persons in order to be relevant in the secular and materialistic, contemporary society. Today I find meaning in what our Founder, Bishop Ceasar Asili told us in the formation; ***"You must use this period of formation to equip yourself to face the hostile world in order to win souls for God or the world will convert you!"*** The question still remains, how much quality time do we use for converting the world?

Today, more than ever, the boat (the universal Church) is sailing in the troubled sea. We are troubled by the aggressive sea waves, like the troubled apostles, how often do we call upon the Lord for help? Mt. 14:22-33. No more watching and waiting but together, we can do the needful.

SYNOD ON SYNODALITY KICKS OFF IN THE VATICAN



St. Peter's square in the Vatican City. Online Courtesy

Compiled by ARU Reporter

VATICAN CITY (RNS) — According to Religious News Service (RNS), Catholic clergy and laypeople assembled at the Vatican from Oct. 4-29, 23 for the synod on Synodality, with an emphasis on communion, participation and mission.

While some might dismiss the highly anticipated event as a meeting on meetings, the term synodality under Pope Francis has expanded to reflect his vision for dialogue and decision-making in the church.

“I am well aware that speaking of a ‘Synod on Synodality’ may seem something abstruse, self-referential, excessively technical, and of little interest to the general public,” Francis said to journalists at the Vatican on Aug. 26.

Accordingly, the summit will bring 464 Catholic clergy and the laity especially women, to the Vatican to discuss hot-button issues ranging from sexual abuse to LGBTQ inclusion and female ordination. “It is something truly important for the church,” the pope said. Of the 364 voting participants, mostly bishops, 50 will be women, (14%)!

What is the Synod on Synodality?

This synod is the result of a two-year process that started in September 2021, when the Vatican released a preparatory document and instructions on how to prepare for the summit. Catholic faithful around the world then met in their parishes to discuss the questions posed by the synod. The syntheses of those conversations were then sent to their respective bishops’ conferences.

Once bishops had the opportunity to discuss and debate the syntheses, they sent their conclusions to the Vatican, where a group of some 30 experts, theologians and pastoral workers met in the town of Frascati near Rome in September 2022 to draft a document that would guide the next phase. This document, titled “Enlarge the Space of your Tent,” was sent to the Continental Assemblies, or groups of bishops divided by continents. The Eastern churches and Catholic advocacy groups also had a chance to submit their reflections on the synodal topics.

The results of those continental discussions were sent once again to the Vatican, where officials at the synod office drafted another document, the “Instrumentum Laboris 2,” that will guide discussions at the upcoming synod in the month of October, 2023.

In the same vein, Edward Pentin in the National Catholic Register, Oct 2, 2023, wrote: “Five cardinals have sent a set of questions to Pope Francis to express their concerns and seek clarification on points of doctrine and discipline ahead of the opening of the Synod on Synodality at the Vatican.”

The cardinals submitted five questions, called “dubia,” on Aug. 21 requesting clarity on topics relating to doctrinal development, the blessing of same-sex unions, the authority of the Synod on Synodality, women’s ordination, and sacramental absolution.

Dubia are formal questions brought before the pope and the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) aimed at eliciting a “yes” or “no” response, without theological argumentation. The word “dubia” is the plural form of “dubium,” which means “doubt” in Latin. They are typically raised by cardinals or other high-ranking members of the Church and are meant to seek clarification on matters of doctrine or Church teaching.

The dubia were signed by German Cardinal Walter Brandmüller, 94, president of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences; American Cardinal Raymond Burke, 75, prefect emeritus of the Apostolic Signatura; Chinese Cardinal Zen Ze-Kiun, 90, Bishop emeritus of Hong Kong; Mexican Cardinal Juan Sandoval Íñiguez, 90, archbishop emeritus of Guadalajara; and Guinean Cardinal Robert Sarah, 78, prefect emeritus of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

Accordingly, Pope Francis’ responses “have not resolved the doubts we had raised, but have, if anything, deepened them,” they said in a statement to the National Catholic Register. They therefore sent the reformulated dubia on Aug. 21, rephrasing them partly so they would elicit “yes” or “no” replies.

In all these, the members of the Universal Church are called to accompany the rest of the Church and pray for this noble cause. United we stand for the common good.

Pictorial



The 16th General Assembly of the Synod kicks off in the Vatican with an emphasis on listening as the core element in seeking to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Courtesy picture from the Vatican News website.



The first General Congregation of the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops begins with a focus on the integral experience of a synodal Church. courtesy picture from Vatican News website



Pope Francis proposed to synodal assembly to read the following collection of Patristic texts for the opening of the Synod’s work. Courtesy picture from Vatican News website.



Paolo Ruffini, President of the Commission for Information of the Synodal Assembly, holds a second briefing for journalists and outlines the topics addressed in the small working groups and the free interventions, which include formation, the Church as a family, and abuse. Photo courtesy of Vatican News website

ARU EMBRASING NEW COLLABORATIVE NETWORKS



In the picture is a round table discussion in session of the healthcare network at ARU Secretariat, Nsambya Kampala. Photo by ARU Reporter.

By Sr. Grace Kyomugisha, OLCG

Networks are new ventures in the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU). ARU is learning and re-learning new practical ways of reaching out to its members as it lives and fulfills its Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives. Fiscal Agents shall keep ARU informed of the activities being carried out. The understanding and practical living of these Networks evolve with times. Thus, whatever is written down is not the blue print.

Fiscal Agent

A Network initially begins with an Institute as a Fiscal Agent. The first grant could support registering the Network according to the Country's registration laws for a non-profit NGO. Ultimately, the Network is managed by an advisory board to

support moving the project forward. If the registration eventually goes through, the entity becomes the recipient of the grant to help further both the partner's and ARU's Mission.

ARU has four Networks:

1. Consecrated Catholic Women Health Care Initiative. The Fiscal Agent is the sisters of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus (DST)
2. St. Bakhita Anti-Human Trafficking Network. The Fiscal Agent is the sisters of the Holy Cross.
3. The Elderly Consecrated Women-The Fiscal Agent is the sisters of Immaculate Heart of Mary Reparatrix (Ggogonya), (IHMR)
4. Sisters Communication Practitioners-The Fiscal Agent is the Missionary Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church (MSMMC)

Network Guidelines

1. A Vision of the Network
2. A Mission Statement that articulates the purpose and goals of the Network
3. Terms of Reference and By-laws and Constitution, including a dissolution clause, should be in place to assist in the governance of the Network. This is in case the Network is registered as an NGO.
4. An advisory Board should have between 7 and 9 members, preferably odd numbers. The majority should be sisters, but the board should include lay people with expertise in the field and experience in resource mobilization. Each board member's appointment letter should stipulate the term of office.
5. A clear organogram for the Network should clarify the role of each party's involvement to avoid confusion of roles.
6. It is advisable to have an independent physical address and, optimally, a physical office for Network operations; this should be off the national conference premises where possible. This helps to clear conflicts of interest and the ability of the director and advisory board to operate toward moving the Network's Mission forward.

Network Operations Guidelines

1. Personnel would include a Director/Coordinator who is not a member of the grantee Institute (Fiscal Agent) and one member from the grantee institute who could serve as a Financial Manager. Other personnel depend on need and budget the network proposes to accomplish. This may differ by country, type of network created and consensus among the partnering Institutes on ministries. Documentation is important to ensure continuity and foster trust in the Network members.

2. Contracts for the personnel of the Network with a Job Description for each should be provided. The duration of the contract should be equal to the grant period. However, the Director/Coordinator may have additional period to allow continuity of the project if there is a need for succession planning.

3. The members of the network should develop a clear work plan within the first three months of the grant to allow the Network to have a roadmap with clear goals and an approach to achieve them.

4. Officers/Personnel should be available for meetings and have access to the internet and other necessary means of communication to conduct the Network's business.



Maximum attention during the first communication network meeting.



Human Trafficking workshop in session to initiate Anti-Trafficking network with consecrated persons from various Institutes that converge at ARU Secretariat. Photo by ARU Reporter.

Network Financial Guidelines

1. The Fiscal agent shall entirely oversee expenditure.

2. Decisions on the project implementation are made by the Director and staff and approved by the Advisory Board or Entity Board.

3. In the case of sub-granting and/or award to the beneficiaries, written criteria for awards are required, and award letters should have a standard template for accountability purpose. This applies to Start Up Capital. For instance provided to Youth who complete the Sister Led Youth Empowerment Initiative (SLYI).

4. A Network is a formal collaboration, interconnection or partnership of multiple religious Institutes for clearly stated purposes: human development topics, formation, sisters' service needs, healthcare with specific goals and coordination mechanisms and is operated through dedicated communication channels to facilitate accomplishing of project goals.

5. Collaborative networks demonstrate the impact of the services rendered and provide learning opportunities on what works. Helping to see the larger portrait of the social issues being addressed within a community by the Network and could lead to partnerships with public and government entities supporting these issues like Trafficking in Persons.



A group photo of shortly after the first communication network meeting at ARU Secretariat

Franciscans celebrate 200 years of their foundation



Some of the Franciscan Brothers initiating their newly professed Brother through invocation of Franciscan blessing. File photo.

By Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru, MSMMC

THE Franciscan Brothers, with a presence in Baraka-Kenya and Adraa – Uganda celebrate 200 years of their foundation (1820-2020) in Mountbellew-Ireland. The Brothers converged in Mountbellew for two centuries having moved in from Miltown and Dalkey.

On Saturday July 1, 2023, the Brothers celebrated their legacy of the bicentennial anniversary of their foundation in Mountbellew after celebrating 32nd General Chapter, where they sought to review, renew, and re-plan their life and mission. This chapter bore a unique trait when Br. Charles Lagu, the first African Minister General was elected and entrusted with responsibility to take the institute to another level. Br. Tony Dolan the outgoing Minister General mentored him.

The bicentennial anniversary of the Brothers of Mountbellew was postponed due to Covid 19 that led to universal lockdown. Hence, the celebration was delayed till July this year when the brothers commenced their celebration with mass in St Mary's Church in Mountbellew, before those in attendance made their way across the road to the Atlantic Technological University (former Mountbellew Agricultural College) for a meal and entertainment.

The Franciscan Brothers occupied Mountbellew when Christopher Dillon Bellew of the Bellew Estate asked the Franciscan Friars Minor in Dublin to send Brothers to Mountbellew to run a school for the poor in the area. Christopher Dillon Bellew gave them 10 acres and a site for a monastery, (Tuam Herald).

In 1904, the Franciscan Brothers set up the agricultural college in Mountbellew. It was the first edu-

cational institute in Ireland devoted solely to agricultural practices. The founding Brothers moved to begin a community of religious brothers that eventually responded in ministry to the socio-economic-religious realities in the West of Ireland, in the early decades of the 19th Century.

The legacy and motivation of the Brothers is drawn from two sources: the historical association with the Order of Friars Minor, and the life and ministry of the Brothers in the early communities. With a strong sense of fraternity, centered on prayer, work, and the common life, embodied the life of the early brothers.

Farming provided their sustenance as well as the resources for their ministries. Questing provided support for their outreach to the poor while also supporting their other ministries. Catechetical instruction and basic education in the 3Rs of reading, writing and arithmetic, along with technical and agricultural training characterized their ministry

These brothers teach with a difference with Br. Peter Tabichi breaking the world record; A Franciscan brother who teaches children from poverty-stricken families in Kenya was awarded

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the 2019 Global Teacher Prize and a cool \$1 million. Brother Peter Tabichi OFM was selected from 10,000 nominees for the prestigious prize which he was awarded on 23 March. “I feel great. I can’t believe it. I feel so happy to be among the best teachers in the world, being the best in the world...” Brother Tabichi said after receiving the award. (The Catholic Weekly).

Similarly, their traditional charism of educating the children of the poor in primary schools is to be encouraged. According to Br. Tony Dolan, their Charismatic Identity entails living the gospel way of life, following the Franciscan spirituality

of fraternity, simplicity, hospitality, closeness to the marginalized, and care for creation, as lived by the early communities of the Franciscan Brothers.

“We are defined by our core values such as fraternity, stewardship, simplicity, hospitality, justice and promoting human dignity. We care for the earth and promote peace building within the geographical communities in which we serve. We also follow our patrimony of continuing with agriculture and rural development for the promotion of sustainable livelihoods. In all matters, we exercise a creative fidelity,” Br. Tony concluded.

The Brothers attribute their success and legacy of over 200 years to the kindness and generosity of many individuals, communities and donor agencies they will live to appreciate.

They resolved not to lose sight of the strong tradition in “trade-skills” such as carpentry, cooking, farming, kitchen-gardening, and mechanics, practiced by the brothers over the years. In accepting brothers to the congregation, those with talents and aptitudes in those areas would be identified and nurtured, as such talents will eventually provide essential services to ministries and communities.

Pictorial



The new-elect Minister General, Br. Charles Lagu of the Franciscan Brothers. Courtesy of Franciscan Brothers website.



Franciscan Brothers in Jubilation during profession at Adraa agricultural college. File Photo.

CATHOLIC SISTERS ILLUMINE GIRL CHILD FUTURE THROUGH BPE



Bakhita Partnership for Education (BPE) workshop review conducted by Dr. Kevin Owuko in session at Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) Secretariat at Nsambya, Kampala. Photo by ARU Reporter.

By: ARU Reporter

Catholic Sisters through their girl child project dubbed St. Bakhita Partnership for Education (BPE) convoked a review workshop at Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) Secretariat, Nsambya – Kampala, with intent to find out the fruits of phase I project in order to roll-out the phase II from August, 2023.

Policy Analyst, working with girl child empowerment program, Dr. Kevin Owuko, has revealed that this second phase which they are about to rollout is going to expand to more countries which include; Tanzania, Malawi and later to West Africa in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) - a remarkable difference from phase I which supported only three countries; Kenya, Uganda and Zambia. Phase II is slated to run from 2023 – 2026.

BPE has run for three years in Kenya, Zambia and Uganda. The project supports 15 schools in the three countries; 20 girls in each school totaling to 300 girls who are getting support from BPE in terms of school fees.

Now BPE project is looking at a target of supporting 75 schools in the five countries; more 15 schools in Tanzania and 15 in Malawi. They expect to support around 1,500 girls, according to Dr. Owuko.

This project supports girls from extremely poor backgrounds but have reached in semi-candidate and candidate classes. It will support them from senior three to senior six only for schools that have A' level.

“The progress has been good and, in this workshop, they have been able to register a number of successes and some of the challenges that they experienced during phase I. out

come is that the successes have outweighed the challenges and so they are very happy and the sponsors are willing to inject in more funds in the project,” Dr. Owuko noted.

According to Sr. Victor Tugamuhaki, Head Teacher, St. Gertrude Vocational Girls' school, Kisoro, BPE pays for 20 girls in her school and they have now done it for four terms. “I am really happy with them because girls had dropped out of school after Covid'19. They supported the girls who are now very happy, joyful and well behaved,” Sr. Victor noted.

Sr. Victor prays that this project continues and she send her heartfelt gratitude to the Jesuit Priest who started the project and to sisters who are representing different congregations at ARU and have labored day and night to make sure the girl child is retained in school.



BPE group discussions during the workshop review to find out how better they can execute phase II of the program. Photo by ARU Reporter

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“May God bless you as I pray that the team may keep supporting the girls until they acquire skills to come out as responsible citizens to uplift the society, the Nation and our Church!” Sr. Victor remarked.

Sr. Victor also observed that, such schools where the disadvantaged girls study have been uplifted because funds (school fees) that come in time and are used to promote the welfare of a girl child in schools.

However, when the girls complete senior six and have no skills, they are nowhere and they look like school dropouts. She recommends that if need be, at least they could follow-up those who are already beneficiaries and make sure that they attain skills before phase II is rolled out. However, she concluded, as focus is on psycho-social support, the beneficiaries may emerge as skilled personnel.

Sr. Judith Adilo from Dokolo Girls’ SSS, Northern - Uganda emphasized that many girls have progressed and very few dropped out from what they shared in the workshop but teachers are still passionate about them and want to bring the dropouts back to school.

“We need more of advocacy on this subject that is already being appreciated. As we bring more students on board, let us not only base on the support we get from BPE. We need additional support for these girls from other stakeholders like the government because there are so many needs, Bakhita project cannot provide everything at the moment.” Sr. Judith Adilo remarked.



The Assistant Secretary General, ARU, Sr. Grace Kyomugisha delivers her remarks shortly after the conclusion of the BEP workshop review at ARU Secretariat, Nsambya. Photo by ARU Reporter.

According to Sr. Judith, the project has helped the beneficiaries to be more disciplined and self-sufficient, trying to do somethings for themselves through small projects at school which helps them to become self-sustaining.

“In this workshop, we have discovered that all schools are appreciating the hand of BPE because most of these schools can now do many things despite the fact that they are in a rural setting.” Sr. Judith added.

Like any other project however, BPE has faced challenges in terms of selecting the beneficiaries. As the project targets the most vulnerable girls, there are very many vulnerable girls. The selection becomes tough. And finding the neediest is challenging as a very big section of the girls needed support.

The workshop being held at the beginning and towards the end of the term has also been a challenge, it becomes difficult for the school administrators to attend such workshops. SSSSSS So there was a call to adjust to a common calendar with the partnering sisters’ association such that the workshop could be in tandem with the school work plan to be able to attend and participate fully in workshops.



Participants contributing during the workshop review.

This is a follow-up program and we promise to keep you posted of the latest developments as they unfold.

108 CATHOLIC JUNIOR PROFESSED COMMISSIONED



The junior Consecrated Persons pose for a memorial group photo after commissioning at St. Mbaaga, National seminary. Photo by ARU Reporter

By: ARU Reporter

“As we commission you back to your communities to prepare for your final vows and soon some of you will become community animators and superiors, please don’t become wicked because God is sending you with a clear purpose to go and bring His people to Himself.” Rev. Fr. John Bosco Kamoga cautioned the newly commissioned junior professed.

About 94 junior professed Sisters and 14 Brothers were commissioned at St. Mbaaga major seminary, Ggaba on August 4, 2023, after a month of training course.

“Those he foreknew from the beginning, He called, those He called, He sanctified, those He sanctified, He justified and those He justified, He glorified. We all arrive here by the Mercy of God,” Fr. Kamoga proclaimed vehemently.

He reminded the participants that, “God has a plan for his people and He wants to send you (Junior Professed) to go liberate his people and bring them close to Himself so that He can make them a kingdom of Priests. You are the people whom God wants to send to His people; so that you can redeem them; tell them about repentance and return to God.”

Quoting from Pope Francis’ speech delivered on International Youth Day 2023, Lisbon, Fr. Kamoga emphasized that; “God wants to send us broken and weak as we are; as consecrated persons.

We have lost the aspect of contemplation and meditation and because we have lost that, yet we are the people who are being commissioned to go and liberate others but sometimes we go as little devils; characterised by vices.” Fr. Kamoga told the junior professed.

He added that, such little devils are full of hate, sometimes tribalism, unforgiveness, pride, and full of all sorts of things which are not in the image of God.

Fr. Kamoga advised the junior professed, every single day and moment, ought to be dedicated to prayer, because by themselves, they cannot manage. “*Cut off from me, you can do nothing.*” “You cannot bear fruits of kindness, mercy, generosity and availability unless you are united to Him who is our true vine,” John. 15.

Conclusively, Fr. Kamoga gave reasons for daily endeavor to pray both community and personal prayers and celebrate the Eucharist; that they are energized and gain renewed vigor. “Be a new generation of consecrated men and women with a difference. You are sent to go and bind the wounds of those who are wounded.”



Fr. John Bosco Kamoga, Vice President of ARU, handover a certificate of completion to the participant. Photo by ARU Reporter

“All of us are happy but I think I am the happiest.” The Secretary General, ARU, Sr. Mary Lydia Apili Bwor, declared in her opening remarks. The Secretary General advised the newly commissioned to go back home, renew others and continue renewing themselves. “Let all these praises and beautiful words be seen when you go back home.” She said.

“None of us in the house of God is qualified but God qualifies us for His mission. You have made us proud, continue to be good so that your younger brothers and sisters can also benefit from this. One frog spoils the water, do not be that frog that will spoil the water for others”, Sr. Lydia cautioned the newly commissioned junior professed.

She thanked ARU through the Vice President, Fr. John Bosco Kamoga, for believing in the administration of ARU that they are capable of organizing such good programs. She also commended major superiors for entrusting ARU with their daughters and sons.



The Secretary General, ARU, Sr. Mary Lydia Apili Bwor (Middle) being escorted to give a speech during the commissioning of the junior professed. Photo by ARU Reporter.



The Junior Professed attending send off Mass during their commissioning at St. Mbaaga Major Seminary, Ggaba on August 4, 2023; it was presided over by, Fr John Bosco Kamoga. Photo by ARU Reporter.

The Secretary General lauded participants for their cooperation by the fact that they allowed themselves to be trusted and it cannot be taken for granted. Quoting Rev. 21:5, “God is making all things new for us, Isaiah 43:18, forget the past and see the new things I am doing in your life.”

Sr. Pauline Namuddu, LSOE, Coordinator, Formation Ministry of Religious in Uganda (FoMRU) urged the newly commissioned junior professed to be examples of humility because some people climb ladders and are never down to earth! “Christ is the new wine and He wants you people to be new wineskins. These are the earthly wear vessels and we are.”

“We thank all those who have participated in giving you this rich and fruitful month because it has been teamwork which has helped us carry out this course of the junior professed successfully and fruitfully and this is the best year we have had.” Sr. Namuddu enthusiastically revealed.

“Now dear friends, as you go away, go and fulfil God’s plan of reaching out to people in Synodality where He wants you to bring good news in communion with others. We wish you all the best in your service of the Lord’s vineyard and congratulations!”, Sr. Namuddu proclaimed. She also appreciated the formation coordinators; Br. Franklin Rukundo, Sr. Sperenza and Sr. Rozetta.

Meanwhile, Br. Franklin Rukundo congratulated the Secretary General and the formation ministry for the day and thanked everyone for ending his tenure in office on a happy note.

“On behalf of the Formators and facilitators and coordinators, we beg for forgiveness because we might have offended you but it was not in bad faith, so please forgive us otherwise I wish you all the best of luck, continue praying for us. Thank you for contributions towards our good, the spiritual and physical nourishment.” Br. Rukundo confessed.

USFCN COMMISSIONS 21 FORMATORS



Formation graduands share a memorial group photo together with the guest of honour and other celebrants of mass at the commissioning ceremony. Photo by ARU Reporter.

By: ARU Reporter

As Formators, you have been reminded of the singular duty that you occupy in our congregations. You are the most important persons in the congregations. You have been entrusted with the duty of accompanying our brothers and sisters into the journey of growing into the calling of this religious life." Fr. John Bosco Kamoga, the Vice President of Association of Religious (ARU) advised Formators.

It was all merrymaking as 21 consecrated men and women were commissioned as Formators under the theme: "Happy are the poor in spirit," at Uganda Spiritual Formation Centre Namugongo (USFCN), a formation house under Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) on the August 25, 2023. Msgr. Lawrence Ssemusu graced the commissioning ceremony as the chief guest and main celebrant of the Eucharistic celebration of Mass.

"You have taken a very important step associated with places of learning, I have attended very many graduations and I have heard so many reports but I must say this is the shortest graduation I have ever attended. The congregation was opened, names were read and I graduated you and then it was dissolved." Msgr. Ssemusu said.

"But as you go out there, people will ask what you are going to be and who you are as a formator. We hope and pray that you be that formator who cooperates with God, the Master Formator and leave a legacy behind as best formators" Msgr. Ssemusu emphatically advised.

Mother Speranza Namusisi – President, ARU through Fr. Kamoga reminded formators about the words of Pope Francis in his Homily at the Vatican reminds us that those who recognize their spiritual poverty are the ones who inherit the kingdom of God. In speech to newly formed, Mother advised about the importance of

embracing values of brotherhood, poverty of the spirit and that that is how consecrated men and women get into the freedom as children of God.

"You are the potters who are molding something. The young people who are given to us are not Angels, not perfect like anyone but we try to mold them to become as much as possible like Christ who calls them.

But for them to be able to embrace what you are giving them, you are supposed to try as much as possible to live an exemplary life of what you are teaching them." Mother Speranza cautioned.

In the Gospel according to Luke, 6:12, She interpreted: "very early in the morning, Jesus goes to pray and so is late in the night. If we want these young consecrated men and women to live by the values of the institute, we the formators have to live by those values. We pray that you may be able to live this task."



Msgr. Lawrence Ssemusu while addressing the graduands during the commissioning ceremony at USFCN. Photo by ARU Reporter

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“Work required of us as religious formators today has been heightened by the experiences that are there but takes a lot self-sacrifice, self-denial and self-transcendence for one to accept to gently walk with someone.” She advised. Sr. Grace Kyomugisha, Assistant Secretary General – ARU told graduates that the administration is very certain about the 21 formators who have graduated today will, not cause any crisis in the formation houses

“We are sure you will make a substantial service because you have been prepared and you are capable of passing on what has been given to you. Please be witnesses.” Sr. Grace said.



The Assitant Secretary General ARU, Sr. Grace Kyomugisha delightedly attends the commissioning ceremony of the formators at USFCN. Photo by ARU Reporter.

She encouraged them that if there is no testimony and consistency, there will be no vocations, be humble and let it be reflected in your life. She emphasized that they have been called to bear witness and that is their ministry and mission; they are not only going as teachers but witnesses of Jesus Christ basing on their own Charisms.

“We the consecrated persons pronounce our vows but in a moment, however, living them for the sake of the kingdom is the work of a lifetime.

The journey requires us to be refashioned by the Lord’s recreating grace over and over.” Sr. noted.

Sr. Grace also assured the participants that, the experience of consecrated men and women is challenging and demanding just like marriage. It is but joyful because it is life-giving which will happily invite others. The Lord’s goal will be hard on our steadfast witness through the gospel.

Pictorial



SISTERS IN UGANDA REAP SUCCESS IN PDCL COURSE



A second group of participants in their first module attentively take notes during the workshop of PDCL at ARU Secretariat. Photo by ARU Reporter

By: ARU Reporter

Two sisters, (Sr. Mary Nabakka and Sr. Maria Gorreti Namono) in Uganda qualify As associate Trainers after graduation in Professional Development for Congregational Leadership (PDCL) in the first ever cohort in Uganda after successful completion of all the three modules they undertook.

This revelation was made by Sr. Alice Anzoyo Dralu, Sisters of the Sacred Heart (SHS) of Jesus Moyo at ARU Secretariat during the PDCL training of the second group who are now undertaking a first module. Sr. Alice Dralu works in Nairobi at Tangaza University College in the Department of Centre for Leadership and Management. PDCL is a program meant to develop the leadership capacity of the major superiors' of institutes of consecrated women.

previously, consecrated women were elected into leadership without considering whether someone has been trained for leadership or not. They are elected through chapters where they understand the Holy Spirit takes all of them to elect a leader that is a leader who is elected.

“But in the 21st century, you cannot leave leadership in the hands of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit also invites us to prepare and learn how to do things that correspond to the context of the time like now in line with signs of the time.” Sr. Dralu remarked.

Participants predominantly come from Uganda among participating Superiors from Kenya and Rwanda.

**A handful of patience is more worth
than a bushel of brains.**

*Patience is more precious than
intelligence*

PDCL course is divided into three modules with module one focusing on developing the leader within. According to Sr. Alice, every human being has inner God given qualities which unless somebody helps this individual to tap into, they may not know that they have a certain inherent quality within themselves or talent. That is why module one capitalizes on helping a leader to realize the inherent leadership capacity and quality within themselves.

Module two, targets at bringing the available resources identified in an individual into getting in the mission of the congregation. Consecrated women live in multi-cultural communities in the religious communities they serve and PDCL helps the leader to create a faith-filled congregational leadership hence the theme: ***Creating a faith-filled congregational culture.***



Participants share what they learnt during the workshop in their different groups. Photo by ARU Reporter.

The third and last module is that, every institute exists for a mission and this mission is identified through their charism, so the theme of module three is: *leadership for mission*. It is still the responsibility of the leader to help inculcate the focus of mission in her members. We ran module three here in ARU, Kampala in March 2023, that is the last module.

The topics running now in the current second group to help leaders realize themselves include among others; self-awareness, emotional intelligence which helps a leader to know her organization by doing something called open living system.

“Transformative experience framework which topic helps the leader to get the tool for analysis of problems, issues and more. We also go out of the church to public social teaching and then the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).” Sr. Alice noted.

The PDCL training runs in a hands-on manner where participants are much involved into doing a lot of group conversations, discussions both in-session and out-session, sometimes sharing with individuals. They encourage bonding among the superiors, so that if they are working in collaboration with each other, they are able to point out pertinent challenges that affect them in different religious institutes.

“We have to collaborate and make one another feel at home in the institute, this is where I have come to follow Jesus and if we work together by loving and enriching one another then the congregation will grow and we shall be happy.” Sr. Alice said.



A team of facilitators organizing their presentations during the PDCL workshop at ARU Secretariat. Photo by ARU Reporter.

Funded by the Hilton Foundation only, the program germinated in Nairobi then to Tanzania: Arusha, Dar-es-salaam and now in Kampala, Uganda, covering the original three East African Countries with hope of making an entry into Eritrea soon.

Sr Mary Elizabeth Boroa from Daughters of Merciful Love of Jesus and Mary, Queen of Apostles, a young congregation in Arua Diocese found the workshop very enriching because the facilitators were many and gave them enough material to know what leadership is. She learnt good leadership skills like openness, cooperation and understanding the sisters she leads, accepting one another as they are.

“Leadership is effective when we work as a team with sisters and the General Council, I have learnt enough that has strengthened me to be able to animate my sisters in the institute. As I said before, it is not one person’s work but teamwork and cooperation, patience and be responsible in the leadership with sisters as we learn from one another.” Sr. Elizabeth said.

Successes registered

The first cohort had 36 participants and ended up graduating 17 due to the busy schedule of

the superiors who completed all the three schedules. This was a great achievement for us and good thing is once a participant has attended module one, they are eligible to attend module 2 & 3 at any given time.

Other things being equal, the program will be far in the next five to seven years; the only limiting factor is funding because the program is expensive.

“We are not sure whether the focus of Hilton Foundation will still remain supporting women religious growth or their strategic programming will change. This is an eye opener for us to look for more additional funding and ask a question about sustainability because we shall not forever continue to depend on external funding. Even as we train, we need to introduce a topic on sustainability as we look forward to the program growing and growing.” Sr. Dralu pondered.

She (Sr. Alice Dralu) added that the topic of sustainability has already been introduced in Nairobi and consecrated persons are willing to support but most congregations rely heavily on donor funding. So far they are just asking for humble contributions.

The second group that successfully completed module one are 37 participants which is a potential sign because these are major superiors of congregations who were able to leave their busy schedules and their responsibilities and spend five full days in the training which is a great success factor.

ACWECA FORGES THEME FOR 2024 PLENARY ASSEMBLY



Participants in memorial photo outside Ulrika guest house, Kisubi shortly after a successful fashioning of the theme for 2024 Plenary Assembly. In picture are; Presidents/ Chairpersons and Secretaries General of the different associations in the ACWECA region. Photo by ARU Reporter.

By: ARU Reporter

The Board Members and Secretaries General from the Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA) met to forge a theme for the upcoming Plenary Assembly slated for August 2024.

The regional body, made up of ten countries (which include; Zambia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Sudan); convened at Ulrika Guest house, Kisubi -Uganda for a six-day workshop, from August 21 – 26, 2023.

The Plenary Assembly which takes place after every three years will be held in Lilongwe, the Capital city of Malawi which will be a two tier celebration as ACWECA will celebrate Golden Jubilee, marking a whopping 50 years since its inception.

The ACWECA Plenary Assembly August 2024 has been officially convoked under the theme: ***“Transformative holistic formation for authentic living towards a deeper evangelization in the ACWECA Region and beyond.”*** The President of ACWECA, Sr. Rossalia Sakayombo, Religious Sister of the Holy Spirit, Zambia declared.

“We chose this particular theme on formation because as Consecrated women, we have to be deeply rooted and grounded to our religious formation that is when we become good and deeper evangelizers.” Sr. Rossalia said.

At the Plenary Assembly, they try to find and focus on a theme that will direct the activities of the Association for three years and perhaps the following and the other subsequent three years. The lot fell on Uganda this time to map out the strategy and

found the theme that will guide the activities of the Association in the next three years, 2024 – 2027.

Mother Rita Christine Nakitende, the Superior General of the Little Sisters of St. Francis facilitated the workshop and the process was well coordinated as all members of the group lively participated. According to Sr. Rossalia, they prayed, listened to the Holy Spirit, discerned, went back to the theme for the last three years and asked themselves what they have lived in those three years; examining their challenges, yearnings and learnings in order to come up with the current theme.

Different groups in the workshop reflected and shared a number of thoughts to realize what they have been called to do in the ACWECA region and beyond and where they want to be in the next three to five years.



Group discussion intended to come up with the theme for 2024 plenary during the workshop at Ulrika, Kisubi. Photo by ARU Reporter.

Story continued to Pg. 18

Sr. Rossalia added that as ACWECA region, a transformative religious formation is very important and will lead them to authentic living so they are able to evangelize the world. “This is where we feel invited at the moment. As the world has become dynamic, there is need to observe and listen to the signs of the time and find out where God is calling us to go?” She added.

ACWECA President shared experience; “...at the end of the reflection and discernment, I felt that the Spirit of God was really present with us. We prayed, listened and that is what made us to successfully come up with the new theme and topics for 2024, to help us on what we want to focus on in the next three years.”

The topics would be addressed before the Plenary Assembly which will also guide the National Associations in the ACWECA region so that together, they can move as part of synodality; moving together and living no one behind.

“We have reached a stage where we are all happy and satisfied that we have got a theme which is everyone’s efforts right here.” ACWECA President, Sr. Rossalia passionately noted.

Sr. Agnes, one of the participants commended the presentation of Mother Rita to be extremely beautiful as she handled them in a very gentle and calm manner to make everyone participate, making the theme come true; it is a rare gift. She encouraged her to continue going deeper, wider and everywhere with the same spirit because there is more to come.



The workshop to construct the theme ahead of the 2024 Plenary Assembly in session at Ulrika guest house, Kisubi, Uganda. Photo by ARU Reporter.

“I hope it has been a learning process to us all and in August 2024, we will be happy to be in Malawi. Thank you for the active participation.” The Secretary General of ACWECA Sr. Brigita Samba noted.

Sr. Rossalia extended special thanks to Mother Rita Nakitende for accepting to facilitate the workshop and for journeying with them in that week of grace. All sisters felt at home because everything was well blended.

She also thanked Sisters (Board members and Secretaries General for generously participating and sharing their inspirations as they brainstormed on the needs of their region. “We worked very well together as a team and collaboratively came up with a sub- theme; “Great things happen when God mixes with us.” Sr. Rossalia said.

“We thank Mother Speranza Namusi, President, Association of Religious in Uganda, (ARU) and the Secretary General, Sr. Mary Lydia Apili Bwor for hosting us and making us experience the Ugandan unconditional hospitality. We cannot thank Fr. Andrew enough who accompanied us with prayers and Mass and always enriched us with spiritual food to begin our day on a good note.

Pictorial



ACWECA, ARU BEEF UP TRAINING OF FORMATORS



Participants attentively listen to the facilitator during workshop of formators at ARU Secretariat intended to empower them. Photo by ARU Reporter.

By Sr Mary Lilly Driciru - MSMMC

Association of Consecrated Women in East and Central Africa (ACWECA) in partnership with Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) organised a seven days workshop for formators at ARU Secretariat, Uganda to empower the Formators from July 23 – 29, 2023.

The workshop aimed at re-evaluating formators as they accompany the formees (young ones) through various topics ranging from, canonical issues on formation, social teachings of the Catholic Church, abuses in religious formation houses to sustainability in formation houses.

“Formation is the engine of the religious institutes and I encourage you formators to help the young women to grow in their vocations.” The Secretary General, ARU, Sr. Lydia Apili Bwor, noted in her remarks. While another sister observed

that formation is key in religious life. She said that religious formation is central to other undertakings in religious institutes and that holistic formation gives authentic identity to religious persons.

The Coordinator Leadership for Mission Program at ACWECA, Sr. Christine Mwangi encouraged the formators to commit themselves not only in following the sessions but also sharing what they have learnt with the other members of the formation team in their various religious institutes.

Sr. Prisca Kiconco, a canonist, while sharing on canonical issues in formation houses, compared formation to the growing process of a tree or the process of constructing a house. She noted that, as everything is vital in the growing process of a tree, different aspects of formation are very important. She emphasized that, for

the growth of an institute, the stages of formation are supposed to be handled with care and commitment.

She added that, identifying a genuine vocation and helping it grow, constitute a great responsibility. However, challenging the formators in their role of accompaniment, she highlighted that, whatever one has gained in formation will accompany him/her always throughout their lives.

Sr. Prisca advised the formators to be informed so that they can always help the formees in their discernment journey and take a manageable number of them without violating their rights and dignity. She added that all formees are supposed to be accommodated and made to have a sense of belonging regardless of their nationality, race, tribe, status and other backgrounds.



Sr. Clara Mangwengwe, making a presentation about ACWECA

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Formators are supposed to counsel the formees to be emotionally and socially integrated since they bring with them their culture in which they need to be helped to open up to interact with other cultures. They need to be helped to go beyond their own culture and learn from other cultures and the culture of Christ.

Fr. Anthony, a Comboni Missionary, in his presentation on the Catholic Social Teaching (CST) reminded participants that they can only be formators if they are women of God. He also encouraged them to always discern when engaging the formees in apostolates.

He noted that the human element of the formator and the formee has to be taken seriously and the fact that if human needs are not touched, formation will be futile. "CST invites us to have a social response as we believe in the Word incarnate, God embracing our humanity to redeem us." Fr. Anthony said.

According to Fr. Anthony, formators are encouraged to engage the formees in the process of formation and to recognize the potentials of the candidate/formee; quoting Pope Francis, he challenged the formators to avoid forming "academic monsters" but encouraged them to be close to the formees, and closely journey with them to include human, spiritual, social, emotional, academic and vocational dimensions in formation programs.

"The religious have a position that they should never compromise, they have a liminal space, we are in the world but we do not belong to the

world. We should give our contribution to the world to make it a better place. We have the mandate to teach the world as well as to learn. Religious are to be in touch with the reality of the world. Acting in the name of the Church, a formator is supposed to be a mother and teacher." Fr. Anthony emphasized.



Pictorial of participants and facilitators during the formator's training workshop at ARU Secretariat. Photo by ARU Reporter.

Participants' experiences during the workshop

According to Sr. Elizabeth, a daughter of St. Paul, "...the workshop is important and wished all the formators could have an opportunity to attend this workshop. We have been given content on different issues, what the canon law says about formation, the input from social teachings of the church and abuses that can happen in formation houses which is very relevant to us." Sr. Elizabeth said.

Sr. Elizabeth added that they learnt canon law and the process of choosing leaders in the congregation, something that many sisters may not know. They had mostly the vocational promoters and formators of the postulants and pre-postulants but she feels that this information is also important for novice formators.

She appreciated ACWECA and ARU for organizing this workshop and wished to have more workshops like this because it seems to change life

in the formation houses if they have quality candidates as Pope keeps emphasizing that this days there is lack of vocation or crisis of quantity which can lead to crisis of quality. "This renewal has really helped me learn a new way of handling my formees different from the past. I have learnt new methods of handling canon law and how to minister to the contemporary sisters, do apostolate as a new way of meeting people and helping them." Sr. Agatha Nakalema, of Banabikira sisters, (Daughters of Mary) Bwaan-da, Aspirant Mistress revealed.

Sr. Christine added that the society is advanced and the candidates who join have to be learned. "...I'm grateful to the donors for sponsoring this workshop. We have to empower sisters through regular conversations and listening to them. I am happy that they have been actively participating and raised

their own issues which the facilitators are able to respond to and I feel that they have been helped. The participants feel at home and encouraged to continue the journey with the young ones.” Sr. Christine Wairimu Mwagi, belonging to the sisters of Emmanuel observed.

Sr. Sophie Kentwiga, a member of our Lady of Good Counsel (OLGC), formator in charge in of the candidates said, they have been guided on how to arrive to solutions of different challenges they encounter. They have been enlightened on how they should be alert on what is going on where the candidates are coming from; so that they handle them accordingly, understand, and dialog with them.

Her appeal to the organizers is that they make a follow up after these trainings to find out whether what the participants learnt is being practiced and if their expectations are met. They are given a chance to acquire more training for more improvement.

Foot Pilgrimage to Namugongo Martyrs' Shrine



Foot pilgrims from Lira Diocese march to Namugongo Martyrs' Shrine ahead of the Martyrs day celebrations 2023. Courtesy of Pilgrims.

A report and experience of Sr. Kolomba Adokorach, MSMMC.

Personally, I was inspired to be part of the pilgrims after observing problems such as rampant killings, homosexuality, spiritual need for the Priests, Consecrated Persons, Families, our Country Uganda and other countries especially the warring countries and similar calamities. As well as other needs like;

ardent need for God's presence among his people. I felt I should offer these prayers as sacrifice to God during the foot pilgrimage. It was a unique journey I have ever made in life!

This year 2023, the team of Christian-Pilgrims set off from Lira Diocese to Namugongo Martyrs' Shrine on May 19, 2023, to catch up with the D-day, June 3, 2023 for the annual event. 820 pilgrims were officially flagged off from Lira Cathedral

premises to begin the journey of faith. Along the way other smaller groups added to the main group, thus, totaling to 1000 pilgrims.

We made a journey of nine (9) days. Other sisters from my institute (Missionary Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church, MSMMC), who made similar journeys ahead of me also did inspire me. These sisters venerate the Holy Uganda Martyrs, who are among the Patron Saints of our Institute as slated by the Rt. Rev. Caesar Asili, our Founder. It is also symbolically seen in naming one of the blocks in the Mother House after the Holy Martyrs of Uganda.

Those who walked ahead of me include; Sr. Lillian Opinia, MSMMC, Sr. Seraphine Ndegyereze, MSMMC, Sr. Margret Akello, MSMMC, Sr. Orusula Angom, MSMMC and Sr. Eveline Mbabazi, MSMMC.

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The pilgrims included children, youths and the elderly. There were three Diocesan Priests: Fr. Peter Paul Okuta, Fr. Joseph Ogwal and Fr. Francis Otim in the group with me Sr. Kolomba representing the clergy and consecrated persons. The youngest in the group was eight (8) old and the oldest was 88 years old. This journey comprised of believers from all the Parishes in Lira Diocese.

I am happy to see that, consecrated persons have taken interest to observe such long pilgrimages of several kilometers to the destination. We walked 380 kilometers from Lira to Namugongo. The journey to Namugongo martyrs' shrine is not an ordinary journey but extraordinary one. It is a journey of faith, which most Christians from within and outside Uganda often make. I am inspired to share with you my experience of the journey I made to Namugongo Martyrs' shrine which I have made for two consecutive years that is, 2022 and 2023.

My journey to Namugongo was accompanied by prayer which I made through the intercession of the Uganda martyrs who demonstrated their faith by accepting to die for God alone.

This is an invitation to every individual who believes in Jesus Christ, to grow in love of God, and have desire to dedicate yourself to the devotion of Uganda Martyrs because they are alive in spirit and their intercession strengthens us in our faith. May the blood of the Uganda martyrs shed for the love of Christ, continue to purify us that we may be worthy children

of God by not running away in times of persecution. May the Holy Martyrs of Uganda, intercede for us.

Among other challenges encountered include fatigue. While on the way I reached a moment when my legs were terribly paining and when I sat down to rest, I was not able to get up. But surprisingly after I had said a short prayer, God gave me strength to proceed! Shortage of drinking water; despite the availability of water provisions, the thirst for water would not be quenched!"

Much as some fans refer to national stadium as a place for pilgrimage, the TRUTH is that pilgrimage

refers to a visit to respectably holy place for religious motives. A person who makes such a special and long journey is a pilgrim. It symbolizes the heavenly journey.

In Uganda and the neighborhood such places include Uganda Martyrs Shrine Namugongo, Uganda Martyrs Shrine Munyonyo, Our Lady, Sultana of Africa Shrine – Lodonga-Arua, Mary Mother of the Church Shrine, Iceme – Lira, Paimol Martyrs Shrine – Gulu, Mother of the Word Shrine –Kibeho, The Holy Cross Shrine -Pakele, Arua Diocese, Omach Pilgrim Site -Nebbi Catholic Diocese and the like. Such places are suitable for you and me. We can give it a trial next time.

Pictorial



SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES, VULNERABILITY & UNEMPLOYMENT; THE MAJOR CAUSES OF TIP



Religious leaders together with the invited guests in a memorial picture shortly after the National Prayer on Human Trafficking at Old Kamala S.S.S this year. Photo by ARU Reporter.

By: ARU Reporter

Religious Leaders in Uganda joined the rest of the world to commemorate World day of Prayer on Human Trafficking on the September 9, 2023 at Old Kampala Senior Secondary School Play Grounds, Kampala under the theme; *“Reach Every Victim of Trafficking, leave no one behind.”*

The Most Rev. John Baptist Odama, Archbishop of Gulu was the main celebrant and the Chief Guest, Rt. Hon. Anita Among, speaker of Parliament of Uganda was expected but was represented by Hon. Dominic Gidudu Mafabi, Minister of State for the elderly in the ministry for Gender, Labour and social development.

Archbishop Odama revealed that Trafficking in Person (TIP) is caused by many reasons, like; socio-economic inequalities and unemployment which are impacting on many Ugandans, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers.

He adds that, Ugandans who are impoverished, have limited access to education and healthcare coupled with lack of employment opportunities which often makes them primary target of traffickers. “A total of 2099 persons were victims of trafficking in persons last year, according to a report by MoIA, 2022.”

Another report from MoIA 2022, reveals that national responses appear to be wanting by the fact that out of 348 cases taken to court, only 12 cases secured legal conviction and one (1) case was dismissed leaving a back log cases of 335, an indication that only 3.7 % cases were resolved in a year.

Ugandan victims of trafficking abroad still face challenges and when they need to return home, they are not helped enough. Some who manage to escape, their ordeal reach out to the authorities on their own initiative – another clear sign that anti-trafficking responses are falling short and some even end up being re-trafficked as they remain vulnerable upon return.

“This year’s theme is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).” Archbishop John Baptist noted.

He however believes that, if government augmented efforts by stepping up its efforts to implement the Trafficking in Persons Act 2009, National Action Plan II against TIP, and strengthens National frameworks for the identification and protection of victims of trafficking, the challenge of human trafficking could be eased.

According to UNODC, 2023 as argued by the Director of John Paul II Justice and Peace Centre, Mr. Alfred Avuni, this year’s global campaign is intended to raise awareness on the disturbing developments and trends of trafficking in person (TIP) and modern slavery (MS). It calls on governments, law enforcement agents, public servants and civil society to assess and enhance their efforts to strengthen prevention, identification and sup-



From the extreme left is His Grace John Baptist Odama, Fr. Frederick Tusingirwe during the National prayer on Human trafficking. Photo by ARU Reporter.

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“This year’s campaign calls on all of us to end the exploitation of trafficked victims, support victim survivors once they are free from traffickers and end identifiable groups vulnerable to traffickers.” Mr. Avuni noted.

Hon. Dominic Gidudu Mafabi, Minister for the elderly in the ministry of state for Gender, Labour and social development commended the Church for organizing such and events and help other government bodies in an effort to combat TIP.

He promised the congregation that as leaders, with the responsibility to lead Uganda, they will enact laws against human trafficking, put regulations, security and he will do whatever it takes in his capacity to ensure that human trafficking is pushed out.

He adds that the ministry of gender is involved deeply in this inhumane act of TIP together with ministry of internal affairs and ministry of foreign affairs to fight the vice.

Hon. Gidudu informed the stakeholders present that government has set many policies and programs to fight poverty and to also create employment for young people because increase in the cases of human trafficking is attributed to increased awareness about trafficking and because back then, there was less awareness there was less reporting.



A team of religious, students and the officer from the ministry of internal affairs share a memorial group photo shortly after the National day of prayer on Human Trafficking. Photo ARU Reporter.

“Addressing vices like TIP, calls for multistate efforts. The ministry of gender together with other bodies of government appreciate efforts of the Church to complementing government efforts in combating trafficking in persons.

From the analysis carried by government, one of the factors that increases vulnerability to trafficking is lack of awareness about safe and irregular migration pathways. “We are therefore glad that the efforts of the Church towards combating TIP emphasizing awareness creation, self-representation on the ability of the vulnerable people or victims to speak for themselves is a cornerstone for human rights promotions and protection. Without representation, self-representative is difficult.” He commended.

The arm of policy measures to tackle TIP have been taken into action and includes among others; recruitment of migrant workers, regulations like the sentence for illegal recruitment from three months to five years (3-5). As a result of strengthening enforcement, 728

alleged traffickers were prosecuted in 2022 compared to 589 in 2021, Hon. Gidudu informed the congregation.

He advised the youth who seek employment abroad to do so through a licensed recruitment agency. Information about a licensed recruitment agency is available at the concerned ministry.

Rev. Fr. Frederick Tusingire, head of the department of the laity from the Bishops’ conference remarked that most children from the Karamoja region are on the forefront in internal trafficking. He told the public to not only fight against transnational trafficking but also the internal one which is dominated children from the Karamajong region on the streets on Kampala, other cities and towns.

The National day of prayer on human trafficking was organized jointly by the Uganda Episcopal Conference (UEC), John Paul II Peace and Justice Centre (JPIIPJC), Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU), SANTEGIDIO in conjunction with other denminations in the country and government.

A fruitful Journey from Fundraising Training to a successful charity walk!



Participants in a memorial photo during flagging off ceremony on KCCA grounds. The chief guest was Eng. Owek. Martin Kasekendi, chairperson Bord at SWICO. Courtesy photo

By Caroline Nansukusa. Ssebakijje. ARU-CCCU-CMO

A fundraising training for child care institutions (CCIs) Staff by ARU-Catholic Care for Children Uganda, (CCCU) in partnership with Markempa Consult has resulted to a cheering display of unity compassion and a fundraising event.

This move became fruitful when numerous CCIs embarked on a mission to support vulnerable children in the current challenging signs of the time. Part of the efforts was expressed in a charity walk on September 30, 2023. An event that would forever be etched in the memory of all who participated.

The charity walk commenced at the bustling Kampala City Council Authority (KCCA) grounds opposite the railway offices, with the melodious tunes of the Uganda Police Band leading the way. This extraordinary

journey was not just a stroll through the city; it was a symbolic journey of compassion and hope for the vulnerable children. The destination was Nsambya Babies Home, a place that nurtures and cares for the most vulnerable members of our society.

Msgr. Charles Kasibante, the Vicar General Kampala Archdiocese flagged off the walk. While the Chief Walker was Eng. (Owekitiibwa) Martin Kasekendi, they manifested symbol of leadership and commitment. Other walkers included groups of individuals dedicated to making a difference among the vulnerable. The home realized 60 million UGX out 70 million their targeted budget.

The innocent babies were curios about the event that fully blasted their serene territory! Accompanying them were the dedicated staff of Nsambya Babies Home, who work tirelessly to provide love and care to these children. More so, the pres-

ence of the clergy and consecrated persons conveyed the spiritual dimension of this noble endeavor.

Representatives from various children's homes, schools, and organizations like Pax Insurance, KCCA, National Water and Sewerage Corporation, Ends Believing, and government leaders such as PSWOs, Rotary group, a staff representative from ARU-CCCU-Carol, all walked side by side, demonstrating the power of collective action.

During the walk and even after arriving at Nsambya Babies Home, inspiring speeches rang out, echoing the sentiment that every step taken was a step toward a brighter future for these children. Each speech concluded with a gesture of generosity, as an extra cash contribution. Signed cheques were handed over to support the babies too. In addition, walkers brought along essential items such as food stuff, snacks, soap, detergent, and clothing to provide for their immediate needs.



ARU-CCCU staff representative and case management officer and CCI social worker pose for a memorial photo. Courtesy photo

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The charity walk was an indisputable success, not just in terms of the funds raised but in the profound impact it would have on the lives of vulnerable children. The outpouring of support from the almighty God, duty bearers, home staff, Nsambya parishioners, and countless others was a testament to the determined spirit of kindness and empathy.



In picture is the Police band and the warden leading the walk which was a success. Photo by ARU-CCCU staff.

By sun set, that memorable day, the walkers left Nsambya Babies Home with hearts full of hope and joy, knowing that their collective efforts would ensure these children received not just basic needs but also a chance for a brighter future. This heartwarming journey portrayed that, when a community comes together, they can create a world where every child's dreams can be realized.

Pictorial



CCCU promotes 'Best Practices' through review and support to the Vulnerable Children



The ARU-CCCU team during a review in Moyo babies home. From the extreme left is the case management officer followed by M&E, ICT manager. Photo by ARU-CCCU staff.

By; Caroline Nansukusa. Ssebakijje-
ARU-CCCU-CMO

Anually, the Program Staff of CCCU carry out a round up to review best practices or a virtual follow-up to residential facilities where vulnerable children find solace. These Child Care Institutions (CCIs) are the base of care and hope for these children, hence CCCU ensures they are aligned with government-required best practices.

From September 11-27, 2023, five CCCU Staff member; Sr. Euphrasia, Sr. Stella Maris, Caroline, Sam Benard and Patrick-took on a mission of profound significance. They visited 16 CCIs, each devoting two days per CCI allocated for review, refresher training, support, and additional mentorship, particularly for new staff. They focused on areas such as Assessment and Case Planning. There is still more training initiatives in the pipeline for the 2024 activity plan.

Best practices encompassed several critical areas. The team checked Governance and Management Structure of the CCIs, recognizing that proper leadership is vital for these homes to thrive.

Financial management was another focal point, as adequate funding is the lifeblood of these institutions. They precisely examined inspections and reports conducted by probation and health personnel, members of the management committee, who play a pivotal role in ensuring the well-being of the children. Human Resources and staff well-being were not overlooked, acknowledging the indispensable role of a strong team in supporting these vulnerable children.

Child Care Provisions, which directly impact the children's daily lives were also reviewed. Records, holding the comprehensive journey of each child, were accurately inspected file by file.

Child resettlement and alternative care practices were assessed to determine if gate-keeping persisted and if children were being resettled or cared for within their families, potentially reducing the need for institutional care. Post placement support for re-settled children was monitored, with a focus on their reintegration into family and community, leading to case closures to make room for other children.

During the field visits, it became apparent that some staff members were new and required additional support, particularly in completing care management tasks such as assessments, case planning, post-placement support and follow-ups. CCCU staff offered basic training and further guidance on strengthening fundraising efforts, creating opportunities for potential local and external funders to support their commendable work.



A team from ARU-CCCU during a review in redeemer children's home. Photo by ARU-CCCU Staff.

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The journey proceeded seamlessly, as planned. All the 16 CCIs were visited, and staff members were re-energized about their crucial role in ensuring best practices. Most practices were still firmly in place, but one particularly heartening observation was that all children had their initial records documented. Even CCIs with expired licenses had either applied for new licenses or successfully obtained them.



M&E and ICT officer at ARU-CCCU, Mr. Bernard Gumisiriza (left), leading a review in sewing hope with the Administaror, Sr. Jola. Photo by ARU-CCCU staff.

As the CCCU staff concluded their mission, they left behind not just practical knowledge but also a profound sense of hope and dedication.

Their journey symbolized the ongoing commitment to nurturing the well-being and future of the most vulnerable children, through diligence and compassion.

Pictorial



ARU-CCCU join in partnership for Nutrition and Feeding Inclusion for children



In the front is Pamela (blue dress) from Master Trainers sensitising parents on the special care for children with disabilities. Courtesy photo.

By: Caroline Nansukusa Ssebakiije ARU-CCCU-CMO

In the heart of Bikira - Health Center IV, Kitaasa at Health Center III, and the compassionate facility of St. Vincent Palloti Transitory Home in Masaka, a remarkable group of children with disabilities thrive despite their feeding challenges.

Change began to stir up when CARITAS MADDO, in collaboration with St. Vincent Palloti and the expert Master Trainers in Nutrition and Feeding from ARU-CCCU, embarked on a transformative mission. The aim was to enrich the lives of these disabled children and ease the burdens of their dedicated parents.

This profound journey unfolded over three pivotal days-June 28, July 5, and July 12, 2023. It was marked by a series of community outreach programs across the villages of Bikira, Kitaasa, and the nurturing embrace of St. Vincent Palloti. Together, these

partners joined hands to usher in a new era of hope and inclusion. Their story is one of compassion, resilience, and a shared commitment to nurturing the dreams and well-being of children with disabilities.

Their unique impediments were matched only by their strong spirits, which bound the community together in warmth and compassion. Amidst this unity, there was an unspoken yearning for greater awareness and support to cater for specialized nutritional needs of these exceptional children. Like in many communities, they aspired the team to enhance health and well-being while fostering healthier life choices.

The multifaceted approach of support included nutritional assessments, education on balanced nutrition, personalized nutrition plans, counselling for caregivers, and links to specialized support services. The detailed activities include:

A dedicated team of nutritionists that conducted careful Nutritional Assessments, measuring height, weight, head circumference, arm circumference, screening for anaemia, and analysing dietary intake for each child. These assessments were pivotal in understanding the children's nutritional status and unique needs.

Recognizing the power of knowledge, they included vital Nutrition Education. Caregivers and families gathered to learn about the significance of balanced nutrition, the functions of various foods, and the intricate relationship between nutrition and disabilities. The community eagerly absorbed this invaluable wisdom.

They crafted Personalized Nutrition Plans using the specialized web-based mHealth App, "Count Me In." These plans were tailored to each child's health conditions, dietary preferences, and accessibility to food resources.



Mrs. Doreen Alupo, a master trainer in a white t-shirt carrying out assessment of a child with disabilities. Courtesy photo.

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Caregivers received individualized counselling sessions that fostered a deeper connection and understanding. These sessions discussed care plans, addressed concerns, answered questions, and provided guidance on implementing nutrition plans, emphasizing supplementation, deworming, and WASH practices for holistic well-being.

Children in need of ongoing support were connected to St. Vincent Pallotti for monthly monitoring and additional nutrition and feeding support. Those requiring clinical nutrition management were referred to nearby nutrition rehabilitation units for specialized care.

The impact of these outreach programs was deep because, countless children with disabilities received

vital support, iron supplementation benefited children with deficiencies, extending aid to others in need, caregivers gained valuable insights into proper nutrition and caregiving for children with feeding difficulties, collaborations with specialized support services ensured comprehensive care for these children such as occupational and physiotherapy.

The outreach there-in presented visionary recommendations such as;

Implementing a mother-Care-Group Model, leveraging the strength of community bonds to encourage peer-to-peer support, follow-up, and referrals. Mothers received training in care, nutrition, and psychosocial support, benefiting a stigmatized group.

Conducting food and cooking demonstrations to promote practical learning, showcasing various community foods, their functions, and nutritious recipes suitable for children with disabilities.

Emphasizing continuous sensitization through radio programs and community events, raising awareness about nutrition, the challenges faced by children with disabilities, and the importance of an inclusive and supportive environment.

The path to nurturing these children's hope lay in community support, education, and compassion. The outreach programs had sown the seeds of change, and with unwavering commitment, partnerships, and resources, they aspired to extend their program's reach to more communities in need. In the heart of these villages, the inspiring journey of nurturing hope through nutrition and inclusion continued as-one child, one meal, and one heart at a time.

Pictorial



Pictorial Highlights of the Major Events



The 16th General Assembly of the Synod kicks off in the Vatican with an emphasis on listening as the core element in seeking to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Courtesy picture from the Vatican News website.



The ACWECA Presidents and Secretaries General break exercise during the workshop to forge the Theme for 2024 Plenary Assembly.



The Junior professed shortly after being commissioned at St. Mbaaga Ggaba National Seminary.



Group photo of the Religious shortly after the National Prayer on Human Trafficking at Old K'la S.S.S.



Group photo of the formation chapter at ARU Secretariat, Nsambya Kampala.



Group photo of the commissioning of formators at Uganda Spiritual Formation Centre Namugongo.



Franciscan Brothers bless a fellow brother during Commissioning



Communications network ever first meeting at ARU Secretariat, Nsambya Kampala.