TRANSFORMATIVE PARTNERSHIPS:

THE ROLE OF AGENCIES, CHURCH AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES IN PROMOTING STRATEGIC SOCIAL AND SUSTAINABLE CHANGE IN AFRICA
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APPRECIATION

This book was possible by a grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and sponsorship of the African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC). The book is the result of dedicated individuals, authors and reviewers of the manuscripts. I started working on this book while I served as Executive Director of ASEC, working with the authors has been a journey of faith, hope, resilience and gratitude. I am grateful to the authors for your enduring patience. I wish to express gratitude to the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation for the support that made this project possible. Your generosity, continued support in elevating the work of the Catholic Sisters is incredible – you continue to live Conrad Hilton’s legacy. Thank you to all of the contributors to this volume for their willingness to work within the confines of a stringent turnaround time. The book benefited from the skillfulness of seasoned reviewers. Thanks go also to Fran Fasolka, IHM for designing the cover of the book.

DEDICATION

In gratitude to the Catholic Sisters and partners who work to improve the lives of the underserved and solve difficult challenges in marginalised communities in Africa.
The title of this book “Transformative Partnerships: The Role of Agencies, Church and Religious Institutes in Promoting Social and Sustainable Change in Africa” highlights a significant change that has happened within the Catholic Church during the past several decades. Since Vatican II there has been an increased emphasis on developing creative partnerships both within the Church and with men and women of good will who seek to respond to the “joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men (and women) of this age especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted.” (Gaudium Et Spes, #1). In the intervening years and particularly under the leadership of Pope Francis there has been a call to develop a spirituality that responds to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor who are among those who suffer most from ecological imbalances. In addition, various agencies, Church bodies and Institutes of women religious have explored ways in which they can bring a new imagination and creativity to meet the needs of those who are among the poorest and most excluded and to respond to the call for an ecological conversion. For systemic and sustainable change to happen the need for new types of leadership and new cultural and organisational models are crucial. There has also been a clear call within the Church to establish new bridges of collaboration and solidarity across religious congregations and with faith-based and humanitarian organisations so that the mission of Jesus can be refreshed and energised. This type of dialogue continually challenges church bodies and religious institutes to widen “the space of their tent” (Is 54:2) and establish life giving connections.

Therefore, the fourfold division in this volume—collaboration; leadership development and education; spirituality, religious life and Christian communities and finally institutional and ministerial case studies, reflects some of the key shifts mentioned above. This volume meets the need to build a field of research studies for women religious, providing them with the canvas on which to write and record their own experiences, their congregational histories, their successes and their challenges. It is particularly important that the focus is on female religious life in Africa, a continent which has seen significant growth in both the numbers of female religious congregations and of religious sisters. These in turn have made a significant contribution to the areas of education and health care and in responding to critical social needs e.g. HIV/AIDS, poverty reduction, socio-economic activities, food security, local community development, trafficking, prostitution etc. Some of the authors are religious sisters who have recorded their congregational or collaborative experiences in these fields while others are academics who have focused their quantitative and qualitative research on the impact of the lives and ministries of the sisters in different contexts. In some articles terms like charism, spirituality mission, evangelisation, ecclesial, demonstrate the outward thrust of consecrated life in Africa today; while other articles highlight the need for education (institutional and online) and formation programmes that focus on spiritual and human development, consciousness raising together with appropriate professional and leadership development.

Finally, the theme of “Transformative Partnerships” serves like a golden thread to link the articles together. These are partnerships between religious congregations and dioceses, with ecclesial communities/movements, with other religious congregations, with international partners, local communities and with the laity in parish and school contexts. The exploration of partnership includes helpful insights with regard to networks, coalitions, alliances, task forces and many different approaches to collaboration. This rich collection of articles provides the reader with a window into developments within female religious life in Africa. It seems to answer the desire expressed at the International Congress on Consecrated Life (Rome, 2004) that consecrated life be “defined around new priorities, new models of organisation and open and flexible collaboration with men and women of good will.” These articles demonstrate how women religious in Africa are forging new pathways carried forward by the Spirit towards new forms of mission and life. May they be truly blessed on the journey ahead.

Sr Patricia Murray ibvm

Executive Secretary, UISG, Rome.

November 2018.
INTRODUCTION

In today’s rapidly changing world, partnerships and collaborations that transcend geographic borders, cultures, and creeds can enhance and hasten solutions to the most unnerving challenges in ineffaceable ways. To advance social impact, harnessing the power of collaboration across faith communities, nonprofits, and other public and private entities is key to providing practical solutions to complex social problems in contemporary society. This book resulted from observing women religious who, grounded in spiritual witness and living the Gospel values, tirelessly provide essential services in remote regions of Africa. I saw that women religious were solving difficult systemic issues with meager resources, and it struck me that there is something to be gained by working collaboratively which cannot be accomplished by any one organisation alone. To learn the strategies and approaches utilised by women religious to engage and collaborate with local communities in creating projects that address socio-economic, health, and educational issues, I envisioned Transformative Partnerships: The Role of Agencies, Church and Women Religious Institutes in Promoting Strategic Social and Sustainable Change in Africa. By engaging in systems thinking and operations, partners can gain mutual benefits and projects that will not only result in collective efforts and considerations but can also create momentum to bring about desired changes in communities.

Sisters make a difference in the communities they serve, and remain present among the people, at times in complicated situations. Regardless of inadequate resources, women religious are resourceful problem solvers; they work collectively and diligently to resolve difficult societal challenges by initiating educational, health, social justice, and pastoral programs to build healthy communities and break down the barriers that inhibit opportunities for the underserved. They are spirited social justice leaders with endowed servant hearts, working hard to revitalise underserved communities. They lead with courage and conviction, serving grassroots communities to enhance social and economic justice for all. Without

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is inextricably linked with the creation of opportunities for the local people. Sisters continue working to build human dignity, helping the underserved, overcome obstacles and transforming their communities for self-reliance.

Part IV consists of nine chapters illuminating institutional and ministerial case studies. Women religious mobilise resources, both human and financial, and turn potential to reality; as a result, lives are transformed. These case studies also expound on educational opportunities for community members; food security; and Sisters’ efforts towards reducing poverty and improving livelihoods.

This book demonstrates the power of collaboration and storytelling, as well as the roles played and gaps filled by women religious in Africa. Both Catholic Sisters and individuals who have lived and worked closely with the Sisters are contributors to the chapters presented in this book. The discourse provided in these chapters reveals and constructs portraits of women religious, religious life, and the partnerships and collaborations forged in their work in Africa. The authors have endeavoured to share stories from their personal, cultural, ministerial, and professional perspectives. In an effort to collect, use, and disseminate research on the life and work of Catholic Sisters, this book provides a pen, a space, and an opportunity for Sisters to tell their own stories as an effort to build a field, and to not only preserve these stories orally but also in a written form. This book is an invitation to learn about Catholic Sisters and their work in Africa. I hope you will be inspired by these transformative and collaborative stories and that they catalise new understanding about women religious in Africa and the work they do.

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Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
PART I

COLLABORATION
Growth of the Church 

Parishes, religious institutes, and lay groups are pertinent to this effort. The collaboration among these groups in evangelisation is responsible for the educational, health, and spiritual growth, among others, that is witnessed in different parts of the world. The first missionaries to Africa were both clergy and religious men and women. While the priests embarked on pastoral activities, religious women engaged in either education or medical work. This explains why in every new parish opened by the missionaries a church, a school, and a hospital were given precedence over other projects. The missionary evangelisation endeavour in Africa was threefold:

- **Spiritual formation.** Wherever missionaries stepped in, they built a Church with the aim of centralising worship and prayer among the people they ministered to. Spiritual formation was and still is accomplished through various pastoral activities such as catechism, celebration of the sacraments, and adherence to days of obligation and other forms of prayer that govern the life of a Christian. Both in the parish and in Catholic schools, the youth are taken through the sacraments of Christian initiation making them children of God and members of the pilgrim Church on earth journeying towards heaven. Baptism, the first of all the sacraments, enables one to experience constant renewal through receiving the rest of the sacraments. In the mission schools, the prospective African converts to Christianity learned new ways of relating to God away from their cultural beliefs and practices (Mugambi, 1989).

- **Academic formation.** The need to introduce Africans to formal and modern education led to the building of schools where formal learning could be carried out. The purpose of this type of education was to civilize the African people and to put them on par with the rest of the world. Prior to the introduction of formal education, Africans were comfortably walking the path of traditional and informal education. The African type of education was education for life and not for any academic purposes. According to Mugambi, by introducing formal education to Africans, missionaries enabled most of them to achieve a literate standard. Those who embraced modern education were now able to read the Bible and other literary material by themselves, which was a great achievement on the part of the missionary endeavour.

- **Health care.** The third means of evangelisation was the introduction of modern medicine and medical skills. This strategy was aimed at
promoting the health status of the African person for a better life and experience of God through the care provided. To this day, health centers ranging from dispensaries to hospitals can be found in almost every parish compound with missionary origins.

This study examines the collaboration between Sisters and dioceses with reference to the Nairobi Catholic Archdiocese. There is a popular saying that “Behind every successful man there is a woman.” Women are generally industrious and often determined to achieve their desired goals in life. By the nature and character of religious vocation, Sisters consecrate themselves to God for their own salvation in the service of humanity in the Church and society. They vow to live according to the three evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience. These three vows possess an inherent power that warm the religious persons from within, prompting them to respond to their apostolic activities in a manner that is fascinating and amazing. In addition, they commit themselves to community living and to an apostolic life. In chastity, the Sisters embrace a life of total surrender for sake of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 19:12). By observing chastity, they become more open to the will of God as a deliberate choice to follow his way (1 Corinthians 7:32). Created in the image and likeness of God, they share the gift of God’s love by showing compassion and love to those they serve. In poverty, the Sisters identify with Christ who, though he was rich, emptied himself for the sake of humanity (Phil 2:7). Like Christ, they seek to treasure the richness of virtue rather than that of material well-being (Jas 2:5). By renouncing the riches of this world, they endeavour to follow Christ, serving him among the poor and needy of society. Sisters work in collaboration with bishops in their various dioceses, sharing their God-given gifts for the growth of the Church and more prominently for the glory of God. In this, the vow of obedience has always to be exercised. The bishops have to align with this reality, so that if a Sister is transferred she may move without resistance.

As a way of optimising their religious vocation, Sisters engage in various apostolic activities which place the Catholic Church at a higher level of service to God’s people. Different congregations in different parts of the world engage in apostolates that harmonise with their charism. All over the world, the Catholic Church has recognised and provided space for the Sisters’ participation in the work of evangelisation. Whether missionary or indigenous, Sisters in the Church have had influence on the educational, social, and health dimensions of life. A study by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (2014) shows that by 2012, there were approximately 4,821 Sisters in Kenya. Depending on their charisms, these Sisters participate in different apostolates for the growth of the Church. For purposes of precision, the present study limits itself to the growth and development realised in the Archdiocese of Nairobi through collaboration with Sisters in various apostolic activities. For example, Sisters play a key role in schools as teachers and heads of institutions. In almost every parish where Sisters have a convent, there is a school either founded by the parish/diocese or the Sisters themselves.

Historical Background of the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi

The Archdiocese of Nairobi was erected Prefecture Apostolic of Zanguebar on February 26, 1860, Vicariate Apostolic of Zanguebar on November 23, 1883, and Vicariate Apostolic of Zanzibar on December 21, 1906. On March 23, 1953, it was elevated to Archdiocese of Nairobi with the following suffragan dioceses being erected: Mombasa Diocese (1955), Meru Diocese (1956), prefecture Apostolic of Kitui (1956), Kisumu Diocese (1959), Prefecture Apostolic of Ngong (1959), and Machakos Diocese (1969). Since its inception, several bishops have been installed as Ordinary, with the last of the missionary bishops being Bishop John Joseph McCarthy, who was appointed in 1946 and retired in 1971. He was succeeded by Maurice Cardinal Otunga in 1971 (now Servant of God), who retired in 1997. From 1997 to 2007, Raphael Ndingi Mwana a’ Nzeki took up the leadership of the Archdiocese, and since 2007 the Archdiocese has been under the shepherdship of Cardinal John Njue. Over time, the Archdiocese of Nairobi has expanded immensely from one parish to another. A diocese that began under the leadership of missionaries is now running fully under African leadership with only a limited number of missionary priests actively working in the parishes.
Background of the Study

Since its foundation, the Archdiocese of Nairobi has shown steady growth in various dimensions, including increase in the number of Christians, clergy, religious congregations, and infrastructure (churches, schools, hospitals, and other social amenities). This growth cannot be attributed to individuals or to particular groups but rather to collaborative effort. Lay people, clergy, and religious men and women have each played a role in the growth and development that is visible in the Archdiocese of Nairobi today. Of particular interest to this study is the contribution of Sisters towards this development. By 2013, there were 1,384 Sisters of different congregations in the Archdiocese. The researcher wondered whether the input of this evidently high number of Sisters could be correlated to a greater output—hence the need for this study.

Purpose of the study. The purpose of this study is to assess the extent to which growth in the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi was a result of collaboration between Sisters and the Archdiocese.

Research questions. To establish the extent to which the Sisters have been collaborators in the growth of the Archdiocese, the researcher focused on three main questions:
1. What are the apostolic engagements of the Sisters in the Archdiocese?
2. What are the experiences of the Archdiocese and Sisters’ congregations in their partnership efforts?
3. What are the motivating factors for the Sisters working in the Archdiocese of Nairobi?

By asking the first question, the researcher aimed at finding out how these apostolates have contributed to growth in the Archdiocese of Nairobi. The second question was deemed important to both the Archdiocese and the Congregations in evaluating their current collaborative situations and planning for future collaborations. The third question was asked to help the researcher gain insights into the factors that help to sustain this collaborative spirit.

Study area. The study was carried out in the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, Nairobi County.

Scope and delimitation. The study was limited to the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi and to Sisters working in collaboration with the Archdiocese.

Methodology

The study employed a mixed methods research design. This method was found relevant to the study due to its suitability for the use of different methods in an effort to find answers to the problem under study. The main methods applied were survey and phenomenological approaches. Surveys were used for gathering comprehensive data through questionnaires. In addition, the phenomenological type of study was applied. Gay et al. (2007) describe phenomenology as the study of the world as it appears to individuals when they lay aside the prevailing understanding of those phenomena and revisit their immediate experience of the phenomenon (p. 495). According to them, the central characteristic of phenomenology is the emphasis on participants’ experiences and interpretation of those experiences, which makes the approach most relevant to the study. This is because the study aimed at drawing from the participants’ experiences to determine whether or not the Sisters and the Archdiocese were effective in their areas of collaboration.

Target Population

The study targeted clergy and Sisters working in the Archdiocese.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample for the study constituted one administrative officer (clergy) and sixteen Sisters from ten congregations. The one administrative officer was purposively selected. This purposive selection was based on his knowledge, position and experience in the Archdiocese. To identify congregations working in the Archdiocese, a simple random sampling method was used. To select sample units from the different congregations, the snowball sampling method was used. One Sister was purposively identified from one of the congregations, who in turn pointed to the next
Informants. These informants were selected on the basis of their experience and understanding of the reality on the ground. By employing this strategy, it was hoped that the selected participants would provide expert opinion leading to generation of the expected information for the study. The total number of expected participants was seventeen.

**Data Collection Instruments**

Three instruments were designed for the study. These included a questionnaire for Sisters, an in-depth interview guide for clergy, and a focus group discussion guide. The questionnaire was subdivided into two sections; the first section focused on personal details, and the second was content-oriented. Both the interview guide and focus group discussion guides contained a set of questions related to experiences of both the clergy and Sisters in the Archdiocese.

**Data Collection Procedures**

To source for information, the study made use of “methodological triangulation”, which allowed for multiple methods for gathering data. Prior to embarking on the actual study, the researcher identified a research assistant who helped in distributing the questionnaires, ensured they were duly completed, and collected them thereafter. Twelve questionnaires were distributed to twelve Sisters. Through the help of the secretariat of the Archdiocese, the researcher made interview and focus group discussion schedules. Three interviews were conducted, one of which was face-to-face with one priest, and two of which were by voice call. In all cases, notebooks were used to record information from interviewees. After each interview, the researcher confirmed with each respondent, through the method referred to as “member check”, that the written information was a true record of their views. The third method used was focus group discussion. A focus group discussion guide was used to obtain information from two Sisters. Initially four Sisters were targeted for a discussion, but only two were available.

**Presentation of Findings**

**Introduction**

The study aimed at establishing the extent to which the Sisters working in the Archdiocese of Nairobi have contributed to growth in the Archdiocese through their various apostolates. To establish this, the researcher went on further to find out the type of apostolates the Sisters were involved in and the possible growth of the Archdiocese through these apostolates. As described above, data was collected through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussion. All questionnaires were returned and the scheduled interviews and focus group discussions were conducted.

Presentation and discussion of study findings was structured around the two main questions of the study. The following areas constitute this section: type of apostolates by congregations working in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, experiences of Sisters in their collaboration with the Archdiocese of Nairobi, experiences of the Archdiocese in working with Sisters, factors that sustain the collaboration, and growth in the archdiocese as a result of collaboration with Sisters.

**Apostolates of Sisters Working in the Archdiocese of Nairobi**

When the Sisters were asked about the apostolates of their Congregations in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, different responses were recorded. Figure 1 presents a summary of these responses.
As shown in Figure 1, a number of respondents (67%) said their congregations were involved in pastoral work. Half (50%) of the respondents reported that their congregations were serving in the Archdiocese through education and administrative ministries. One respondent (8%) reported that her Congregation was running diocesan hospitals. Table 1 presents a more detailed presentation of the different categories of apostolates.

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congregation</th>
<th>Apostolate</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Medical</th>
<th>Administration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Felician Sisters</td>
<td>Catechesis;</td>
<td>St Mary’s School</td>
<td>Secretarial</td>
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<td></td>
<td>spiritual direction to students</td>
<td>Secretarial</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Demese Sisters</td>
<td>Catechesis;</td>
<td>Secretarial</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>retreat center</td>
<td>Secretarial</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The information in Table 1 was collected through questionnaires distributed to Sisters. The table presents four main categories of apostolates, and reveals that a majority of the Sisters working in the Archdiocese of Nairobi are pastoral workers. Some of the pastoral activities mentioned were teaching catechism, spiritual direction in schools, and Pontifical...
Missionary Childhood (PMC). The Cardinal is particularly passionate about PMC and unity of the Church as a family. This explains why every year he celebrates the Eucharist twice or thrice with the children and holds an annual Family Day which brings together all parishes. In all these activities Sisters remain at the forefront.

Pastoral ministry supersedes the rest of the apostolates for the simple reason that religious life is first and foremost about the salvation of humanity. For the Sisters teaching catechism, it harmonises with the charismatic demands of their congregations. In an interview with one of the respondents, the Sister explained, “For my Congregation, teaching catechism as a pastoral activity is not optional but an integral part of our charism. Each Sister has to acquire basic catechetical training bearing in mind that whatever other training one acquires thereafter is simply an addition to the primal knowledge” (personal communication, November 10, 2016). This is in harmony with the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops (2009) in reference to consecrated persons, which states that “Through their proper charisms and specific involvement in the Church, these institutes and societies work to extend the kingdom of Christ’s justice, peace and love through pastoral work with youth, assistance to the poor, services to women and care of the sick” (p. 52). During the same synod, catechists were described as heralds of the gospel who continue to be valuable animators of Christian communities. Out of the ten Congregations selected for the study, only the Catholic Carmelite Sisters reported that they did not teach catechism. However, within their primary apostolate (i.e., education) they participate in catechetical work by ensuring that pupils are fully prepared for the sacraments of Christian initiation.

Another apostolate common among congregations in the Archdiocese is education. According to the Diocesan Education Secretary, there are eight well-established schools owned by the Archdiocese and headed by Sisters. These are Donholm Catholic School, Vendramini Education Centre, St Anne Gichocho Girls, St Peter & Paul Primary School, St Joseph the Worker-Ting’ang’a, Tasia Catholic School, St Michael Nursery, and Catholic Parochial School. In a face-to-face interview, a respondent described these schools as champion schools in Nairobi. Administrators and teachers in these schools come from both local and international congregations. The researcher had the privilege of attending the Annual Catholic Education Day for the Archdiocese on June 18, 2016. Looking at St Mary’s grounds that day, the compound was well blended with different colours of habits, reflecting a high presence of Sisters either teaching or heading the schools represented.

Still other areas of collaboration between Sisters and the Archdiocese are administrative. These include social development activities through the office of the director, secretarial services, and administrative assistance. The various apostolates carried out by Sisters of different Congregations portray a spirit of inclusiveness and the desire by the Archdiocese to promote religious life and vocations. Most of the Sisters, especially those based in Cardinal Otunga Plaza, have an opportunity to reach out to parents, youth, and young children as dictated by the nature of their apostolates.

Experiences of Sisters in their Collaboration with the Archdiocese of Nairobi

Generally, the Sisters working in the Archdiocese with whom the researcher interacted sounded happy with their work and at home with their employer. One of the respondents expressed contentment with the fact that her congregation was well remunerated for her services, that the Archdiocese provided her transportation to and from work, and that above all she worked in freedom and peace.

In response to the question “What has been your experience with the owner of the schools since they were started?”, the respondents had much to share. Through group discussion, it was revealed that there existed a warm and cordial relationship between the Archdiocese and the Sisters. Through this discussion, which lasted one hour (from 3:30 to 4:30pm on October 27, 2016), it was revealed that the Catholic Carmelite Sisters had brought the school from nothing to something. They explained to the researcher that the school came into existence through the effort of a Mill Hill missionary who soon after handed over the school to the Sisters. According to the respondents, the life of the pioneer Sisters was difficult. Among the challenges they mentioned were poor accessibility to the school. As one of the respondents, who was also one of the pioneers, explained it, “The present admirable state of the school does not erase in me the experience of sinking in the mud during the rains. People had to pull our car out every time.” This notwithstanding, the Sisters working in this diocesan school expressed satisfaction in the way the Archdiocese
treated them. One of them positively explained that whenever any problem arises the Archdiocese is always quick to remedy it.

Another respondent expressed fulfillment in her apostolate, saying “I love my work and feel quite fulfilled to see the catechists vibrant and motivated. What thrills me most is the incredible support I receive from the Archdiocese and from the groups that I work with.” (personal communication, October 20, 2016). She further reported that the Archdiocese was very committed to the course of women and all other organised groups under her pastoral care. Emphasising the necessity of pastoral work, this respondent reiterated that pastoral work in relation to women and catechism was very demanding but a necessary apostolate for the salvation of humanity. According to her, catechists participated directly in the ministry of teaching, and thus needed to be exposed to the knowledge necessary for growth in Christian faith. In her experience, catechists required unrelenting spiritual formation so that they might impart the same to those they instruct. She described women as the pillars of their homes, hence the need to listen to them, guide them, and counsel them in the way of God.

Archdiocesan Experiences with the Sisters

A face-to-face interview with one of the priests revealed that the primary areas of collaboration between Sisters and the Archdiocese of Nairobi were education, administration, and pastoral work. When describing his experiences with the Sisters—he was working with a number of them—he was clear and precise. He said, “Sisters are the backbone of this office and other places of interaction with the Archdiocese. They are very supportive, they listen, they know their role, they consult, respect protocol, do not reserve knowledge or energy. I cannot do without them in this office. There is not a single day that I ever left the office angered by any of the Sisters working here” (personal communication, October 25, 2016). According to this respondent, the Sisters were well grounded in terms of their response to apostolic demands.

When asked to comment on his experience with Sisters as the Diocesan Education Secretary, his take remained very positive. His observation was that in all the diocesan schools under the leadership of Sisters, the results were commendable. He said, “Without any reservation, I must admit that the Sisters are doing very well wherever they are. Marking them out of ten my mark would be 7.5/10”. This opinion was tied to the high discipline found in schools under the leadership of Sisters. He observed that in these schools, students were not only disciplined but also attentive and obedient to their teachers. Speaking about the nursery children, he noted that Sisters offered a strong base for future transformative leaders.

Growth of the Archdiocese Through the Sisters

The study revealed that various types of growth have been experienced through the collaboration and initiative of Sisters in the Archdiocese. It was also noted that many congregations within the Archdiocese owned private institutions such as schools, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, and retreat centers. In his post-synodal apostolic exhortation (1995), Pope John Paul II declared that the task of evangelisation is the most important mission of the Church. He said, “Evangelising is the grace and vocation proper to the Church” (p. 15). By their private apostolates, Sisters participate in the work of evangelisation. In this regard, although the services rendered are privately initiated and controlled, in many ways they enlarge the Archdiocese. There are no private students, patients, or poor people. As Sisters interact with Christians in parishes, they promote social development through initiation of new projects. For the purposes of this study, only growth effected by Sisters working for the Archdiocese has been presented and discussed. From the study, this growth can be summarised as follows.

Physical growth. Physical growth of institutions under Sisters is visible both through the expansion of buildings, especially in schools, and in the increase of numbers of learners. According to respondents of Tasia Catholic School, the current state of the school is a true testimony of the hard work performed by the Carmelite Sisters both in Kenya and back in India since its foundation. One of the visible areas of growth has to do with infrastructure. During the focus group discussion, one of the respondents stood up, pointed to an old building which was the initial block with three classrooms in 2005, and exclaimed, “Look at the small structure over there, you will not believe that this is where we began.” These modern buildings are manifestations of great creativity in terms of architectural design, floor plan design, and use. The entire compound is well furnished and maintained. In terms of numbers, the respondents revealed to the
researcher that they had worked tirelessly to bring the nursery numbers up from 17 to 313 and the primary school numbers up from 14 to 620.

The Sister in charge of catechists and women’s groups stated that in 2014, when she became the coordinator of these groups, there were only 70 registered catechists and 15,000 participating women. Regarding the catechists she exclaimed, “When I started with them the program was collapsing”. She explained that to turn the numbers around she had to conduct a lot of seminars and workshops. According to her, it was through this great effort that both the catechists and the participating women have come to understand their place and role in the Church. The study revealed that the total number of registered catechists today has grown from 70 to 364, and the number of registered women in the Catholic Women Association (CWA) has grown from 15,000 to 20,000. The rise in numbers, according to this respondent, can be attributed to the outreach missions that have become part of her apostolate. She explained to the researcher that before she was appointed to work with women, they lacked focus and were in great need of a mentor (personal communication, October 23, 2016).

As a way of fostering physical growth and unity among pupils, students, teachers, Christians, parents, Sunday school children and Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC), different activities are organised at institutional and Church levels. One respondent cited games, sports, and other spiritual activities. The researcher was able to observe learners engaging in various pastimes, including karate, in one of the schools. Respondents indicated that at times schools hosted sports day events, during which parents competed against teachers, teachers against learners, and learners against other learners. According to respondents during one focus group discussion, these physical activities play a role in attracting new students to these vibrant schools, and are also a contributing factor in new registrations among Sunday school children, PMC, catechists, and other groups.

Academic growth. During the interview with the Education Secretary, he highly commended the Sisters for their hard work and commitment. He noted that at “all schools where Sisters are in charge there is quality education and good performance due to the high discipline instilled in learners” (personal communication, October 25, 2016). He attributed the good performance to Sisters’ moral and spiritual formation of learners coupled with heavy reading. During the 2016 Education Day, most of the schools headed by Sisters ranked high, including Tasia Catholic primary school, St Michael Primary, Donholm Catholic, St Joseph the Worker, and St Peter and Paul (Archdiocese of Nairobi, Catholic Education Day manual, June 18, 2016). During this function, the leading schools were awarded trophies and other rewards. On discipline, the Education Secretary described the walking style of nursery children in one of the schools. He observed that children in this school were trained to walk together in a line with hands folded behind their backs. In this way, they cannot attack one another physically or trample upon each other. Africans have a popular saying that if the stem of a plant is not bent while still green it cannot be changed thereafter. Good formation of young children is a sure way of ensuring a future disciplined generation.

Spiritual growth. The spiritual well-being of learners is of great concern today, as society is becoming more and more secularised. In his pastoral letter of 2015, Cardinal John Njue observed that “In an age of moral decline in our schools, families, our places of work and even among Christians, we constantly need to remind ourselves about what the truth is, about the virtue of purity” (p. 12). In institutions where Sisters are working, great emphasis is placed on spiritual and moral formation. Spiritual formation includes, among other things, Church clubs such as Young Christian Students (YCS), singing, liturgical dances, frequent participation in the Holy Mass as per the arrangement of each institution, preparation of children and adults for the sacraments of Christian initiation, devotional prayers such as the Holy Rosary, common Bible reading, and reflection. In all schools where Sisters are involved, Christian Religious Education is studied as a compulsory subject. In Kenya, this subject is only compulsory up to form two and optional from form three. However, in their need to help learners to develop spiritually, these schools reveal a unique trend. Examining the case of Tasia Catholic School, the researcher found that once learners attained the expected age to begin catechetical instructions, they did so without delay. Arrangements were made immediately and the catechetical classes incorporated into their learning schedule. In addition to ensuring that students receive the necessary sacraments, weekly Mass is celebrated with them. In fact, the School occupies the same compound as the Church, making it easier for pupils to go in and out of the Church for personal prayer, especially during lunch hour. In this school and others, the ongoing Pastoral Program of Instruction is one of the key sources of spiritual nourishment for Christian youth in schools.

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The effort to instill spiritual thoughts and habits in learners is basically the fruit of collaboration between the Sisters working in the Archdiocese and the priests who are the chief spiritual fathers. Through a face-to-face interview with the Education Secretary of the Archdiocese, the researcher learned that priests devote their time to the course of spiritual formation of learners through celebration of the Eucharist, seminars, counselling, and hearing confessions. The Archdiocese takes care of private schools (those owned by the Archdiocese and those owned by Sisters) as well as government schools. Figure 2 provides counts of the schools sponsored by the Archdiocese of Nairobi.

As shown in Figure 2, 96 (41%) of the schools sponsored by the Archdiocese are public primary schools. Sixty-three (27%) of the sponsored schools were private primary schools, and an equal number were public secondary schools. The study revealed that only 11 (5%) of the sponsored schools were private secondary schools (Archdiocese of Nairobi, Catholic Education Day manual, June 18, 2016).

Community outreach. As part of their holistic formation, learners in schools and parishes are helped to grow in social consciousness. Aware that no man is an island, one participant expressed that Sisters endeavour to instill in learners the values of charity and generosity towards the underprivileged members of society. In the case of Tasia Catholic School, in order to strengthen these values learners are encouraged to practice self-sacrifice by avoiding things like biscuits and sweets. The money saved by not purchasing these snacks is collected and essential items such as dry foods and clothing are bought for needy persons. For example, during the 2016 Lenten campaign, through the combined effort of pupils and the Carmelite Sisters, the school paid a visit to the Little Sisters of the Poor, which is a home for the elderly. During their visit, they interacted with the poor and sick residents and donated food and money for their upkeep. The Sisters running the school also donated food and 26,000 Kenyan shillings (roughly 250 USD) to Don Bosco School. A similar gesture of solidarity with vulnerable members of society was shown to the Missionary Sisters of Charity (Mother Teresa Sisters) through the donation of foodstuffs for the poor people in the center. The Sisters further pointed out that in addition to providing charitable support to the poor, the school is also engaged with the local community in ensuring a healthy environment. This is accomplished through garbage collection from time to time. Solidarity with poor and needy members of society is what Benedict XVI (2005) describes as love of neighbour, which is also the Church’s responsibility.

One of the participants, referring to her congregation’s outreach mission within the Archdiocese, pointed to street children and refugees as a powerful means of reaching out to vulnerable members of society in the Archdiocese. Poor people in society are at the heart of the Church’s mission in the world. Sisters in the Archdiocese meet the needs of challenged persons through medical care. The sick and suffering members of society call for tender care. Hospitals and health centers in the Archdiocese, private or otherwise, are places where sicknesses and diseases are confronted in various ways. Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, for example, operate a hospital in Kilimambogo, and the Little Sisters of St Francis run a hospital in Kasarani.

Financial growth. Through the efforts of Sisters working in the Archdiocese there has been financial growth. Since all Sisters are salaried as teachers, nurses, administrators, secretaries, and legal officers, among other categories, every other income goes into an account controlled by the Archdiocese. In this way whenever money is needed to accomplish a diocesan project, these accounts can be accessed. A recent example was
cited by some respondents working in a school. They reported that there was an agreement between them and the Archdiocese in terms of financial collaboration. A discussion with these respondents revealed that at its initial stage, the school survived through the good will of its founding missionary group. The respondents did inform the researcher that it has been clear how both parties benefit from the arrangement. They said, “The school finances for a single academic year are shared among four groups: the parish, the Congregation, the school, and the Archdiocese. The percentage given to each is, School 50%, Parish 10%, Congregation 20% and the Archdiocese 20%”. In reality, the 10% and 20% allotted to the parish and Archdiocese are both submitted to the Archdiocese for its development programs. This is a great contribution towards the growth of the Archdiocese.

Respondents participating in the study identified the provision of personnel by congregations as another way that Sisters contributed to growth in the Archdiocese. For example, at the central administration offices of the Archdiocese located at Cardinal Otunga Plaza, every office has a Sister or two providing services. Through their commitment to the course of evangelisation, the Sisters create an atmosphere for growth. Through their services to the people they communicate joy, peace, and love to the people they serve. Some people seeking services in the Archdiocese find that they receive spiritual guidance and counsel from the Sisters over and above the services they expect.

Factors that Influence Continued Collaboration with the Archdiocese

The study further set out to identify factors that have enabled the Sisters to maintain a collaborative spirit between them and the Archdiocese of Nairobi. This question was addressed to all of the questionnaire respondents who were Sisters. Their responses are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage mentioning factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive attitude of the clergy</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cordial relationship and team spirit in places of work</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favourable working conditions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to serve God’s people</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to practice and concretise one’s skills, especially for newly trained Sisters</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to enhance growth and development in the Archdiocese</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved by the charm of service to the poor and needy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2016 Field Data.

Table 2 indicates that most respondents (75%) said that the positive attitude of clergy towards the Sisters enabled their Congregations to continue working in the Archdiocese. Eight respondents (67%) pointed to the cordial relationship and team spirit in places of work as a motivating factor, while seven respondents (58%) said there were favourable working conditions. Five respondents (41%) reported that by working in the Archdiocese, the Sisters had an opportunity to serve God’s people and hence a chance to fulfill their missions, and an equal number said they found an opportunity to concretise their skills by working in the Archdiocese. Three respondents (25%) said that their congregations continued to serve in the archdiocese of Nairobi because they felt the need to participate in the effort to enhance growth and development in the Archdiocese, while an equal number reported that their congregations were fulfilling their charisms of serving...
the most vulnerable members of society by reaching out to poor and needy groups in the Archdiocese. These findings show that congregations working in the Archdiocese of Nairobi have a variety of factors that are responsible for their continued collaboration with the Archdiocese. In addition, all the factors mentioned presuppose that the Sisters also have a positive attitude towards the Archdiocese and the people they serve.

Challenges Experienced by Collaborators

Collaboration between the Archdiocese and the Sisters is not without hurdles. However, as some Sisters noted, the challenges experienced were the fault of neither the Archdiocese nor the Sisters, but represented instead opportunities for improvement through continued collaboration. Among the challenges identified by most respondents were:

1. Turnover among the Sisters is high. The Sisters observed that their missionary spirit did not allow for their long stay in one office or apostolate in the Archdiocese or elsewhere. This response was advanced by nine respondents (75%). As a general practice across Congregations, a Sister will stay in the same community for a period of three years, after which a transfer is imminent. According to one of the respondents, this affects efficiency, especially at the initial stages when a new Sister has just been appointed.

2. Some jobs require people with high qualifications, who may not be easy to find within the congregations. This means that at times Sisters may have to learn on the job or train as they work. This shortfall was mentioned by one of the priests during his interview. He observed that some Sisters are appointed to work for the Archdiocese without proper qualifications. As a result, Sisters must be trained on how to respond more appropriately to the demands of their specific apostolates in accordance with the guidelines of the Archdiocese.

4. Language barriers were mentioned by three respondents (25%). According to some respondents working in offices of the Archdiocese, they sometimes received clients who could speak neither Kiswahili nor English, which impeded communication. Languages such as French, Spanish, and German were mentioned as necessary languages, especially for those in the secretariat, yet the majority of Sisters have a fluency in but three languages: their mother tongue, English, and Kiswahili.

5. Another challenge mentioned by two respondents (17%) had to do with harmonisation of different charisms among Sisters of different Congregations working in the same offices. The possible diversity of charisms is demonstrated in Table 1, which shows the presence of different congregations working together in Diocesan offices and projects. Congregations have different charisms and different practices attached to these charisms. While some place emphasis on the poor and sick members of society, others prioritise education. Although this diversity is meant to remain complementary, at times it may create differences.

6. Some Sisters decried the lack of sufficient support from parents. Four respondents (33%) working in schools reported lack of cooperation from some parents whose children were deviant in behaviour. All four respondents faulted the parents, most of whom were drug addicts and abusers, for failing to provide enough support and moral formation to their children. According to the respondents, some parents blame teachers for any moral shortcomings in their children, instead of adopting a collaborative spirit in the fight against these vices. Soko (in Giuseppe & Churu, 2015) observes that parents today have neglected their role of rearing their children in a manner that is consistent with societal expectations. He argues that some parents find it difficult to choose between their children and money. Some parents, according to Soko, work overtime at the expense of their children and families.

7. Lack of adequate resources, such as money and land for expansion, was mentioned by five respondents (41%). The concerned participants expressed their fear that while the numbers of children and students joining schools headed by Sisters continued to accelerate, there was not much space to allow for infrastructure growth. Schools such as Catholic Parochial are foremost in this category. Lack of sufficient funds to support expansion where land was available was also cited as a challenge to those in various projects.

8. Seven respondents (58%) felt that the Archdiocese was duplicating the same kind of apostolates instead of venturing into new ones where the
majority of Sisters could easily be absorbed. The common example cited was that of schools. The Sisters observed that the apostolate in schools ranked higher than, for example, the medical apostolate. This observation was supported by those interviewed as well as those who participated in focus group discussions. The education option can clearly be observed during the annual education day for the Archdiocese, where schools and Sisters attend in large numbers.

9. Three respondents (25%) decried lack of understanding between the Sisters in the communities and those in some diocesan projects. According to them, because most Sisters working in the Archdiocese were provided with a means of transportation or received a similar consideration, others became jealous, perhaps because they did not receive the same treatment elsewhere.

10. Six respondents (50%) felt that Sisters should be well remunerated and accorded necessary allowances similar to their lay counterparts working in the same institutions, offices, or projects. According to them, in some cases they did not receive leave allowances as their lay counterparts did.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. For continued growth and development in the Archdiocese, there is a need to bring more Sisters on board through the creation of new job opportunities. The growing number of Congregations in the Archdiocese is a blessing for the Church. Both the Archdiocese and the Sisters have to open up for a deeper collaborative spirit as an opening to deeper growth.

2. Where the Sisters are working directly for the Archdiocese there should be fair remuneration to all. Most Congregations depend entirely on salaries for their upkeep.

3. Sisters working in the Archdiocese should be doing so under proper contracts and job descriptions.

4. The participants recommended that more clergy should join in the effort to educate society through the teaching profession. This will lead to a better understanding of what is happening in their diocesan schools being run by Sisters and the laity.

5. The study further recommends a network of seminars and workshops for children, youth, and parents, both in the school and in the Church. These seminars should be geared toward helping each group to capture their roles in the Church and society. Seminars and workshops open people up to their moral, spiritual, and social responsibilities.

6. The Archdiocese partners with Sisters’ congregations in the process of mobilizing resources needed to run Diocesan institutions and projects. What both groups should be more concerned with is evangelisation of God’s people through the different apostolates. Financial gain, despite its necessity, should not overshadow the purpose of the Church’s existence in the world.

7. Both the Sisters and the Archdiocese should cultivate a deeper collaborative spirit that dispels competition. For example, when Sisters are starting a new apostolate within the Archdiocese, they should consider initiating an apostolate that supplements what already exists, rather than reinventing the wheel.

8. This study concurs with Mwaura (in Voices of Courage, 2015) that more young Sisters should be trained in professional skills to enable them deliver to society with more confidence and competence.

Conclusion

Collaboration in the effort of evangelisation, whether by the clergy, religious men and women, or the laity, is a noble course. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commissions his disciples to preach the good news to the whole world. All those baptised share in this mandate. The collaboration between Sisters’ congregations and the Archdiocese of Nairobi is a great response to this endeavour accomplished in a variety of ways. All respondents in this study were convinced that their particular apostolates in the Archdiocese were of paramount importance and that through each apostolate, the congregations contributed to its growth and development.
COLLABORATION IN ACTION: THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THREE RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS IN HEALTHCARE PROVISION THROUGH THE USE OF PARTICIPATORY LEADERSHIP IN MONZE DIOCESE, ZAMBIA

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Abstract

This study explores how three religious congregations, the Religious Sisters of Charity, the Religious Sisters of the Holy Spirit, and the Sisters of Charity of Milan, are making use of community participation in order to enhance healthcare provision in the three health facilities that they run in the Diocese of Monze. The study focused on how the three religious congregations are employing participatory leadership in order to bring about positive social change in three areas where they are providing healthcare services. In this study, qualitative methodology was employed. One-on-one interviews and questionnaires were used to collect the necessary data with the aim of providing a better understanding of the topic under study. The sample population was drawn from a variety of participants who were able to provide the necessary information about the topic. These were the Sisters managing the health institutions, employees who work in the health institutions, local community leaders, and local members of the communities who seek medical services at the health facilities. The theory of participatory leadership was used as a theoretical framework. The collected data was organised into patterns and categories in order to better identify similarities and linkages. Literature related to the topic was also used to analyse the data. The findings show that the three religious congregations have helped to bring about social change in...
the communities where they are providing healthcare services by making use of participatory leadership in such areas as malaria control, maternal and child health, and HIV/AIDS mitigation. Members of the community are given an opportunity to participate and make decisions about health matters affecting them. This collaboration with community members has brought about a sense of ownership of the decisions and activities planned by the health facilities. It is hoped that the findings of the study will enable a better perspective on the contribution of religious congregations in healthcare provision and on how participatory leadership can be a catalyst for social change and community development.

Keywords: collaboration, health, community, participatory leadership, religious congregations.

Introduction

One of the most fundamental needs of every human being is good health. In many instances, good health is viewed as a prerequisite for one to make a meaningful contribution to society. The Catholic Church has long recognised this fact and has, in its long history, taken an active role in healthcare provision. Religious congregations have played a particularly significant role in running the healthcare facilities established by the Church. Pope Francis (Rome Reports, 2014, para. 1) acknowledged the contribution of women religious congregations to the life of the church with the words, “Just think a little, what would happen if there were no nuns in hospitals, schools, mission, just think of a world without sisters: it’s unthinkable, these women are great!”

In the Diocese of Monze, Zambia, the Church provides healthcare through religious congregations that are working in the diocese. These include the Religious Sisters of Charity, the Religious Sisters of the Holy Spirit, and the Sisters of Charity of Milan. This chapter explores ways in which these three religious congregations are using collaborative efforts in order to offer quality health services to the people of the Diocese of Monze by engaging the use of participatory leadership in the health institutions they are managing. The Religious Sisters of Charity are the proprietors of Our Lady’s Hospital, Chikuni, while the Religious Sisters of the Holy Spirit and the Sisters of Charity of Milan are managing Chivuna Mission Rural Health Centre and Mtendere Queen of Peace hospital, respectively.
The participatory leadership theory places emphasis on respect and engagement. It constructively focuses energy in every human-to-human encounter. It is a democratic and effective model of leadership that harnesses diversity, builds community, and creates shared responsibility for any given action. Since members of the community are given an opportunity to be part of the decision-making process, it brings about a deepening of individual and collective ownership of the decision, thereby yielding real development and growth (Participatory Leadership Workbook, 2014).

The theory of participatory leadership bases its ideas on some of the following underlying assumptions:

- Conversations matter.
- Meaningful conversations lead to wise action.
- Organisations are living systems which are intelligent and capable of self-organising their own unique solutions (Uniting Care Community, n.d.).

Participatory leadership requires collaboration. Straus (2002) points out that for any group to make beneficial decisions and to function in an effective manner, there is need to follow five principles: involving relevant stakeholders, building consensus at every stage, designing a process map, giving authority to a process facilitator, and making use of the power of group memory.

As data on the contribution of the Sisters in healthcare in the Diocese of Monze was analysed, these ideas about participatory leadership were kept in mind and applied as appropriate.

### Theoretical Framework

The theory of participatory leadership was used to analyse the data about the contribution of the three religious congregations in the health institutions they are managing. According to Uniting Care Community (n.d.), participatory leadership is a style of management where decisions are made with the most feasible amount of participation from those who are affected by the decisions.
has a hand in the health programs that are carried out in all public health institutions countrywide. The Memorandum of Understanding drawn between the Ministry of Health and the Churches Health Association of Zambia clearly outlines this fact, and reads in part: “The Ministry of Health is responsible on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Zambia for all health services in the country including health services administered by the Church” (Ministry of Health, 1996, p.3). Despite this state of affairs, the church-run health institutions still maintain a fairly autonomous role in the day-to-day operation of the institutions, and this helps them instill the spirit of hard work and commitment to duty, attributes which are normally lacking in public health institutions.

## Diocesan Health Commission

Collaborative efforts in providing quality healthcare among the three religious congregations find expression in activities organised by the Diocesan Health Commission. Membership of the Commission comprises the health institutions in the Diocese of Monze as duly represented by nominees from the health institutions. Each health institution in the diocese nominates a member (and in some cases, two members) to sit on the Diocesan Health Commission. Members are then officially appointed by the Bishop of Monze to serve a three-year renewable term.

Members of the Diocesan Health Commission meet three times a year and it is at such meetings that members from the various health institutions share ideas about how best to improve healthcare provision in the health facilities they are managing. They also share challenges they have experienced and discuss how best to address the identified challenges.

## Churches Health Association of Zambia

The Catholic Church is a member of the Churches Health Association of Zambia (CHAZ), an association which was formed in 1970 by Catholic and Protestant Church health institutions. To date, the association is the largest non-governmental health provider in Zambia. By virtue of their status as healthcare facilities belonging to the Catholic Church, the health institutions managed by the three congregations under study are affiliated with CHAZ.

The membership of CHAZ comprises 151 health institutions representing 16 different Christian denominations. Most of the health institutions belonging to this organisation are based in rural areas, accounting for over 50 percent of formal healthcare in rural and other hard-to-reach areas. At the national level, CHAZ manages about 35 percent of all formal healthcare services in the country (CHAZ, n.d.).

Since its inception, CHAZ has worked closely with the government through a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ministry of Health (MOH) that commits the government to providing grants covering 75% of operational costs for Church Health Institutions (CHIs). The MOU also provides for the payment of salaries for professional and non-professional health workers and provision of essential medicines for CHIs. CHAZ implements a number of programs including programs to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

Being conscious of the fact that the mission of the Church is to save souls and promote the healing ministry of Christ, the sixteen-member church denominations of CHAZ have put aside their religious differences to work for a common cause, a sure sign that it is possible to work for a greater good even when people have divergent beliefs.

## Methodology

Qualitative methodology was employed during this study. Malterud (1996) in Kvestad and Fjermastad (2002) posits that the qualitative methodology helps to bring out the meaning of informants’ experiences without subjecting them to rigid pre-set categories. The qualitative methodology also seeks to understand human and social behaviour from the perspective of those living in a particular environment. The contribution of the three religious congregations was therefore studied in the light of the local communities surrounding the health facilities that the three congregations are managing.

## Data Collection Methods

In order for the researcher to collect the necessary data about the contributions of three religious congregations in the health sector by
making use of participatory leadership, semi-structured interviews were used. Some participants were interviewed on the telephone. As Kvale and Brinkman (2009) noted, interviews are an important tool for data collection, as knowledge is generated when two or more people exchange views on a topic of interest. Questionnaires were also used to collect data from selected participants. These different data collection techniques enabled the researcher to gather diverse views on the topic.

According to Bryman (2008), a sample refers to “The segment of the population that is selected for the research” (p. 698). Purposive sampling was used in the selection of research participants. This sampling method was used as it proved effective in drawing into the study people who had the necessary information about the topic under inquiry. Maykut and Morehouse (1995) state that a researcher can employ the use of purposive sampling in order to understand the experiences of a carefully selected group of people. Participants were recruited through the health institutions. Identified participants were then asked to recommend other appropriate participants. A total of 30 participants took part in the study. These included six religious sisters, one executive member of the Diocesan Health Commission, eight health workers, and fifteen members of the communities surrounding the three health institutions. The researcher explained the purpose of the study to the participants, and all of them expressed willingness to participate in the study.

Findings

In this study, data were organised according to emerging themes and concepts. As Miles and Huberman (1994) note, the researcher has the important task of analysing collected data into a pattern of relationships. The findings below are presented in narrative form and relevant quotations from research participants have been used to support the information.

Data from this research suggests that in all three health institutions under study, the religious congregations have employed community involvement in activities being carried out at the health institutions. This collaborative spirit has yielded positive results in the areas of malaria control, maternal and child health, and care for people with HIV/AIDS. As one religious sister observed, “The days when missionaries worked alone in isolation are long gone. We have come to realise that if you want to make any impact among the people you serve, then it is important that you work with them. In this way, you can easily have an idea about what the community really needs.” This perception was shared by 74% of the respondents, who expressed that collaboration yielded more results than ‘doing it alone.’

Regarding how collaboration occurs in the three health institutions under study, 88% of the respondents agreed that collaboration is largely achieved through Neighbourhood Health Committees (NHCs). These are community-based support groups that are formed by the community with the help of health personnel from the health facility. Other parties involved in community participation are peer educators in the community as well as various volunteers such as malaria agents, care givers, and traditional birth attendants. It is through such individuals and groups that the health facilities reach out to members of the community to familiarise them with various health-related issues. These individuals and groups are an important link between the health facility and the community. Members of the community take an interest in the activities of the health facilities and view them as their own.

On the matter of community ownership, one religious sister working in Chikuni Hospital reported that members of the community were always reminded that they were the owners of the health institution and that, “As sisters, we only came here to work among them and could be missioned elsewhere at any time.” This constant reminder has yielded positive results because members of the community were reported to be more responsible and accountable for the hospital property.

Malaria Control

The three health institutions under study have embarked on an aggressive campaign to educate communities about malaria. This is done through trained Malaria Agents who are members of those same communities in which they work. The Malaria Agents make rounds in the villages to carry out Rapid Diagnostic Tests (RDTs) using the kits which were sent to health facilities by the Ministry of Health. One Malaria Agent stated, “If a person is tested positive for malaria, they are straight away advised to go to the hospital to seek medical attention.” This exercise carried out by the Malaria Agents in the communities has been well-received.
by members of the communities, as it relieves them of the burden of travelling long distances to the health facilities to seek medical assistance. Since malaria is now detected in good time, the chances of survival are high, thus preventing unnecessary deaths. In fact, it was reported by one health worker at Mtendere Queen of Peace Hospital that the health facility recorded zero malaria in nearly a year, largely because of the practice of involving Malaria Agents in treatment and prevention.

Malaria Agents have also helped members of the communities appreciate the use of mosquito nets in the prevention of malaria, as this quote from a Malaria Agent testifies: “Because of community sensitization, people are now using mosquito nets for their intended purpose. Some time ago, mosquito nets were used as fishing nets.”

**Maternal Health and Child Mortality**

Neighbourhood Health Committees are the main organisers of safe motherhood activities within the communities in which they live. They work in collaboration with the health personnel to give health education to expecting mothers and care during pregnancy and childbirth. Furthermore, they encourage all pregnant women to go to the ante-natal clinic and to deliver at the health facility when their time to have a baby comes. One of the religious sisters working at Chivuna Rural Health Centre reported that through community mobilisation, members of the community were able to raise resources to build a mothers’ shelter for expecting mothers at the health center. This initiative has ensured that those taking care of expecting mothers admitted to the health center have conducive accommodation.

In addition to the above innovation, a policy was passed in all villages surrounding the health center that any woman who delivered her baby at home without the help of health personnel was liable to a fine of one hundred and fifty Kwacha (ZMK 150), which is about fifteen US dollars. As a result of this policy, a nurse at the health center reported that even husbands had joined the campaign against home deliveries. At Chikuni Hospital, like in Chivuna, a penalty fee is charged for women who deliver their babies at home, “to pass a message to them that they are endangering both their life and that of the baby,” explained one religious sister.

**HIV/AIDS Mitigation**

According to 92% of the respondents, one important intervention currently aimed at mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS in the community has been through community sensitisation about voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC). Peer educators and health personnel are making countless efforts to spread information about the benefits of the practice, which includes a reduced likelihood of contracting HIV/AIDS. One health worker from Mtendere Queen of Peace Hospital noted, “People are responding well to the VMMC initiative and the radio programs we have organised on the local community radio station are yielding positive results.” People now have a more positive attitude towards male circumcision. At first, it was seen as a preserve of a particular ethnic group in Zambia.

In each of the three areas where the health facilities under study are situated, Voluntary Care Givers in the community visit the terminally ill and provide health education on living positively even when one is infected with HIV. They promote the use of anti-retroviral drugs in the community, and they also promote education against stigma and discrimination of people living with HIV/AIDS. This is done through community radio programs, the drama and songs of peer educators, and more importantly, through personal accounts of people living with HIV/AIDS during large community gatherings such as the commemoration of the World AIDS Day. One health worker noted, “On our own, we would not have managed to reach so many people. With the help of community members, we are able to support patients in every home in the community.” The above-mentioned practices have helped to bring about positive change in the way HIV/AIDS patients are perceived. “I now know that HIV/AIDS is not a death sentence hanging on my head. I can now take my ARV drugs in the open, without fear that I will be discriminated against,” said one member of the community in Chikuni, who has been living with HIV for the past ten years.

When asked about what drives them in their apostolate as healthcare providers, one religious sister noted, “We are content with being a voice for the voiceless. We do everything possible to ensure that the people we serve get what is rightfully theirs. For us, life must be preserved at all costs.”
Challenges

Despite the many successes recorded as a result of working in collaboration with members of the community, the religious sisters and health personnel from the three health institutions under study stated that they also experienced challenges. Prominent among the challenges cited were: limited financial resources, non-communicable diseases, and issues regarding human resources.

**Limited financial resources.** In order to keep the health facilities running, each of the three institutions has resorted to income-generating activities for effective operation of health programs at the health facilities. All three institutions have opened tuck shops to supplement the meager resources from the government, and other income generation projects are being piloted. At Chivuna Rural Health Centre, members of the community donate maize, which is used to feed patients admitted to the health facility. The surplus is sold to raise funds for the clinic. At Chikuni Hospital, a hammer mill was purchased as an income earner, and beekeeping is being explored.

It has also proved to be quite challenging for the Sisters to engage the local communities in projects to fund the hospital. Some community members are reluctant to donate whatever they can to the health facilities because they feel that the health institutions must have all the resources they need since they are run by missionaries. This was expressed by 74% of the respondents. “The ingrained mindset of many people is that they should receive instead of giving to the hospital,” bemoaned one health worker.

**Increase in cases of non-communicable diseases.** One relatively recent challenge in the areas where the three health institutions are located is the emergence of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and other conditions related to lifestyle changes. Of the Sisters and health workers interviewed, 92% felt that this was a matter of great concern. “While the Ministry of Health has concentrated on the treatment and prevention of communicable diseases, the other ‘modern’ diseases are just as deadly but not much has been done to sensitise the communities,” stated one religious sister from Chivuna. Medical personnel in the three health institutions acknowledged that much still has been done to sensitise the communities on non-communicable diseases.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to ascertain whether there were any notable contributions that the three religious congregations had made in the provision of healthcare through the use of participatory leadership in the health facilities they are running. To guide this study, three research questions were formulated. Data from this research suggests that in all the three health institutions under study, the religious congregations have employed community involvement in activities being carried out at the health institutions. Activities such as the commemoration of the World AIDS Day and Malaria Week, as well as Child Health Week, during which children are immunised against diseases like measles and polio, are done with full community participation. With the help of members of the Neighbourhood Health Committee and other community support groups, members of the community have taken an interest in the activities of the health facilities. As the theory of participatory leadership states, “Participatory leadership is about drawing on and blending the methods to design processes that enable people to work well together to contribute to wise action and effective collective action” (Uniting Care Community, n.d.).

One of the greatest challenges that the health sector in Zambia has grappled with is the control of malaria among both rural and urban populations (Ministry of Health, n.d.). Since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals by world leaders in 2000, a number of interventions...
have been put in place to prevent the occurrence of the disease and to improve access to medicines. The positive results that have occurred as a result of this effort are beginning to show. Malaria prevalence in the country is gradually beginning to decline. The national malaria indicator survey of 2012 indicated that malaria prevalence for children under the age of five in Zambia had dropped from 16.1% in 2010 to 14.3% in 2012 (UNDP, 2012). Despite these significant strides, much still needs to be done to curb the disease, as it is reported that three children still die of malaria in Zambia every day (UNDP, 2012).

As a result of the involvement of the community through the Malaria Agents, more and more people are beginning to value the use of mosquito nets. This is a notable social change in communities where people once used the mosquito nets for fishing purposes. A UNDP Report (2012) indicates that the percentage of women and children under the age of five who were sleeping under a mosquito net has increased from 50% in 2010 to 57% in 2012. The efforts of the Malaria Agents, who are in direct contact with the community members with whom they live, resonate with the theory of participatory leadership, which places emphasis on respect and engagement of community members as well as creating a shared responsibility for any given action (Uniting Care Community, n.d). Malaria Agents engage community members and help them realise that their health, and the health of their children, lies in their hands.

In the area of maternal health, more women are delivering at the health facilities under the supervision of trained health personnel. The reported numbers of maternal deaths has dropped in all three health institutions. At Chikuni Hospital, for example, one religious sister reported that during the four years of her work at the hospital, the health facility has not recorded any maternal deaths. The hospital’s annual report (Chikuni Hospital, 2015) confirms this. A reduction in the number of maternal deaths is testimony enough that the campaign against home deliveries has clearly yielded positive results. This also resonates with the theory of participatory leadership, which places emphasis on human beings as the main resource for identifying problems affecting the community and coming up with solutions that would act as a measure to mitigate the identified problems (Participatory Leadership Workbook, 2014).

Nowhere in the world has the HIV/AIDS pandemic been more devastating than in sub-Saharan Africa, where more than half of the world’s population of people living with HIV reside. Zambia is among the nine most-affected countries in the region (CIA World Fact Book, 2014). At present, there are 60,000 new infections in Zambia annually and 20,000 AIDS-related deaths; among HIV-positive adults, 63% are receiving antiretroviral treatment (UNAIDS, 2016).

Church-run health institutions have been involved in HIV/AIDS-related services, such as voluntary medical male circumcision. The initiative was officially launched in 2007, and so far great strides have been made to reach as many males as possible (Global Fund, 2014). The three religious congregations under study are among the religious congregations making a difference in the lives of countless Zambians in the area of HIV/AIDS mitigation. Collaboration with peer educators and other community volunteers has improved acceptance of male circumcision in a province where it was not traditionally practiced. This is an important social change.

With the rise of many terminally ill patients due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, it became necessary to seek ways to provide palliative care to such patients. The Churches Health Association of Zambia is credited with pioneering the home-based care (HBC) model of caring for terminally ill patients based on community voluntary participation (CHAZ, n.d). The HBC project has grown into an extensive support network, and the involvement of community care givers is so extensive that it has truly become a community-owned project. The local parishes near the health facilities are managing the HBC program, thereby providing not only physical support but spiritual support as well. The involvement of the church-run health institutions has also helped to bring about positive change in the way people living with HIV/AIDS are perceived. French, Greef and Watson (2014) confirm the role of spiritual leaders in the reduction of stigma attached to people with HIV/AIDS.

In all the activities where the health facilities are helping to bring about social change, the religious sisters managing the institutions play an important supervisory role. Through their charisms, which they have tried to impart in their collaborators, one can ascertain that members of these communities are receiving holistic healthcare at the three health institutions. With these sentiments, the theory of participatory leadership rings true, “Participatory leadership blends powerful conversational processes to invite people to step in and take charge of challenges facing them” (Uniting Care Community, n.d, p.1).
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states that the demand for health services provided by religious sisters remains on the increase. Apart from the inadequate numbers, it is important that the qualifications of Sisters be upgraded in order for them to be abreast with developments in the health sector. When the Sisters are empowered by giving them opportunities to pursue higher qualifications in their field, they will also be able to carry out their supervisory roles with more confidence, having become more knowledgeable about their work.

Future Collaborative Efforts

Since community participation in issues affecting the people has been proven to be a powerful catalyst for social change, all of the challenges described above can be mitigated if more concerted efforts are made to intensify the already existing collaborative ties between the three health facilities and the communities they serve. This can be done in the following areas:

Upgrading the qualifications of religious sisters. The Diocesan Health Commission and CHAZ could advocate for higher qualifications for religious sisters involved in healthcare work by organising scholarships where possible, so as to help them address some of the challenges facing the health facilities they are managing in a more effective manner.

Community sensitization on non-communicable diseases. The three religious congregations could take advantage of the high regard in which the Ministry of Health holds church-run health institutions by taking a leading role in advocating for greater publicity of non-communicable diseases through their involvement with CHAZ. Furthermore, health education of local communities can be done through already-existing voluntary groups, such as peer educators, and by conducting phone-in radio programs on community radio stations, where members of the community can participate by sharing their experiences, and where they would have an opportunity to ask questions from health personnel without making a trip to the health facilities.

Formulation of local policies. Since Neighbourhood Health Committees have proven to be an effective way of mobilising communities for action-oriented tasks (Ministry of Health, n.d), the three religious congregations can make use of these committees in the health facilities they are managing so as to address such issues as non-communicable

Challenges

Lack of adequate funding for the health institutions managed by the three religious congregations remains a constant challenge in effectively managing the institutions. The Ministry of Health helps to fund the health facilities, considering their status as grant-aided institutions. However, church-run hospitals are given less funding (Ministry of Health, 1996). While it was somewhat easier to source for donor funding in the past, times have changed, and in recent years the phrase ‘donor fatigue’ has become more and more pronounced. With limited financial resources, organising some community activities becomes a challenge. A move toward self-sustainability is therefore no longer an option but a means of survival.

As the country is becoming more urbanised, many activities associated with modernity are being embraced. This includes changes in food preferences, with more and more people regularly including processed foods in their diet. The result is that the number of cases of hypertension and diabetes is increasing. The chairperson of the Diabetes Association of Zambia (DAZ) describes an alarming situation that calls for quick intervention: “The prevalence of the ‘silent tsunami’ (diabetes) is high in Zambia and we are yet to compile concrete data about the statistics....In Chipata where I live, clinics see not less than 30 diabetic patients a week” (Musika, 2016, p.12).

Data from Chikuni Mission Hospital shows that hypertension was among the top ten diseases treated at the health facility and the second most common cause of hospital admissions in 2015 (Chikuni Hospital, 2015). Data from Chivuna and Mtendere hospitals show a similar upward trend (Chivuna Rural Health Centre, 2015; Chiesa di Milano, n.d). One religious sister from Chikuni noted that the increase in non-communicable diseases could also have been triggered by stress and unprocessed grief experienced by many elderly people as a result of harsh life experiences they have undergone. With many of their children who were bread-winners dead as a result of HIV, these people are under constant stress and worry about how to secure necessities for the grandchildren left in their care. Nhong’o (2004) refers to such elderly people, who are mostly women, as “Africa’s newest mothers.”

The identified challenge of low numbers of Sisters in the medical field is a matter of great concern. Mbonu (2014) also acknowledges this, and
diseases and how best to generate funds to run the health facilities. Through community participation, local policies about these issues can be drawn, in order to encourage communities to be active promoters of positive social change.

Conclusion

This study sought to explore how three religious congregations – the Religious Sisters of Charity, the Religious Sisters of the Holy Spirit and the Sisters of Charity of Milan – are employing the use of participatory leadership to enhance healthcare provision in the health facilities they are running in the Diocese of Monze. It is evident that the Sisters’ role as proprietors/managing agents of the health institutions they are running is highly appreciated because of the tangible positive results that the health facilities have exhibited. They have made strides in actively involving the local communities surrounding the health institutions they are managing in the activities organised by the health facilities. They have helped to bring about positive social change in such areas as malaria control, maternal health, and HIV/AIDS mitigation. However, there are still some areas, such as community sensitisation on non-communicable diseases and resource mobilisation, where this collaboration with the local communities can still be harnessed for the greater good of all.

Challenges are usually a springboard for heightened success. As the three religious congregations continually strive to be true witnesses of the risen Christ who has come so that all may have life (cf. John 10:10), may they be encouraged by the fact that they do not work in isolation, but that the communities they are serving and working with so selflessly appreciate the many sacrifices and efforts they are making to ensure that through collaborative efforts, quality healthcare is provided to every individual in the communities surrounding the three health facilities. The Sisters are doing a truly commendable service. Indeed, as Pope Francis noted, “These women are great!”

References

There is a growing concern over the continuous environmental changes taking place in our world today. It is clear that saving the earth calls for a common responsibility at all levels of the Church and society. This chapter aims at investigating the involvement of Catholic religious sisters and the laity in making decisions and taking actions that are in the interest of protecting the natural world, with particular emphasis on preserving the capability of the environment to support human life and making responsible decisions that will reduce the negative impact of human activity on the environment. The study was guided by the following research objectives: to explore the initiatives taken by Sisters in collaboration with laity in promoting environmental conservation in Kenya, and to establish the extent to which the Sisters and laity participate in the conservation of the environment. The study adopted a qualitative approach and case study design. Interview guides and content analysis were used to collect the data. The sample population of 10 Sisters, 10 laypeople and a priest was drawn from members of the Mother Earth Network. Purposive sampling was employed. The findings show that Sisters play a large role in environmental conservation individually and collectively. The Mother Earth Network has provided a platform for collective advocacy and information sharing on forest conservation and environmental management issues in Kenya by motivating people, institutions, and religions to participate in green programs.

**Keywords:** Environment, Mother Earth Network, Laity, Religious Women.
Introduction

Global environmental challenges, such as the impacts of climate change, loss of biodiversity, over-use of natural resources, and environment-related health issues, are certainly everyone’s responsibility; both the secular and the religious communities must work together to achieve greater results (Odira, 2013). In his encyclical *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis noted that the urgent challenge of protecting our environment includes a concern for bringing the whole human family together to seek sustainable and integral development. Caring for the environment means recovering the original value of the earth that has been lost due to human greed and insensitivity. As everyone is responsible for the current status of the earth, there is consequently a common mandate to restore the dignity of God’s creation (CSD, 466-468).

Ecological concern is a major subject of discussion all over the world (Brown, 2006). There is no way that we can have progress without addressing environmental issues. The root cause of damage and the main danger to the environment is human action; therefore, there is dire need for a substantial human solution to prevent environmental crisis. Everyone, including those with religious, political, economic, and technological vocations, among others, must put hands on deck (Berry, 2006).

Biblical Concept of the Environment

Man has specific responsibilities towards the environment in which he lives – towards the creation which God has put at the service of his personal dignity and his life – and not only for the present but also for future generations. From Genesis and the Garden of Eden, it is clear that what God made in creation is good (Genesis 1). Humans, made in God’s image, have been given the unique responsibility to act for God in this world—to value as God values, to love as God loves, to care as God cares. They were given the intimate and loving task of naming all the animals as their first act of caretaking. But because of disobedience, Adam and Eve were sent from the garden. Disorder came, and people were at odds with nature.

God then lovingly bound people and the animals into a covenant after the great flood, placing the rainbow into the sky as a promise for all and linking the animals and people again (Gn 9: 8-17). As the people survived and multiplied, they endured slavery and longed for their own lands. So God, through Moses, led them through the desert into the land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey (Ex 3:17).

But God reminded them that they do not own the land; they are merely God’s tenants (Lv 25; Mt 21:33-43). If they did not respect the earth, which was given in common to be shared, and if they did not respect his command for the Sabbath to give the land and the animals and themselves periodic rest, the people would be doomed to massive destruction (Lev 26; Heb 4:4-11).

Later, in the Christian testaments, Christ comes to renew and redeem Creation, to show people once more how to value as God values and how to live in ways that would bring back the harmony lost in the Garden of Eden. Christ gives his followers examples of prayer, praying in places of solitude, with nature: in the garden, by the seashore, in the wilderness, in the desert. And he reminds his followers of his Father’s great care for all of creation, especially for other people (Mt 6:26-29). St Paul reminds his readers that Christ is in all creation (Col 1:15-23) and that the nearness of the end times is all the more reason to be vigilant in carrying out one’s duties before Christ (Heb 13:11-12). Chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians extols the strength of diversity and interdependence, while Revelation reminds followers, “Hurt not the earth, neither the seas, nor the trees,” (Rv 7:3), and that those who destroy the earth, God will destroy (Rv 11:18).

Role of the Human Person in the Ecosystem

The human being is the most intelligent creature. This also means he is supposed to be the most responsible being for the environment and all of creation, especially through the keeping of balance in the ecosystem (CSDC, 456). Human beings must respect the laws of nature and maintain the delicate equilibrium existing between the world’s creatures in their biodiversity (Pope Francis, 2015).

According to the social teaching of the church, care for the environment represents a challenge for all of humanity. The respect for this common good and patrimony of mankind which is destined for all humanity is a universal responsibility that must mature on the basis of the global dimension of
the present ecological crisis and the consequent necessity to meet it on a worldwide level, since all beings are interdependent in the universal order established by the creator. Saint John Paul the Great asserted that “One must take into account the nature of being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system, which is precisely the cosmos” (CSDC, 466).

The late Wangari Maathai was a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and one of the greatest environmental activists of our time. In her Nobel Lecture, she said:

“We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and, in the process, heal our own – indeed, to embrace the whole creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder. This will happen if we see the need to revive our sense of belonging to a larger family of life, with which we have shared our evolutionary process. In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground....That time is now.” (Oslo, December 10, 2004)

Maathai believed in empowering people on issues affecting the environment by informing them and helping them understand that environmental resources are theirs, as is the responsibility for protecting those resources.

Maathai also believed that the generation that destroys the environment is not the generation that pays the price. For example, we emit carbon dioxide today, but the sea level will continue to rise slowly over decades or centuries. Emissions in wealthier countries like the United States affect people in poorer countries with a lesser capability for adaptation and who are likely to suffer the severest consequences first. Regardless of religion, people for the most part think about what kind of world they wish to leave for their children and grandchildren.

In Africa, women are the primary caretakers of Mother Earth, holding significant responsibility for tilling the land and feeding their families. As a result, they are often the first to become aware of environmental damage as resources become scarce and insufficient for sustaining their families.

**Catholic Perspective on the Environment**

Catholics have been united by one faith and by the moral imperative of responding to and raising awareness about climate change. There has been active encouragement and renewal of our relationship with God’s creation for current and future generations. Pope St John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis all accepted the reality of human-caused climate change and recognised it as a moral issue.

According to *Evangelium vitae No. 42*, the dominion granted to man by the Creator is not an absolute power, nor can one speak of a freedom to use, misuse, or dispose of things as one pleases. We are subject not only to biological laws but also to moral laws, which cannot be violated with impunity.

Concerning the environment and the sharing of goods, the social doctrine of the church instructs that the goods of the earth created by God should be used wisely by all. They must be shared equitably, in accordance with justice and charity (CSDS 481). This is basically a way of preventing the unjust hoarding of resources as a result of individual or collective greediness.

The Catholic Church has a strong tradition of attending to matters of importance to the world. In recent decades, ecological concerns have been growing. According to Laurel Kearns, Associate Professor of Sociology and Religion and Environmental Studies at Drew University, the Catholic Church has long looked at environmental issues through a moral lens. She noted that orders like the Franciscans have worked on environmental issues for decades, and that both Pope Benedict XVI and St John Paul II set precedents for Francis’ encyclical by speaking publicly about climate change. The encyclicals of both Popes were responses to environmental concerns. *Laudato Si’* (Praise Be!) is simply the latest encyclical in this tradition, in which Pope Francis urges the whole world to embrace an inclusive dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet.

While celebrating World Peace Day in 1990, Pope John Paul II warned that the continuous destruction of the environment was reaching crisis proportions as a consequence of industrial growth, massive urban concentrations, and vastly increased energy needs. Industrial waste, the burning of fossil fuels, and unrestricted deforestation, the use of certain types of herbicides, coolants and propellants: all of these are known to harm the atmosphere and environment. The resulting meteorological and atmospheric changes range from damage to health to the possible future submersion of low-lying lands. He noted that every effort to protect and improve our world entails deep changes in lifestyles.
In his own 2010 World Peace Day message, Pope Benedict XVI identified the urgent need for a greater sense of intergenerational solidarity to save our planet. Future generations cannot be saddled with the cost of our use of common environmental resources. Quoting in part from the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (CSDC), Pope Benedict explained:

“We have inherited from past generations, and we have benefited from the work of our contemporaries; for this reason we have obligations towards all, and we cannot refuse to interest ourselves in those who will come after us, to enlarge the human family’. Natural resources should be used in such a way that immediate benefits do not have a negative impact on living creatures, human and not, present and future; that the protection of private property does not conflict with the universal destination of goods; that human activity does not compromise the fruitfulness of the earth, for the benefit of people now and in the future.” (Pope Benedict XVI, 2012)

In his latest encyclical on “Our common home”, Pope Francis urged those who have positions of responsibility in the economic, political, and social spheres of life, as well as all people of goodwill, to be protectors of creation, protectors of God’s plan inscribed in nature, and protectors of one another and of the environment. The title of Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical, Laudato Si’, is taken from Saint Francis of Assisi’s Canticle of the Sun, which celebrates Mother Earth. This title is very apt, for in his encyclical Pope Francis challenges all of us to consider in a radical way how our future on this planet will be determined by how we treat all of nature, including our fellow human beings (Laudato Si, 2015; CISA, 2015).

While in some cases the damage already done may well be irreversible, in many other cases it can still be halted. The Church still holds, however, that the entire human community – individuals, states, and international bodies – must take seriously their environmental responsibility.

Franciscan Family

The spirituality of St Francis of Assisi offers a strong motivation to Franciscans to become thoroughly involved in efforts to deal with the current environmental crisis. It highlights a special concern and responsibility for our Mother Earth and for all of Creation, arising from a desire to follow in the footsteps of Francis. He was named patron saint of ecology by John Paul II in 1979 for a reason. He may not have confronted the same questions that we do, as the environment in his time did not face the same global threats it does today. However, his approach to the world and his relationship to nature are prophetic in pointing us in the right direction. His Canticle of the Sun ultimately reminds us of the moral imperative to address the crisis that threatens our planet and all its inhabitants. Unlike the common spirituality of his time, Francis did not separate the spiritual world from the material world, and he certainly did not look down upon the material world as godless. He rather viewed the earth and everything in nature as God’s creation, as a place of incarnation. Francis viewed all created things, living or inanimate, with great respect and sought to be subject to them.

Among the advocacy initiatives on the environment is Mother Earth Network in Kenya. It is a Franciscan movement comprising Catholic religious and laity in partnership with other faiths who aspire to take positive action to implement the recommendations of Pope Francis. The initiative aims at making the world a greener place for the well-being and sustainability of all people. Their main mission is to provide an international platform for collective advocacy and information sharing on forest conservation and environmental management issues by motivating people, institutions, and religions to participate in green programs (m-e-net.org).

Religious women in Africa are already working on missions that reflect the United Nations’ 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were adopted in 2015 to eliminate poverty and hunger and promote good health, gender equality, clean water, and affordable and clean energy, as well as to take urgent action to combat climate change, by 2030 (United Nations, n.d.).

Catholic Sisters are in a unique position to offer thoughtful solutions to the environmental and natural resource problems and issues we face in the world today. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, they are among the growing group of people from a variety of professional and personal backgrounds who recognise that effective, long-term solutions to natural resource and environmental problems and issues require an appropriate moral basis for action.

In October 2016, a group of religious women met in Nairobi to discuss ways in which their congregations in Africa could work to
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Caring for creation. Thus, environmental conservation is very much rooted in the consciences and attitudes of people. Many things have to change course, but human beings must change first; they must develop new convictions, new attitudes, and new lifestyles.

Methodology

This study employed the qualitative method, a research strategy that uses words rather than quantitative collection of data. A case study design was used to give a detailed description of Mother Earth Network. According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), the case study is a way of organising data and looking at the object to be studied as a whole. The researcher used both primary and secondary sources.

Sampling Methods

The sample was selected using non-probability sampling. Tromp (2006) argued that this method is mainly applied to find out how a small group or a representative group is doing for purposes of illustration or explanation. Purposive sampling was used to select one priest to participate in the study. Since most members are not found in the same place, snowball sampling was used to select 10 Sisters and 10 lay people who are members of Mother Earth Network. According to Kilagu and Marimba (2004), snowball sampling is also known as referral sampling. These members were selected with the understanding that they would represent the Network.

Data Collection Methods

An interview guide was used to obtain information on the initiatives of the Mother Earth Network and the successes and challenges of the Sisters and laity. Interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth information from the respondents. The information provided by respondents was tape recorded. Additional data were obtained through document analysis and the Internet.
Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study guided by the objectives. It also presents the origin of Mother Earth Network as well as its initiatives, attitude change, motivation, achievements, challenges, and opportunities. According to Patton (2002), data analysis involves the organisation of data into meaningful categories. Analysis of responses is supported with direct quotations, and a summary of the main findings is provided.

Socio-Demographic Information

Demographic information collected from the participants included the name of the congregation of sisters with which each participant was affiliated as well as gender, age, and number of years as a member of the Mother Earth Network. A total of ten Sisters participated in the study, including members of three congregations: Little Sisters of St Francis, Little Sisters of St Joseph, and Loreto Sisters. Of the participants, 35% were male and 65% were female. Among the laity, 70% were male and 30% were female. Among the female participants, 50% were religious sisters. All participants (100%) had been members of the Mother Earth Network for a period of between 1-5 years.

Mother Earth Network

Background. Mother Earth Network is a registered trust network of Franciscan Religious Sisters and laity from Kenya and beyond who share a deep concern for the well-being of Earth and seek to support each other in the common effort to attain spiritual and ecological healing on a global scale. Although primarily composed of Roman Catholic religious men, women, and laity, the organisation welcomes men and women of all faiths, including Islam, Hinduism, and other Christian denominations, whose life and work would identify them as Mother Earth members. The network is also composed of students from universities such as Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenyatta University, and Nairobi University, as well as other lay people from Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) and the Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya (AOSK).

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For a period of three years, JPIC and AOSK met regularly to plan an annual tree-planting project for World Environment Day (June 5). They aimed to make the world a greener place for the well-being and sustainability of all people. The idea of forming a network that would allow them to do more environmental conservation other than planting trees was introduced. In 2012, they conducted an evaluation and agreed to form Mother Earth Network (M-e-net) with the aim of bringing together laity and religious sisters who embrace the Franciscan spirituality. Fr Hermann Borg volunteered to host M-e-net in Portiuncula, in Karen, Nairobi. Mother Earth Network was then registered as a trust and on April 8, 2015, they received the certificate of incorporation. M-e-net is now managed by a board of trustees and supported by the patron, chairperson, technical advisory committee, program coordinator, liaison officer, and working groups. One of the co-founders of Mother Earth clarified:

“We started planting trees in Karura forest and over the years the Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya have been promoting a cleaner, greener environment. It was always in the mind to begin the network so we agreed to form a network so that we continue taking care of mother earth.”

Partnerships of Mother Earth Network. Mother Earth Network started a partnership with the government through Kenya Forest Services to provide seedlings for planting. With a membership of over 20 members, the Network has established partnerships and collaborations with other stakeholders, with some relationships growing closer to achieve mutual goals. Some of the partners include:

- Association of Sisterhoods in Kenya (AOSK)
- Catholic parishes and schools
- Franciscan Family Association (FFA) Kenya
- Kenyatta University Environmental Club (KUNEC)
- Total Eco Challenge
- Kenya Interfaith Network on Environmental Action (KINEA)
- Sustainable National Environment Program (SUNEP)
- Green World Resource Foundation
- Adams Mirror International
- Young Christian Students
• Ruaraka Business Community (RUBICOM)
• Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA)
• Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Africa

Mother Earth continues to seek partnerships in the areas of advocacy, environmental education, research, policy analysis, and protection of water catchment areas, among others. It continues to build partnerships and collaborations with like-minded organisations in Kenya and beyond.

Relevance of *Laudato Si’* to Mother Earth Network. According to Mother Earth Network, *Laudato Si’* is an important tool for motivating Catholics, as well as those of other religious faiths. Pope Francis frames the need to mitigate climate change in theological terms that follow his religious tradition and will reach more than one billion adherents around the world. *Laudato Si’* has made a strong appeal to all people of good will, inviting them to have a dialogue which includes everyone, a fact that Mother Earth Network has embraced. Environmental concerns affect all of us, and therefore everyone’s opinions and talents are needed to address the damage to nature caused by human beings. Pope Francis, who identified himself with the Patron of Nature, St Francis of Assisi, applauds the global environmental movement which has made considerable progress in raising awareness about environmental challenges in the world. Mother Earth Network has taken this call seriously and aims at concretising the invitation through its objectives.

Mother Earth Network initiatives. Mother Earth Network strives to conduct four key activities: tree planting for conservation, capacity-building workshops, advocacy and information dissemination, and awareness creation. Other activities include waste management, water and energy conservation, climate change adaptation projects, wetlands conservation, ecosystems conservation, environmental restoration, and environmental education, among others.

Sr Mary Frances, LSSJ, a religious member of Mother Earth Network, has taken awareness creation to a different level. Through her position as Director of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, Franciscans Africa, she has united the efforts of other faith and environmental groups to create interfaith forums for youth on the environment and peace. She asserts:

“The purpose of these events is to bring together the young people of different faiths on the issues of the environment and peace. We are utilising the environment as a focal point to help us access young people. We cannot just bring them together and expect something to happen. When you give them a common goal, they can work together”. (*Remarks, Interfaith Youth Forum, September 30, 2016, CUEA Nairobi*)

Figure 1. Interfaith Youth Forum held at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Langata Campus, from September 30 to October 1, 2016. Source: photographs taken by author.

According to one of the respondents, tree planting is the activity carried out most frequently. It has taken place at various events, workshops, parishes, estates, and schools, such as Umoja Primary, Huruma Primary, and Mji wa Furaha Youth Center, among others. The major event was started in Kasarani Hero Park to plant trees in 2015. The project targeted the Kasarani region because of its high susceptibility level to environmental pollutants. Parishes willing to mobilise youth have been brought on board. Among the parishes are Umoja and Kamulu, where more than 800 seedlings have been planted.

Having succeeded in tree planting, the idea of having annual celebrations was introduced, and the first was held at Jamhuri High School in 2013. Various religious sisters, laity, and faith groups attended the celebration, which created awareness through the motto “Interfaith National Environmental Day”, to share ideas on environment.

An interview with Fr Hermann Borg, a Franciscan of the Catholic Order of Friars Minor and founder of the Network, clearly shows his care for the environment, which has compelled him to plant over 1 million trees in an area of about 1,000 km² in Kenya. The Lower Subukia tree planting initiative in Nakuru County has been a great model of how tree planting can bring transformation and environmental change and so revive the provision of environmental services. Fr Borg’s vision about the rehabilitation of God’s Creation is often shared in talks whenever he is given time to speak to
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environment. All respondents (100%) believe that change begins with the individual. When respondents were asked to express their motivation, one Sister commented on personal motivation towards nature that has moved her to participate fully in environmental conservation in the Mother Earth Network and at an individual level. She explained:

“I love planting trees and I have planted many trees and fruits on different occasions. Through Mother Earth Network, my attitude has changed completely in favour for the environment. Late Wangari Mathaai’s passion for nature has been my motivation”.

This respondent claimed that the world is already suffering from climate change, a situation that all must face and address. All of us must treat nature well so that our next generation will not be mistreated by nature. Being a Franciscan member, she is moved by Seraphic Father Francis of Assisi, who addressed everything in nature with concern and respect. The respondent concludes, “If we all take care of every creature and plant well then we live together in harmony and respect.”

Most members feel that they are obliged to conserve the environment. An interview with Mr Eric Ogallo, a lay member of the Network, demonstrated his personal conviction as a steward of the environment. He has great passion for a clean and safe environment for himself and the entire world. He wishes to apply knowledge acquired from his studies at Kenyatta University to solve problems related to the environment, and believes that Mother Earth Network has given him a unique platform on which to work with religious sisters and members of other faiths to address the challenges of climate change. His desire is to see more movements form in stewardship of God’s creation.

Successes of Mother Earth Network. The Mother Earth Network has contributed much in conserving the environment. One respondent remarked:

“Kenya is becoming a green country through the efforts of Mother Earth initiatives and other actors. More than any other time, Kenyans have taken seriously the work of the environment. We have succeeded to create awareness on the importance of tree planting especially the indigenous trees.”

Great things have been achieved by the Network. Through the leadership of Fr Hermann Borg, it has been recognised and awarded a silver trophy by Total Eco-Challenge in 2012 for its contributions to the environment. Mother Earth Network was also awarded the first-ever conservation enthusiasts – especially during the annual Interfaith National Environment Day celebrations, among other environmental forums. In conjunction with Franciscan Religious, schools, and other partners, he has organised major tree planting activities in Nairobi and beyond. The Network, together with other people who love the environment as individuals and as organisations, counts over one thousand members. Fr Borg was honoured on World Environmental Day in 2011 for his conservation initiatives and for showcasing the true meaning of stewardship of God’s creation through tree planting and taking care of Mother Earth for future generations. The Network has gained recognition and engaged in partnerships with various organisations ranging from government agencies to the private sector and of course other environmental organisations.

Solutions to environmental problems are possible for humans if they are committed. As God’s people, religious men and women and governments alike have responsibilities to our Mother Earth. More people should be willing to join a Mother Earth Network, to raise awareness in neighbourhoods and the community at large about environment sustainability. More workshops and forums with local people and youths should be organised more often to create awareness about issues such as air pollution, and the ways in which it can be controlled by replacing household energy sources like coal and firewood with others such as electricity or solar energy. Negotiations can be made with factory owners and vehicle owners to use dust and smoke purification systems even as they are also encouraged to use solar energy-based industries and vehicles. A young lay member of the Mother Earth Network stated:

“We can organise environment sensitisation and a forestation program in barren lands in Kenya. We youths can appeal to the government to bring eco-friendly development policies and proper planning of cities. We can organise orientation programs about the climate change, its causes, and effects and mitigation measures in our parishes, schools and colleges to induce other youths towards conservation of nature”.

Membership of Mother Earth. The Mother Earth Network has been using tiered membership levels – individual, corporate, and associate – to recruit more members to join the network. The network still has few members who are active, and a majority of the religious sisters who are members belong to Franciscan family. Most members joining the Mother Earth Network have been motivated by personal conviction to care for the environment. All respondents (100%) believe that change begins with the individual.
Environmental Stewardship Award by United Religions Initiative for its outstanding efforts in caring for creation through tree planting and involving other faiths.

The Network has designated October 4 as a day of prayer for the environment and to celebrate together. It has succeeded in partnering with more parishes for planting trees and to create awareness on issues related to the environment. The Network has seen a survival rate of more than 80% for the trees it has planted. Membership has increased, especially among religious sisters, with many realising their duty and responsibility to care for nature.

**Future of Mother Earth Network.** Going forward, the Network will focus on the following initiatives, among others:

- Publishing books, articles and journals on caring for Creation.
- Encouraging more religious congregations to become a part of the Movement in Kenya and beyond.
- Exploring other ways of conserving the environment, such as ‘healthy farming’ in small kitchen gardens in homes and especially in convents, and the recycling and proper disposal of (solid) wastes.
- Strengthening partnerships with non-Catholic Christians and other faiths including Islam and Hinduism.
- Leveraging other opportunities arising from the unique calling of Franciscans to work with all faiths.
- Creating awareness in all parts of Kenya and beyond on the importance of planting the right tree for the right place.

**Challenges facing Mother Earth Network.** The researcher sought to identify challenges that the Mother Earth Network has been experiencing. The researcher provided open-ended questions and interview guides. The following challenges emerged clearly:

1. Lack of adequate resources, both human and material, are among the challenges facing the Mother Earth Network in their progress towards sustainability. All respondents (100%) agree that the network often lacks adequate finances to implement its programs as well as provide necessary resources for environmental programs. One respondent noted:

   “We get invitations to plant trees in many places including institutions of higher learning but there are insufficient funds, making us slow down the tree planting exercise.”

2. People want exotic trees to make money but not indigenous trees, which they claim take too long to grow.

3. Inadequate support from the government at both the national and county level to support private environmental initiatives.

4. Membership recruitment has not been easy; most people favour compensated work over volunteering, and many have the perception that Catholic institutions have money.

5. A general negative attitude towards nature among many people, which can be due to a particular cultural background or ignorance.

6. Members are sometimes engaged in other activities whose agendas do not permit them to attend regular Network planning meetings.

7. Many parts of Kenya are dry, and as the effects of climate change become more pronounced, many of the trees planted do not survive.

8. There is a high demand for knowledge on care for creation that cannot be fully met by the Network.

According to Fr Hermann Borg, the main source of pollution that makes regions in Nairobi more polluted than others places is heavy traffic. There are a lot of gases released from machines and vehicles along the Nairobi-Thika superhighway (M-e-net website). The Kasarani region is an industrial zone, and so there is heavy emission of carbon dioxide gas. This is hazardous to human health and may cause respiratory illnesses. Fr Hermann Borg believes that the forest is necessary for the reduction of pollution and freshening of air. He hopes that every stakeholder will be committed to the project for the sake of the future improvement of air quality and development not only in Kasarani but the whole world.

**Recommendations**

This study dealt with aspects of environmental promotion. More studies can be carried out on other aspects of sustainability, such as economic and social aspects. More Sisters should be willing to be a part of...
the sustainability process by initiating more environmental conservation programs. This could be an opportunity for Sisters to participate in achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

The training of Sisters in environmental disciplines should be considered to enable them to face environmental conservation challenges with greater courage and understanding. Each Congregation should identify its particular needs and integrate sustainable development goal concepts into formation syllabuses.

The study also recommends more involvement of religious sisters in decision-making processes in the areas of environment conservation and sustainability. As agents of God’s creation, Sisters work with different groups at the school, parish, and diocesan levels and are therefore closer to people for the creation of awareness on environmental promotion.

Mother Earth Network should also promote collaboration with the laity and people of other faiths. A good working relationship between the Sisters and laity of different faiths is important for the success of the Sisters’ work and the provision of a holistic education on environmental sustainability.

According to Sr Agnes, Secretary General of the Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya, Sisters are able to advocate for the promotion of environmental conservation through various avenues including catechesis, homilies, and school syllabuses at every level, which should be environment-oriented (AOSK, 2015). All available resources must be used to develop and impart a culture that is conservation-literate. This will reduce environmental abuse, and hopefully St Paul’s dream will be fulfilled, as creation will cease to groan at the revelation of the children of God (Rom 9:18).

Fr Hermann, the Director of Mother Earth Network, notes in summary that tree planting and afforestation are the easiest interventions for better ecosystem protection and the management of natural resources for the health and welfare of humanity. All of us have God in us, and that God is the spirit that unites all life and everything that is on this planet.

“Our children and children’s children want to live in a world in which it is worth to live in, to adapt to values and virtues and to embrace life to the full and this is what the campaign aims to achieve by creating a sustainable future for the generations,” said Fr Borg.

Conclusion

This chapter is a reflection on the Top of Form

- Bottom of Form
- Top of Form

Mother Earth Network, which, through its collaboration and partnerships, has motivated many religious sisters, Catholic laity and members of other faiths in Kenya to care for their environment. Its agenda of caring for creation has been admired by many who have embraced good stewardship for God’s Creation. Members are driven by the need to mitigate the diverse effects of climate change, and they strongly believe that planting trees can provide a long-lasting solution to the climate change phenomenon and a better future for upcoming generations. From this study, it is clear that now more than ever, Catholic Sisters’ environmental initiatives are needed, not only to renew the world through activism, but for its very survival. They need a groundswell of new directions, new energies, and new ways to show meaningful, inspiring servant leadership in the world.

It is the duty of Christians and of all who look to God as the Creator to protect the environment by restoring a sense of reverence for the whole of God’s creation. It is the Creator’s will that man should treat nature not as a ruthless exploiter but as an intelligent and responsible administrator. All have a moral duty to care for the environment, not only for their own good but also for the good of future generations.

A solution to ecological challenges demands more than just economic and technological proposals. It requires an inner change of heart that leads to the rejection of unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. It demands an ethical behaviour that respects the principles of universal solidarity, social justice, and responsibility.

Thus, for the sustainability of our planet, all people must fulfill their responsibilities towards Mother Nature as global citizens, so as to protect our living planet from deterioration and hand over a clean and green planet to future generations. Our single efforts may seem small, but if thousands of people can unite together in the conservation of nature, then one day our efforts will be a drastic step to protect our motherland, Earth, from more destruction.
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References


WORKING FOR ONE CHRIST: THE IMPORTANCE OF AND NEED FOR COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY AMONG WOMEN RELIGIOUS IN GHANA – THE CASE OF THE SISTERS OF ST LOUIS

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Abstract

Collaboration is partnership in ministry; it unites people to work towards achieving a common goal. In a broader sense, effective collaboration leads to social change and transformation. It is therefore not surprising that there appears to be so strong a call to collaboration now as the Church seeks new ways to evangelise. Women religious in Africa have always been evangelisers and collaborators as they unite with diverse groups of people to accomplish the mission entrusted to them by the one Christ. This study explores the collaborative efforts of women religious in Ghana and the effects of such collaboration on their ministries using the case of the Sisters of St Louis (SSL). St Louis Jubilee School, where a good number of SSLs work, is singled out for this study. The study benefits from a mixed method approach with primary data as a major source. To achieve its aim, the study focuses on Hogue’s (1993) five levels of collaboration: conversation, cooperation, coordination, communication, and collaboration. These are essential ingredients to effective collaboration, and evidence from primary data suggests high levels of satisfaction in all five levels. These have helped St Louis Jubilee School to create a conducive learning atmosphere for students and have helped to improve performance over the years.


Keywords: Religious life, Education, Catholic Education Unit (CEU), Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), Ghana Education Service (GES).

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Introduction

Collaboration is partnership in ministry. It is communion in the sense that it unites people to work towards achieving a common goal. Therefore, communion is said to be at the center of collaboration, as people get to know one another more fully (Donio & McCrabb, 2014). In the wake of the call to new evangelisation, collaboration has become an important subject in the Church more than ever. The Second Vatican Council, the synod on new evangelisation held in Rome in 2012, and Pope Francis in Evangelii Gaudium all encourage inter-congregational collaboration, as it leads to effective evangelisation.

Women religious in Africa are evangelisers; they understand that missionary effort and action cannot be an individual project (Luke 9: 1-6). Therefore, the call to collaboration for effective ministry is not new to them or to religious in Africa. In fact, women religious in Africa currently serve as agents of change and beacons of hope for the socio-economic development of the communities they serve. One way of strengthening and enhancing their ministries is through collaborative efforts among them as different congregations, and among them and other institutions and stakeholders, all in their bid to work for the one Christ who calls them to love and serve humanity.

Background to the Study

By their nature and character, women religious are collaborators in all spheres of life. They partner with dioceses, institutions, governments, and others stakeholders wherever they find themselves on the globe. They are also skilled at inter-congregational partnerships, a classic example of which is the collaborative effort of Major Superiors in the US and their colleagues in Africa that has given birth to the SLDI and ASEC programs in 10 countries in Africa since 2007. The efforts and contributions of women religious toward evangelisation and the transformative partnership in society cannot be overlooked.

Available statistics in Consecrated Life in the Church Today (2014-2016) indicate that there are 68 religious congregations working in Ghana, of which 36 are women religious groups. Yet, the efforts of women religious go unnoticed or are relegated to the background. Some even question the role of women religious in the Church. Unlike their counterparts in the global south, women religious in the global north take the lead in telling their own stories and documenting them (Wakahiu, 2015). Therefore, there seems to be greater awareness and understanding of their role and collaborative efforts towards social transformation than those of their counterparts in the global south. Literature on the role and contributions of women religious in Africa will help minimise these doubts and assumptions or put them to rest. Unfortunately, however, such literature is almost nonexistent.

This study explores the collaborative efforts among women religious in Ghana and the effects of such collaboration on their ministries, focusing on the Sisters of St Louis (SSL) as a case study. The analytical problem for the study revolves around the many ways religious women can facilitate collaboration in their ministries for effective evangelisation and transformation. Collaboration, not only across congregations but also with other stakeholders, is the hallmark of religious life. Collaboration is rooted not only in necessity but also in a growing sense of solidarity for authentic witnessing to the one Christ who sends all members of religious groups on mission. The study works under the assumption that the Church’s mission of evangelisation is first and foremost a collaborative effort. Women religious in Africa are at the helm of affairs to a greater degree than is recognised; the Church in Africa cannot survive without awareness of the value of women in ministry (Wakahiu, 2015), and women religious in Ghana are no exception. The following questions serve as the crux of this study:

a) What are the levels of collaboration between SSL and other stakeholders in the area of common service delivery?
b) What is the purpose of collaboration between SSL and other stakeholders?

c) How is collaboration with SSL and different stakeholders contributing to service delivery?

d) What are the impediments to the collaborative efforts between SSL and other stakeholders?

Concept and Purpose of Collaboration

Collaboration is generally considered to be a complex phenomenon, and many partially or fully overlapping concepts have been proposed (Jenni & Mauriel, 2004). Some scholars assert that collaboration is the process of creating, exploring, sharing and integrating knowledge; it requires the management of material and knowledge boundaries in order to develop common goals, processes, and products (Pikas et al., 2016). Lai (2011) cites Dillenbourg, Baker, Blaye and O’Malley (1996), who define collaboration as a “Mutual engagement of participants in coordinated effort to solve a problem together” (p. 2). According to Lai, shared goals, symmetry of structure, and a high level of negotiation and independence are what characterise collaborative interactions. Other scholars consider collaboration to be the cooperative way that two or more entities work together towards a shared goal, for example, in such professions as education and health (Moriarty, 2000; Smith, Frey & Tollefson, 2003).

In an interview, a key informant noted that “Collaboration means two or more people coming together to share ideas and to achieve a goal…. And collaboration can be in different sectors; for instance, if I collaborate with an organisation like St Louis Jubilee School, then it means I am looking at how best I can link up with the management of this institution to solve particular problems that will benefit the school, myself and other people in the community” (Key Informant E). Another articulated that “In all spheres of life, one person or one group of people cannot do everything. You need to get other people to help you achieve your vision or mission since one person or group cannot have the embodiment of all the skills and talents needed. So, for me, collaboration is when different people come together to help them achieve mission or a goal; so I think collaboration is very important” (Key Informant B). It is interesting to observe that these interviewees and scholars mentioned above seem to underline some significant aspects of collaboration: it involves more than one person or any one group, it calls for a shared goal or shared mission, and it is about mutually solving problems.

With regards to education, several scholars, including Ash (1989), DelPizzo (1990), Kysiak (1986), and Rockefeller (1986), have explored and affirmed the specific nature of successful relationships within school partnerships. They assert that successful collaborations have a common purpose and strong resilience, and utilise a “Whole-systems approach” to effect change. Notably, these scholars’ observations regarding the whole-systems approach reinforce Lai’s emphasis on symmetry of structure as another important element in the collaborative process. However, Lai further highlights negotiation as a key element which some appear to overlook. And rightly so, in the sense that it takes negotiation to gain the cooperation of others and arrive at consensus; only then can collaboration be successful and result in transformation. Religious women’s collaborations are strategic by nature. In other words, they collaborate because they want to achieve specific goals or outcomes. To achieve the goals that lead religious groups to form collaborative partnerships, some kind of administrative structure must exist that moves from governance to action (Thomson & Perry, 2006). But, as one can observe, effective collaboration that ensures transformation entails more than structure. Hence, all the significant elements that Lai and others propose apply to the collaborative efforts of religious women who are involved in all kinds of ministries. The School Program Evaluation and Research Team developed the Levels of Collaboration scale to measure progress over the five levels of collaboration based on the work of authorities in the field such as Hogue (1993) and Borden and Perkins (1998, 1999). The five levels of collaboration form the theoretical grounding of this study and are discussed under conceptual framework.

Need for collaboration, its importance, and its effects on service delivery. According to Matthias (2016), the need today is for intercongregational collaboration. He emphasises that:

The mission of God is larger than what each individual or each congregation can do… we can save a lot of money, personnel, and harness both our material and human resources if only we can move towards inter-congregational collaboration both in formation and in many of our ministries. (p. 3)
One important outcome of inter-organisational collaboration lies in its potential to build organisational capacities through the transfer or pooling of resources (Ada, 2013; Hardy, Phillips & Lawrence, 2003). Ada (2013) explains that the effects or outcomes of collaboration in organisations can be examined in three broad areas: strategic, knowledge creation, and political outcomes. Strategic outcomes are those resulting from inter-organisational collaborative arrangements that help organisations to improve their strategic performance by making them more competitive or helping them achieve better positioning in their fields (Galaskiewicz & Zaheer, 1999; Hardy, Phillips & Lawrence, 2003). The strategic view of inter-organisational collaboration stresses the role of collaboration as a catalyst or a vehicle for the transfer of existing knowledge from one organisation to another (Pikas et al., 2016).

Furthermore, Hardy et al. (2003) argue that knowledge creation outcomes of inter-organisational collaboration refer to new knowledge that grows out of the sort of ongoing social interaction which occurs in ongoing collaborations, while inter-organisational collaboration can also have political effects or outcomes. In fact, women religious in Ghana are not oblivious of these benefits. They sometimes make considerable efforts to pull resources together for the mission of the one Christ who has called them to be agents of change. The Institute of Continuous Formation (ICF) in Cape Coast, for instance, is the collaborative effort of the Conference of Major Superiors in Ghana. The institute currently runs diverse national and international programs for priests and religious and appears to be yielding fruitful results. The beauty of this is that the administrative staff has always comprised members of different congregations, both male and female. In spite of this, more efforts are needed to improve collaboration at the inter-congregational level.

The importance of and the need for partnering with others has been presented in literature (Brown, n.d.; Thomson, Perry, & Miller, 2007; Ertesvåg, 2011; Pikas, Koskela, Treldal, Ballard & Liias, 2016). Historically, this need has emerged from the distinct functional disciplines, each operating within their own objective world with different paradigms, languages and activity systems, sharing knowledge and skills together (Pikas, Koskela, Dave & Liias, 2015; Bucciarelli, 2003). The reality is that it is not always the case where a single member or group has all the knowledge, skills, and resources needed for the achievement of a particular purpose, as some interviewees have rightly noted. Bucciarelli (2003) and Brown (n.d.) echo the fact that by working together, schools, families, and communities can prepare for a more promising future. They explain further that collaboration has academic benefits such as better comprehension, improved performance, and acquired generic skills. It enhances communication, problem-solving, and social skills.

Pikas et al. (2016) reinforce the importance of collaboration, especially in education. They maintain that educators in a variety of educational settings – from kindergarten to the university classroom – have long used collaborative approaches to teaching and assessing students. It is noted that more recently, educators and policy makers have identified the ability to collaborate as an important outcome in its own right rather than merely a means to an end. For example, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills has identified collaboration as one of several learning and innovative skills necessary for workforce success (Pikas et al., 2016). Similarly, Chapman et al. (2009a) and Stoll (2015) examine the meaningful positive impact of collaboration among schools and other institutions or stakeholders. Among other things, they emphasise quality of professional development and opportunities, mutual learning between the different stakeholders or organisations, and a highly conducive learning atmosphere for students. This suggests that educational institutions that take collaboration seriously are more likely to have improved performance than those who do not. It is clear that women religious must intensify their collaborative efforts, as they are engaged in multiple ministries of social transformation, especially education at all levels.

What are the necessary conditions for effective collaboration?

The effectiveness of collaborative effort is what yields positive impacts. Literature abounds with regards to conditions that promote effective collaboration. Key factors among them are leadership, structures, processes, relationships, communication, and context (Chapman et al., 2009b). Chapman and his colleagues maintain that collaboration, be it formal or informal, needs open, outward and forward-looking leadership that will steer affairs. Strong and well-established structure is imperative to the effectiveness of the collaborative process as much as the context. Communication and critical friendship are equally key characteristics that build trust among the collaborators for effectiveness.

Real et al. (2015) identify strong and committed leadership across all partners and leadership capable of building the capacity of others as
Additionally, Chapman et al. (2009a) report that tension arising from perceived power imbalances between collaborating parties can weaken and create conflicts among stakeholders. The same thing can happen when there is a lack of clear objectives or common understanding of the purpose and nature of the collaborative effort from the very beginning (Woods, Armstrong & Pearson, 2013). It is for these reasons that Keddie (2015) underscores, “The difficulties of creating socially responsive and responsible collaboratives in the current ‘heterarchical’ and market-oriented policy environment” (p. 29) as a major challenge. Townsend (2013) shares in this sentiment, but adds the challenge of sustaining relationships and systems that will endure. It is worth knowing the collaborative efforts of women religious in Ghana and how they are sustained or otherwise, as manifested in the case of the Sisters of St Louis, Ghana.

The Case of the Sisters of St Louis (SSL), Ghana The choice of the Sisters of St Louis as a case study for collaborative work among women religious in Ghana is apt. Having marked the 70th anniversary of their presence in Ghana in October 2017, there is no doubt that SSLs have a vast living and working experience in the country. Furthermore, the SSL charism, *Ut Sint Unum*, and vision for a world healed, unified and transformed through the saving wisdom of Christianity are geared towards transformative partnership, and this study will explore how these influence their ministries. And because SSL as an international religious institute has a culture of living and working with people of different cultures both home and abroad, their collaboration with others goes beyond the boundaries of their native country Ghana. Though there are only Ghanaian SSLs living and working in the country currently, some of the Ghanaian sisters are on mission to other countries. This study focuses on St Louis Jubilee School in Kumasi, a private co-educational institution. Statistically, this school hosts the largest number of Sisters: four on the staff and three in administration. Since its establishment, it has been a common characteristic of the school to obtain 100% in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and the best results were recorded last year (2015), according to the headmistress. It is hoped that the ideals, mission, and vision of the SSLs reflect what they do and that their collaborative efforts help to achieve effectiveness and success.

Challenges associated with collaboration. Building and maintaining collaboration can be hard work. Advocates for Youth (2008) outlines the following points as some of the challenges associated with collaboration.

- Building consensus is a time-consuming process. Collaborators may not always agree on the goals, objectives, and strategies of the collaboration.
- Members may have previous experiences with each other, either personal or professional, that affect their ability to work collaboratively.
- The greater the number of collaborators, the more difficult it becomes to manage logistics. Keeping all members aware of meetings, actions taken, results, and upcoming activities is important but can be challenging.
- Member organisations and programs may compete for funding from the same donor agencies, hampering their ability to collaborate. Building trust in the face of such conflicts is difficult.
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Working for One Christ

their male counterparts in sharing God’s love more effectively with the French society of their time, which still suffered from the atrocities and trauma of the French Revolution. True to his words, “It is the sisters who will be the heir to the spiritual heritage of the family” (O’Donohue, 2012, p. 15-16), the Fathers of St Louis were disbanded in 1849, leaving the Sisters as heirs to the St Louis heritage. From France, the membership spread to Ireland in 1859 and from there to other parts of Europe, America and Africa.

Four Irish pioneer Sisters set foot on the African soil for the first time on October 6, 1947, and arrived in Kumasi on October 19. It was a time when Msgr Hubert Paulissen of what was then the Kumasi Vicariate was desperately in search of religious sisters to answer the dire need of girl-child education in the vast region of Ashanti. Available records indicate that only 15% of children in school in Ashanti were girls (Paulissen, n.d.). One can understand his passionate appeal to the SSLs for this all-important mission. The Sisters’ response to this need meant that they were ready to collaborate not only with the Church but with the native people, the government, and indeed with the entire nation. It would be observed that long before girl-child education became a popular axiom in Ghana, women religious like the SSLs had taken the lead to champion this cause.

The SSLs had to rise to the challenge of responding to other needs of the people of Ghana. Consequently, they extended their services to include health care, pastoral care, and catechesis, mostly ministering in the thickest rural forests, in keeping with their commitment to serving the most marginalised and their chosen “option for the poor.” Older SSL institutions in Ghana include St Louis Senior High School and St Louis College of Education (both in Kumasi), Archbishop Porter Girls’ Senior High School (Takoradi), St Patrick’s Hospital (Maase-Offinho), and Oku Catholic School and Clinic, Afram Plains North. Presently, indigenous Ghanaian St Louis Sisters are continuing the good works started by the missionaries. They are engaged in diverse apostolates of equally vital importance, such as working to redress unjust social structures, promoting the integrity of creation, living in right relationship, and empowering women and youth to make them self-reliant. All of these apostolates are performed in the quest to meet the needs of our own time. More recently, in 1998, St Louis Jubilee School in Kumasi was established to give equal footing to both boys and girls in education. This basic private school seeks to lay a solid foundation for both sexes and to help each child discover their God-given
talents and reach their highest potential. Like their founder, SSLs believe in developing in children the capacity to love all that is good, to recognise all that is true, and to admire all that is beautiful from their earliest age.

Collaborative efforts by SSL in Ghana. In an attempt to provide services, the Sisters of St Louis engage in collaborative work with various stakeholders. There are different areas of collaborative efforts by the Sisters according to their ministries. The broad areas of collaboration in ministry are formation, health, and education. Tables 1 and 2 summarise the collaborative efforts of the Sisters of St Louis.

Table 1

Major Areas of SSL Collaborative Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry</th>
<th>Key Stakeholders in Collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formation</td>
<td>Sisters of St Louis; Institute of Continuing Formation (ICF), Elmina via Cape Coast, Ghana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International formation programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other religious congregations in Ghana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Sisters of St Louis; government, dioceses, and clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Sisters of St Louis; government, dioceses, parents, teachers, and students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Authors’ Construct, 2016, SSL: Sisters of St Louis

Table 1 shows that the SSL, Ghana are primarily engaged in collaborative activities involving formation, health and education. By no means does this suggest that other areas, such as pastoral activities, are not important. Rather, for the purposes of this study, education is singled out as the main focus, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2

SSL Collaboration in the Area of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of School</th>
<th>Key Stakeholders</th>
<th>Years of Service</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Bernadette Girls’ JHS (where SSL ministry in education started; it is now a co-educational institution)</td>
<td>SSL, Diocese &amp; Gov’t</td>
<td>1948-1985</td>
<td>Kumasi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Louis Junior High School (basic; estd. by SSL, co-educational institution)</td>
<td>SSL, Diocese &amp; Gov’t</td>
<td>1975-1988</td>
<td>Kumasi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Louis Girls Senior High (estd. by SSL)</td>
<td>SSL, Diocese &amp; Gov’t</td>
<td>1952-present</td>
<td>Kumasi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Louis College of Education (for training female teachers; estd. by SSL)</td>
<td>SSL, Diocese &amp; Gov’t</td>
<td>1962-present</td>
<td>Kumasi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archbishop Porter Girls’ Senior High (estd. by SSL)</td>
<td>SSL, Diocese &amp; Gov’t</td>
<td>1965-1992</td>
<td>Takoradi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Kizito R/C Basic School (co-educational institution)</td>
<td>SSL, Diocese &amp; Gov’t</td>
<td>1984-2004</td>
<td>Nima, Accra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oku Catholic School (basic co-educational institution)</td>
<td>SSL, Diocese &amp; Gov’t</td>
<td>1993-present</td>
<td>Oku, Afram Plains North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Louis Jubilee School (estd. by SSL, basic &amp; private co-educational institution)</td>
<td>SSL, Cath. Edu. Unit &amp; Gov’t</td>
<td>1998-present</td>
<td>Kumasi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transformative Partnerships

Working for One Christ called to teach everything that is true and good, all that can enlighten and improve man [and woman]. In attempting to form good Christians, the church endeavours, in the first place, to form good men and women, and to this end uses everything that can humanize” (Bautain, 1837). Consequently, SSLs seek to take particular care to treat young people with respect; they offer a safe, empowering, and learning environment and endeavour to provide “a holistic education…that will make them worthy ambassadors to heal, unify and transform the world” (School Handbook, p. 8). As indicated in Table 2, an SSL presence has ceased in a few schools. This only demonstrates that the Sisters have the flexibility and humility to pass on their work to others when the time comes. Even so, they trust that their impact as pace setters will still live on, especially given that some of these schools are headed by past students trained by the sisters. Furthermore, SSLs do not work only in their own established schools, but also in any other schools where their services are needed.

Conceptual Framework

The framework of this study is the five levels of collaboration established by Hogue (1993) and Borden and Perkins (1998 & 1999). Developed in 1994, the five collaborative levels – conversation, communication, coordination, cooperation, and collaboration – are used to measure the progress of collaboration at each stage. They correspond with purpose, structure, and process at every stage. This framework was considered most relevant and most appropriate for the study because it helps to measure the different significant elements in the collaborative initiative. Table 3 illustrates the five levels of collaboration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Name</th>
<th>SSL, Diocese &amp; Gov’t</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Joseph Minor Seminary Senior High</td>
<td>SSL, Diocese &amp; Gov’t</td>
<td>2007-present</td>
<td>Mampong, Ashanti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School (co-educational)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Paul R/C Complex</td>
<td>SSL, Diocese &amp; Gov’t</td>
<td>2007-present</td>
<td>Mampong, Ashanti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(basic &amp; co-educational)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsutaman Senior High</td>
<td>SSL, Diocese &amp; Gov’t</td>
<td>2012-present</td>
<td>Nsuta, Ashanti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School (co-educational)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Peter’s R/C Basic School</td>
<td>SSL, Diocese &amp; Gov’t</td>
<td>2010-present</td>
<td>Wioso, Ashanti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(co-educational institution)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinating team and school</td>
<td>SSL, Diocese &amp; Gov’t</td>
<td>2007-2014</td>
<td>Accra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supervision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mankranso Senior High School</td>
<td>SSL, Diocese &amp; Gov’t</td>
<td>2016-present</td>
<td>Mankranso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Family Preparatory School</td>
<td>SSL, Diocese &amp; Gov’t</td>
<td>2016-present</td>
<td>Pramso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Saviour Kindergarten School</td>
<td>SSL, Diocese &amp; Gov’t</td>
<td>2013-present</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Authors’ Construct, 2016, SSL: Sisters of St Louis; Gov’t: Government, Estd: established; Cath: Catholic; Edu: Education.

St Louis educators can be found in all aspects of the educational system, from running pre-schools to teaching at the tertiary level. Some SSLs work as school administrators, serving on management boards and coordinating teams, while others work for schools in supervisory and policy-making capacities. The St Louis charism, Sint Unum, permeates their schools and influences their relationship with teachers, students, and parents, with ripple effects on these stakeholders’ relationships with others. Their work underpins their founder Bautain’s philosophy of education that: “We are
### Table 3
The Five Levels of Collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conversation/Networking</td>
<td>• Dialogue and common understanding • Clearing house for information • Create base of support</td>
<td>• Non-hierarchical • Loose/flexible link • Roles loosely defined • Community action is primary link among members</td>
<td>• Low key leadership • Minimal decision making • Little conflict • Informal communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation or Alliance</td>
<td>• Match needs and provide coordination • Limit duplication of services • Ensure tasks are done</td>
<td>• Central body of people as communication hub • Semi-formal links • Roles somewhat defined • Links are advisory • Group leverages/raises money</td>
<td>• Facilitative leaders • Complex decision making • Some conflict • Formal communications within the central group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination or Partnership</td>
<td>• Share resources to address common issues • Merge resource base to create something new</td>
<td>• Central body of people consists of decision makers • Roles defined • Links formalised • Group develops new resources and joint budget</td>
<td>• Autonomous leadership but focus in on issue • Group decision making in central and subgroups • Communication is frequent and clear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Communication/Coalition
- Share ideas and be willing to pull resources from existing systems
- Develop commitment for a minimum of three years
- All members involved in decision making
- Roles and time defined
- Links formal with written agreement
- Group develops new resources and joint budget

### Collaboration
- Accomplish shared vision and impact benchmarks
- Build interdependent system to address issues and opportunities
- Consensus used in shared decision making
- Roles, time and evaluation formalised
- Links are formal and written in work assignments

### Source: Community Based Collaborations – Wellness Multiplied, 1994

At the lower level of the scale is conversation or networking; here the structure is non-hierarchical and roles are loosely defined. The flow of informal communication binds members together, and there is little conflict. Cooperation or alliance is the second level. It features a degree of formality and roles are somewhat defined; links play an advisory role, and the leadership facilitates decision making. The third level is coordination or partnership. This level involves sharing information and resources, defined roles, frequent communication and some shared decision making. On the fourth level is communication; it involves sharing ideas and resources. There is frequent and prioritised communication, and all members have a vote in decision making. Collaboration is the fifth and highest level. It is concerned with members belonging to one system. Frequent communication is characterised by mutual trust and consensus is reached on all decisions; impact is made as shared vision is accomplished.
Methodology

The study was designed using Hogue’s five levels of collaboration, which not only provided theoretical validity but also served as a useful framework for exploring the collaborative activities at different levels among the various stakeholders of St Louis Jubilee School. The survey instrument covered all five levels mentioned (Hogue, 1993), and assessment instruments by Borden and Perkins (1998; 1999) were combined and simplified with definitions for respondents.

This study benefited from a mixed method (i.e., qualitative and quantitative) approach in soliciting data. The analytical problems addressed revolve around the collaborative efforts among women religious in Ghana using SSLs as a case study at St Louis Jubilee School. Key informant interviews were conducted with seven different stakeholders representing the Ghana Education Service (GES), the Catholic Education Unit (CEU), parents, and purposively selected teaching and non-teaching staff as well as the management of the school. Research of this nature calls for in-depth information; as scholars like Creswell (2007) point out, a qualitative approach helps the researcher to grasp information more firmly and describe with deep meaning, so as not to neglect people’s experiences, perceptions, and practices.

A random survey was conducted with 65 employees of the school after a pilot study had helped to eradicate all forms of ambiguity. All participants signed consent forms to be part of the research.

Findings

This study explores the collaborative efforts among women religious in Ghana and the effects of such collaboration on their ministries, focusing on the Sisters of St Louis (SSL) as a case study. The empirical data generated from the research are presented thematically in line with the research questions. The first section considers various views and reactions to the levels of collaboration between SSL and other stakeholders in the area of common service delivery. The second section addresses the purpose of the collaboration, while the third section presents views on the impact of such collaboration towards common service delivery. The fourth section examines some of the impediments to the collaborative efforts between SSL and other stakeholders.

Levels of Collaboration

There seems to be a widely shared perception among respondents and key informants about collaborative arrangements at St Louis Jubilee School when it comes to the delivery of quality education. This is encouraging, in that it suggests good administrative structure and common understanding exist among different stakeholders. Common purpose, shared goals, mutual engagement, and process seem to be in place to facilitate effective partnership. These are striking elements highlighted in the five levels of collaboration and also established by Dillenbourg et al. (1996) in the literature review. In the survey data, 83% of respondents agreed that the level of commitment to conversation efforts (both formal and informal) was high, as was the level of coordination, whereas 74% rated the level of communication high.

Respondents were also asked to rate their level of satisfaction in line with the five levels of collaboration. Of the respondents, 89% said they were satisfied with the communication between them and St Louis Jubilee School, and 94% said they were satisfied with the levels of cooperation, conversation, and collaboration that exist between them and St Louis Jubilee School. Furthermore, 74% of respondents agreed that in dealing with school authorities the level of commitment to the frequency of communication between Sisters and staff about the purpose of St Louis Jubilee School was high, and 88% were also satisfied with the way in which St Louis Jubilee School operates. The very high rating on the level of satisfaction resonates with the high rating on the five levels of collaboration. Qualitative comments reinforced the survey data:

Management here…chats with the teachers to find out whether there are challenges; they put before them and they try to solve them… it is a top down bottom up approach of collaboration. (Interview with Key Informant E)

…it to improve collaboration with respect to service delivery, the school has in place a headmistress and two assistants. We also have coordinators who play administrative roles…we give them extra allowance for what they do and we appreciate their leadership skills. And, in all this we try to develop their own potentials…. (Interview with Key Informant A)
Assessing the mutual engagement level, 83% of the survey respondents disclosed that the level of commitment to cooperation between SSL and the staff of St Louis Jubilee School was high. Furthermore, 71% of the respondents confirmed a high level of commitment to collaboration. The survey analysis corroborated the qualitative data, as key respondents in the interviews affirmed that:

…the sisters alone cannot work in the school; they need the skills and talents of teachers who have also been trained to teach, they are also very important stakeholders in offering quality education to the children. The parents are also partners…they’re all important elements in running the school. So, the parents, the teachers, the government and the sisters, we all form a chain and if one chain is broken I don’t think we will be able to offer the quality education that we envisage. (Interview with Key Informant B)

My office has been working with SSLs for a long time. They have been part of the programme of the unit and have worked closely with us. The school is actively involved in the yearly Catholic Education Week. (Interview with Key Informant F).

Evidence gathered supports the existence of a positive level of collaboration between SSL and other stakeholders. This can help in dealing with complex decision-making processes as noted under the five levels of collaboration in the literature review. This in turn facilitates service delivery. However, a key informant expressed a seemingly contrary view, saying:

We’re working together towards a common goal; …we started so well but for [some time] now I don’t know what is happening. The whole of last term, for instance, I didn’t come there [to the school] because you call and all you hear is ‘Sister is not in.’ What about the assistant? And you’re told ‘She too is not in.’ Sometimes I say to myself: ‘let me just pop in’ and when I do I meet their absence. I really don’t know what is happening. I don’t know if I’m not needed there anymore. (Interview with Key Informant G)

This suggests that not all stakeholders are comfortable with the activities. Thus, the need for relationship management cannot be overlooked.

**Purpose of Collaboration**

Collaboration is an overlapping concept. According to the literature, setting out the purpose or goal for collaboration is considered best practice.

Turning to the responses for research question two, 78% of the respondents agreed that SSLs are focused on the purpose or goal of the school. Whereas 77% affirmed that communication between the Sisters and staff of the school is very high with respect to purposefulness of the school, 84% were in support that the purpose of coordination was high. Another 81% agreed that the level of cooperation between the Sisters and staff of the school was high, and 75% rated collaboration with respect to purpose as high.

The quantitative responses were further strengthened by the qualitative comments provided by participants in response to the question, “To what extent is the level of collaboration relevant to the overall purpose of collaboration (mission and vision) between St Louis Jubilee School and other stakeholders?”:

The… mission and vision of SSL is to offer holistic education which enables all those who pass through this school to excel and fit adequately into any society…. To a very large extent the level of collaboration relates to the overall mission and vision of the school. In our in-service training and at the various staff meetings the vision is passed on to all. (Interview with Key Informant A)

The mission and vision statement which explain why the St Louis School exists and has been delivering over the years are explained to us. (Interview with Key Informant C)

…when the parents are bringing their children, we have what we call orientation. We tell them our vision for the school, we tell them the type of quality education we want to offer... and for the teachers too, we have met and have shared the vision…. Apart from giving academic education to the children we also have to stress our Christian values…. (Interview with Key Informant B)

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**Impact of Collaboration**

This section responds to research question three by addressing whether current practices and attitudes of SSLs help to improve collaboration
and contribute to service delivery. Speaking to this, a key informant highlighted how Catholic education aims at developing the total person based on the Gospel values, noting that “The SSL are helping the Church to achieve this aim through their involvement in education and St Louis Jubilee School is a typical example.” Within the same context, another key informant disclosed with passion how the current practices and attitudes of the leadership and management are promoting a positive image of the school both in and outside of the local community. Buttressing this point, the informant said:

Well, the other time I heard it from Fox FM [in Kumasi]; in fact, they were praising the school. They don’t have their wards ooo. I heard it, I was sitting by the radio and I heard that ‘At St Louis Jubilee School, teachers have hearts for the children…. (Interview with Key Informant D)

With this kind of sentiment expressed in the media, the work of SSL is strengthened. In the survey data, 76% of the respondents agreed that the level of commitment to coordination (sharing of information/shared decision making) between the Sisters and staff of St Louis Jubilee School was high. One could argue that a favourable environment has been developed to enable the school authorities to work jointly with other stakeholders when it comes to the five levels of collaboration as discussed in this chapter. Indeed, all evidence supports the arguments established in the literature by Pikas et al. (2016), Styoll (2015), and Chapman et al. (2009a) that a highly conducive learning atmosphere for students is imperative. Other informants reinforced this point:

We see everybody working here plays an important role, whatever they’re doing; people are allowed to be creative and we see that … all work towards the success of the school. (Interview with Key Informant A)

We’re training the students, so through collaboration we’re able to achieve good performance in the students. (Interview with Key Informant D)

Another significant finding during the interviews was a high level of commitment and interactions between parents and the school management team. This finding supports the existence of a continuous level of engagement, but more importantly demonstrates that the current practices and attitudes of school authorities suggest a successful relationship between management and different stakeholders, as ideas and decisions are equally shared. It also shows the impact of collaboration. A key informant spoke very convincingly about this, saying:

…I’ll rate [current practices and attitudes] in the school very good because in most private schools they don’t have PTA … the parents have no say in the running of the school. We have a very [vibrant] PTA that challenge us, they speak their minds, they assist the school in so many ways. The fact that they come for the meeting; even though I expect many more will come, but at least majority of them who come participate in the meeting. (Interview with Key Informant B)

Another informant revealed that the common understanding and mutual engagement existing between stakeholders is formalised through the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) which, as a result, helps to bridge the communication gap. This informant testified that:

We meet every fourth week of the term as executives to discuss issues…. We’re able to look at issues that we table for discussion and it is done diligently with all seriousness, with all interest; and at the end of the day there’s consensus. And that’s what I’m happy about that there’s always consensus before an issue is dismissed. Then with this cooperation among the executive body we’re able to have a successful general PTA meeting. (Interview with Key Informant C)

A third informant appreciates the ability to approach management for tête-à-tête discussion:

Whenever there is an issue concerning the parents and their wards, I come to the sisters; we sit down in a very nice atmosphere, we jaw jaw and at the end of it all where it becomes a challenge they tell us ‘why don’t we do it this way;’ and I also tell them if we do it this way it will also help. So, at the end of it all, we find a way out. So, the collaboration that I can see over here is… very good. (Interview with Key Informant E)

As already noted, Chapman et al. (2009b) stressed the importance of communication within the collaborative arrangement. A majority of the informants affirmed that the structure put in place encourages formal meetings; most decisions are made jointly. The comments made suggest the possibility of positive impact that is helping to improve the performance of the school.
Challenges to Collaboration

What then are the key impediments to collaborative efforts at St Louis Jubilee School? The informants were not silent on the current challenges. As one expressed:

The school is private and enjoys some autonomy but there is the need to consult the unit regarding some of their program. For example, they can invite someone from here to sit on the panel when conducting interviews for new teachers. They can also invite us to attend their programs as resource persons to give input and the like. (Interview with Key Informant F)

Another informant had this to say:
One thing I disagree with the parents is that some do not respect the channel of communication. If something happens in the classroom, I’d prefer that maybe a parent calls the class teacher and ask….If you use that channel and you still are not satisfied you can move to the next level….Certain things can be solved even before they get to the higher level. (Interview with Key Informant E).

Other challenges reported by respondents include:
- Inadequate finances.
- Some parents struggling with certain values of the school.
- Some parents struggling to pay school fees to ensure logistics are available to help achieve the overall goal.
- Some of the teachers are underutilised, as they are assigned fewer periods per week.
- Seemingly improper arrangement with Circuit Supervisor on the frequency of inspection.

Conclusion

This study explores the collaborative efforts among women religious in Ghana and the effects of such collaboration on their ministries, focusing on the Sisters of St Louis (SSL) as a case study. The study relies heavily on primary source materials, given the lack of existing literature in this area; it appears to be a new venture into the collaborative efforts of women religious in Ghana. Evidence gathered from primary data suggests that common purpose, shared goals, and administrative and leadership structure exist. The survey data also provide strong evidence of this, as respondents rate a high level of satisfaction when it comes to cooperation, communication, conversation, and collaboration – all key ingredients to effective collaboration. These have helped St Louis Jubilee School to create a conducive learning atmosphere for students and have helped to improve performance. A high percentage of the respondents are happy with the way in which the school operates. And, as far as SSLs continue to share their Christian values and impart positively on others, there is no doubt that their work of evangelisation is greatly enhanced. However, the need for open conversation and effective dialogue cannot be overlooked, hence frequent review and consultation of all milestone activities with all stakeholders is critical for ongoing collaboration.

Recommendations

Collaboration is an ongoing process; therefore, it is recommended that SSL strengthen and improve upon the current practices in dealing with parents when it comes to payment or collection of school fees. Since parents who are struggling with the payment of school fees are less forthcoming for dialogue, it might be helpful to invite such parents to meet and draw up a well-structured payment plan with them.

It is the researchers’ fervent hope that this study opens the door to further research into the collaborative efforts of women religious in Ghana, especially at the inter-congregational level.
References


Administration Review, 66, 19–32.


Interview with Key Informant C: Male teacher and secretary to the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) of St Louis Jubilee School, Kumasi. November 8, 2016. Guests’ room in the school.


Interview with Key Informant E: Chairman of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) of St Louis Jubilee School, Kumasi. November 8, 2016. Guests’ room in the school.

Interview with Key Informant F: Director of Catholic Education Unit, Ashanti. November 2, 2016. Written interview.

Interview with Key Informant G: Circuit supervisor and representative of Ghana Education Service (GES), Weweso District, Kumasi. November 12, 2016. Phone interview.


EXPLORING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FACED BY CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS SISTERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY-BASED HIV PROGRAMS IN KENYA

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Saint Francis Community Hospital

Abstract

Catholic Religious Sisters (CRS) have been greatly involved in the care and support of people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS in Kenya from as early as 1999, when the president of Kenya declared HIV/AIDS a national disaster. Since then, CRS have worked tirelessly to restore health, dignity, and quality of life among the infected, reduce stigma and discrimination, minimize deaths, and add to the value to life among people living with HIV/AIDS. Through the substantial support of international partners and donors, and the strength of local partnerships, CRS have remained committed to serving the most vulnerable, which they do in the informal settlements of the country in accordance with the teachings and commands of Jesus Christ. The primary aim of this research was to investigate the common challenges and opportunities faced by CRS in the daily operation of their HIV programs in the spirit of collaborative partnerships with other partners in Kenya’s Archdiocese of Nairobi. The researcher studied literature related to transformative partnerships. Mixed research methods were used to carry out the research. A cross-sectional study design was used for the quantitative part of the study, while a phenomenological study design was applied for the qualitative part of the research to collate, analyse, and present data. The researcher used a sample size representing 90% of the target population, where five out of six community-based HIV/AIDS programs within the Nairobi archdiocese were sampled. Purposive sampling was used to ensure representation of the target population, who were working within informal settlements. The main instruments of data collection were questionnaires, interview guides, and focus group discussions. Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS. For qualitative data, the researcher read all the transcripts, identified common themes, reduced data to smaller categories and then shared further with participants for verification. The main findings of this study were that all of the projects depended on international donor partnership for program implementation, and that the programs have positively transformed the lives of many HIV-infected and affected persons. It was also noted that there are no major sustainability measures in place to reduce donor dependency and develop new programs. It is recommended that all collaborative development partners create and implement sustainability measures (social economic empowerment) that target individual clients as well the projects at large for continuity of care, because HIV/AIDS is still a big challenge to people living with HIV (PLWH).

Keywords: explorative collaboration, partnership, development partners, donors, Catholic Religious Sisters, community-based healthcare programs, challenges, opportunities, HIV/AIDS, PLWH

Introduction

According to NASCOP and the Ministry of Health (2006), 26 cases of AIDS were reported in Kenya between the years 1983 and 1985, mainly among commercial sex workers. HIV prevalence among adults rapidly increased, growing from 5.1% in 1990 to 13.4% in 2000 (NASCOP & Ministry of Health, 2006). By 1999, the year that Kenya’s president, Daniel Arap Moi, declared AIDS a national disaster, some Catholic Religious Sisters (CRS) had already become the first government and international partners to respond to the disaster for love of human dignity and the continuous healing ministry of Jesus Christ, who loved and healed the sick.

Although the main goal of the community-based HIV/AIDS programs was to care for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWH), in time CRS found it urgent to respond also to certain emergent needs in the community, among them support for children with disabilities, preventive behaviour change processes for youth groups, and interventions for drug and substance abuse, which is now so rampant and disastrous among young people.
Objectives of the Project

This study had the following objectives:
1. to identify the various services offered by CRS through community-based HIV/AIDS programs in the informal sectors of Archdiocese of Nairobi;
2. to identify various partners that are important to the collaborative implementation of HIV/AIDS programs;
3. to identify the different perceptions of the beneficiaries concerning the community-based HIV/AIDS programs; and
4. to highlight the common challenges that CRS encounter in the funding, implementation, and sustainability of their projects.

Literature Review

According to Carnwell and Carson (2008), the terms partnership and collaboration are often used interchangeably, sometimes even within the same sentence. Partnership means having an equal commitment by sharing risks and profits. It is a shared commitment, where all parties have a right and obligation to participate, and will be affected equally by the benefits and disadvantages arising from the partnership. Partnership and collaboration mean working together as equal parties. The concept of partnership denotes “Who we are” while collaboration expresses “What we do” (Ailbert, 2003). In social and health ministries, the concepts of partnership and collaboration place emphasis on the need for healthcare agencies to work together more effectively in partnership and collaboration, so as to lead driving changes locally (Carnwell & Carson, 2008).

The emerging health-related issues are increasing in number and becoming more complex than ever. In response to increased demand for services, CRS turn to their international donor agencies to seek support for their missions. For the CRS to positively impact the community they must involve and engage the key community stakeholders, including opinion leaders, community health volunteers (CHVs), the primary beneficiaries/clients/patients, government representatives, members of the community and other partners for project development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. It is for this reason that the idea of collaborative partnership...
resonates strongly among all the partners for a rooted promise and hope for sustainability of social health programs that are in line with the third United Nations SDG.

Different authors have variously discussed the issue of partnership and collaboration in the provision of healthcare. Kaseje (2006) argues that these efforts hinge on public and private participation to properly address healthcare issues related to equity, quality, and cost. The call for public-private partnership is an attempt to overcome the challenges which hinder the attainment of quality healthcare that is affordable for all (Hale, 2015; Kaseje, 2006). Hale (2015) highlights the importance of socioeconomic challenges that must be considered in order to advance the healthcare of rural communities and informal settlements. They include poverty and unemployment, low levels of education achievement, and the lack of access to affordable healthcare, all of which contribute to poor health outcomes.

The European Steering Group (ESG) confirms that affordability and financial sustainability are the biggest issues confronting healthcare providers. There is a similar challenge across the board resulting from the complexity and differences in how healthcare is funded and organised in all sectors. Healthcare providers at all levels are seeking strategies on how to continue providing high-quality and universally accessible health services in a financially sustainable way; hence there is an urgent need to reflect on a fundamental transformation of the traditional healthcare systems (ESG, 2014). ESG (2014) recommends three main opportunities that guide a transformative partnership in healthcare systems for sustainability. These include: 1) investing in prevention and early intervention in order to create a significant tangible savings; 2) fostering empowered and responsible citizens by assisting individuals to discover and develop the inherent capacity to be more responsible for one’s own health; and 3) ensuring that individuals understand their rights, responsibilities, capabilities, and opportunities to remain healthy and to manage their own health in the most appropriate setting, thus providing the political and economic context for empowerment.

Just like in Europe, many people in Africa and particularly in Kenya either lack the financial resources needed to adopt healthy lifestyles or place a higher priority on their immediate survival needs. Empowerment strategies require resources and capacity building that should be driven by the public sector, so as to enable citizens to better understand their health condition and participate in the decision-making process to plan and manage their own healthcare plans for better outcomes. The reorganisation of care delivery requires a paradigm shift and the adoption of three entangled ideologies, namely patient-centered integrated care, improved hospital efficiency, and interventions in an optimal setting, either in hospitals, at home or in communities. Information and communication technology (ICT) applications are very important to enabling lean processes and new organisational methods.

The reorganisation of healthcare delivery models and systems cannot materialise without collaborative partnership and involvement of donors, governments, providers, patients, and insurers. It also requires input from health professionals, from all relevant stakeholders, and from the public and private sector, all of whom must assume equal, active roles and responsibilities in order to foster these opportunities. There should be a set course of action for the transformation of healthcare systems through collaborative partnerships so as to serve the community in a more sustainable manner (ESG, 2014).

Building on the theoretical framework of “Partnership: Framework for Working Together,” the study examined challenges and opportunities encountered in supporting and improving sustainable community-based HIV/AIDS programs that are initiated, executed or managed by Catholic Religious Sisters in Kenya; specifically, in view of their collaborative partnerships with the community, international donor agencies, the employees, the CHVs, and the primary program beneficiaries, also referred to as clients or patients throughout the study.

Theoretical Framework

Partnership is a collaborative relationship between entities to work towards shared objectives through a mutually agreed-upon division of labour. In a partnership, there should be a shared common vision and purpose that builds trust and recognises the value and contribution of all members (National Resource Center, 2010). According to ESG (2014), partnerships give room for involvement by each stakeholder, thus maximising the benefits of each member’s effort – for example, the donor agent in fundraising; coordination of program implementation activities
Transformative Partnerships

Exploring Collaborative Partnerships

Methodology

Mixed research methods were used to carry out the research. A cross-sectional study design was used for the quantitative part of the study, and a phenomenological study design was applied for the qualitative part of the research to collect, analyse, and present data. The researcher used a sample size representing 90% of the target population where five out of six community-based HIV/AIDS programs were sampled within the Nairobi archdiocese. Purposeful sampling was used to ensure representation of the target population, which was situated within informal settlements. The target population was CRS, staff, community health volunteers and HIV-positive client beneficiaries in the five HIV/AIDS programs run and managed by CRS in Nairobi, Kenya. The main instruments used for collecting data from the respondents were questionnaires, interview guides, and focus group discussions, as follows: CHVs, focus group discussions N = 5 (one in a rural area and four in the urban area); key informants (5 CRS or their nominees), in-depth interviews N = 4 (one rural and three urban); staffs/employees, questionnaire survey N = 22 (one rural and 21 urban); and program beneficiaries, focus group discussions N = 5 (one rural and four urban).

Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS. For the qualitative data, the researcher read all the transcripts, identified common themes, reduced data to smaller categories and then shared further with participants for verification.

Research Findings

Demographic Characteristics of the Study Participants

The study sought the demographic information of those who were involved in community-based projects. As shown in Table 1, 76.5% of respondents were not CRS and 23.5% were CRS. A majority of the participants (81.3%) were female. Furthermore, 70.6% of the respondents were married and 17.6% were single. Regarding the designation of the respondents, 68.8% were project staff members and 25% were volunteers; this indicates a need for better human resource management so as to optimise the use of available skills. Although 17.6% of the participants...
were nurses, 29.4% were social workers and a majority (52.9%) had alternative qualifications. There is a clear need to recruit more nurses and social workers in the program, and to train more CRS as nurses; this will enhance project ownership and promote the sustainability of these projects. Concerning the number of years worked, 23.5% had worked on their project for less than 3 years, 47.1% had served for 4-7 years, and 5.9% had served for a period of 16-19 years. Finally, a majority (94.1%) had professional development skills. Acquisition of professional development skills by project personnel improves the chances of sustaining a particular project and increases the likelihood of its acceptance.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Individual Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRS</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>81.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRS</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>70.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>68.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiary &amp; Volunteer</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (specify)</td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in Table 2 show individual project information; a majority (42.9%) reported that their project had existed for 13-15 years, 7.1% reported that their project was less than a year old, and 7.1% reported that their project had existed for seven to nine years. Concerning the project workforce, 71.4% reported that one to three CRS are involved in their projects, while 14.3% had 10-12 CRS. Thirdly, 42.9% of respondents had one to three staff members on their project, and 21.4% had 22 or more employees. Further, a majority (53.8%) had 1-10 CHVs and 7.7% had 71-80. Regarding the number of volunteers involved in a project, 46.7% had 1-10 volunteers and 6.7% had no volunteers while an equal percentage had 31-40 volunteers. Beneficiaries in the projects were either adults or children; the projects of 30.8% of respondents served 601-700 adults, while 33.3% reported that their projects served 1-50 children. The projects attracted local and international donations, and 62.5% had sought sponsorship from one to three local donors while 50% had one to three international donors. Finally, a majority of respondents (63.6%) served 1-200 orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). All of the projects of the sampled population depend largely on one to three international donors for their numerous program operations and were offering integrated and comprehensive HIV/AIDS and related services to the poor and marginalised populations in the informal sectors.
### Table 2a
*Project Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of years the program has been in existence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-15</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-18</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 &amp; above</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of CRS working and involved in the program</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-15</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of staff members in the program</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 &amp; above</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of CHVs</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71 - 80</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2b
*Continuation of Project Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of HIV-positive adults</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-100</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>601-700</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>801-900</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>901-1,000</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,001 &amp; above</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of HIV-positive children</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-50</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-100</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-150</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501 &amp; above</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of local donors</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-28</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 &amp; above</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Services Offered by CRS through Community-Based HIV/AIDS Programs

There are numerous direct HIV/AIDS program services offered by CRS; in the current study, 94.7% of respondents reported to have benefited from HIV counselling and testing, 88.9% had received HIV/AIDS care and management in the adult health facility, and 94.7% had benefited from a similar facility in the children sector. In addition, 89.5% reported that they either received therapeutic management of HIV/AIDS, for example, through ART/HAART, or psychosocial support group therapies for HIV-positive children. Of the participants, 94.1% reported that they had either received psychosocial support group therapies for HIV-positive adults or home-based care for HIV/AIDS positive adults while 94.1% had received services for prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Further, 84.2% reported that they had received home-based care for children living with HIV/AIDS. There is free treatment of opportunistic infections, ARVs, and update seminars and workshops for capacity building, as well as hope and encouragement that have built in them a very strong conviction that they truly need to live positively. They have learned the value of loving and supporting each other, for “We are each other’s keeper” (Focus Group Discussion IV, 2016).

### Table 3

**Direct HIV/AIDS Programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct HIV/AIDS Program Objectives</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIV counselling and testing?</td>
<td>94.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS care and management for the adults at the health facility?</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS care and management for the children at the health facility?</td>
<td>94.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapeutic management of HIV/AIDS, e.g., ART/HAART?</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment of opportunistic infections and other health-related problems?</td>
<td>94.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychosocial support group therapies for HIV-positive children?</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychosocial support group therapies for HIV-positive adults?</td>
<td>94.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-based care for the HIV/AIDS-positive adults?</td>
<td>94.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-based care for the HIV/AIDS-positive children?</td>
<td>84.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General support for persons infected and affected by HIV/AIDS?</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of general counselling services for PLWH?</td>
<td>93.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) services for HIV?</td>
<td>94.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The services offered were grouped into direct and indirect services; Table 4 summarises the indirect services offered. First, 94.1% of participants reported that they either provided nutritional care to needy clients – for example, those who were bedridden and under-nourished clients – or they conducted regular seminars and workshops as a way of sensitising clients on current updates. Secondly, 94.7% either reported that they participate in stakeholder meetings in the local community where HIV issues were discussed or they carry out defaulter tracing for clients on HAART. Further, 89.5% reported that they offered education support and empowerment to
OVC, engaged in socioeconomic empowerment activities, and carried out household home visits to their clients; 82.4% carried out default tracing amongst those who were suffering from HIV/AIDS. Finally, 81.3% had CHVs who were fully involved with patients at the community level.

**Table 4**

*Indirect HIV/AIDS Program Objectives*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indirect HIV/AIDS Program Objectives</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provision of nutritional care to needy clients, e.g., bed ridden/undernourished clients?</td>
<td>94.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of child protection services?</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer education support and empowerment to OVC?</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic empowerment activities?</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carry out household home visits to your clients?</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct regular seminars and workshops to sensitiise clients on current updates?</td>
<td>94.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in stakeholder meetings in local community to discuss HIV issues?</td>
<td>94.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carry out TB screening and treatment?</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carry out defaulter tracing for clients on HAART?</td>
<td>94.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carry out defaulter tracing for patients on TB treatment?</td>
<td>82.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have CHVs fully involved with patient care at the facility?</td>
<td>81.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have CHVs fully involved in patient care at the community level?</td>
<td>81.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate general counselling services to deserving clients?</td>
<td>94.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Collaborative Partnership in Implementation of HIV/AIDS Programs

The primary purpose of all of the programs in the sample is to respond to the social and health needs of the poor and vulnerable populations in the informal set ups; most of the people in these populations are unable to pay for the services offered, making the programs donor-dependent. Some of the major donors acknowledged and recognised by the participants for having been very supportive of the Sisters’ HIV/AIDS ministries include Missionszentrale der Franziskaner, the Conrad N. Hilton Fund for Sisters, KinderMissionsWerk, the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), APHIAplus, APHIAplus Kamili, the Jose Luis De Barrueta Catholic Foundation for Health Care, Afya Jijini, Rafiki Africa Foundation, and On Call Africa.

Beneficiary Perceptions of Community-Based HIV/AIDS Programs

The beneficiaries strongly believe that this kind of program in still very useful to their locality and communities at large because there are still new people getting infected with HIV/AIDS; even those who have known their status for a long time fall ill now and then and require the same and even better care, hence the great need for the donors and partners to continue supporting these very noble services to the poor people in the communities. As one respondent explained:

This program has been excellent in contributing to our dignity, the society used to discriminate against us, even referring to us as dead people while we were still alive. We had lost hope and wished to die than live in such ridicule. This program saved our lives, and will continue saving many other lives of our brothers and sisters. Those who think and say that such programs need no more support, do not understand what it really means to be HIV+.....

All of the participants in the study recognised HIV-positive clients as the main beneficiaries of the community-based health care programs, even though other affected people, including orphans and caregivers or guardians, are still supported by these programs.
Catholic Religious Sisters are highly revered by the communities in which they serve, and are hailed as being the most responsible stakeholders, as compared to other staff members, community health volunteers and even support group therapy members, for having impacted the lives of the beneficiaries in a very special way. There was a strong consensus among the participants that there were no other HIV/AIDS programs in their locality that would be compared to the ones run and managed by the Catholic Religious Sisters.

If the programs run by the Sisters did not exist anymore, the primary beneficiaries confessed that they would not have anywhere else that they could turn to in seeking similar and integrated services. They expressed serious concern over the poor quality of the HIV-related services offered in other medical venues. “In other facilities there is no respect for us, peace, harmony nor even unity hence we can’t imagine the sisters program being closed down. We shall not have anywhere else to seek similar and quality services” (Focus Group Discussion IV, 2016).

Challenges Encountered in Program Development, Implementation and Sustainability

The chances of raising the resources required for optimal implementation of a given project are slim; because of this, those implementing the projects may have to seek alternative sources of funding to finance budgetary deficits. International donors were the most common source of funding at 63.7%. Local community financing was received by 40% of the projects, and 26.7% of the projects were funded by the local church. Moreover, 45.5% were rarely funded by international NGOs; 41.7% were mostly funded by local NGOs and 25% were moderately funded by individual well-wishers. Of the respondents, 33.3% reported that they were mostly funded by local corporate organisations, and 53.8% reported that they were moderately funded by local corporate organisations.

There have been great life-changing moments reported by all the participants. Among them are the health improvements enjoyed by most clients; they confess to now being hopeful and feeling useful in society, which raises their dignity and sense of self-worth after having been severely condemned to hopelessness and even death by the community. Some of them had depended on walkers for movement, not because they were physically challenged but because they were very ill with AIDS. “Some people even my own relatives used to say I am dead but now I am a living witness of how this program has given me back my value for life” (Focus Group Discussion IV, 2016).

Support group therapies were reported as having been the best forum for sharing encouraging experiences among members. “I wanted to commit suicide after suffering a lot of rejection and ill health for a long time but after coming to the support group therapies in the program, I regained my inner strength to live positively. I am now a strong and passionate advocate for other people who are going through a similar situation. Thanks to the sisters’ program” (Focus Group Discussion IV, 2016).

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff Perceptions</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-based care services</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home visits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care and support of the OVC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care and support of HIV/AIDS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention of mother-to-child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transmission (PMTCT)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is need for project sustainability after their commencement. The study sought to find out what factors were contributing to sustainability of HIV/AIDS programs. First, 40% reported that the least amount of program-sustaining income came from their income-generating projects, while 33.3% indicated that this was where most of their sustainability income came from. Secondly, 35.7% reported that consultation charges generated no sustainability income, while for 21.4% this was their greatest source of income. There is a need to eliminate consultation charges in order to recruit more people into the project, though this can be achieved by securing supplemental sources of project funding. Although project beneficiaries were using pharmacy services, 31.3% of the groups were not generating any funds through these services while another 25% reported that they generated the least income. Free pharmaceutical services are needed for program beneficiaries in order to eliminate the attrition rates associated with pharmaceutical costs. And although project beneficiaries benefited from both inpatient and outpatient services, neither contributed significantly to sustainability.

**Table 6**

Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Source</th>
<th>N/A (%)</th>
<th>Rarely Funded (%)</th>
<th>Least Funded (%)</th>
<th>Moderate Funded (%)</th>
<th>Most Funded (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local community</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Church</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sister’s Congregation</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International donors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International NGOs</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local NGOs</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>41.7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual well-wishers</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local cooperative organisations</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International cooperative organisations</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>53.8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7**

Sustainability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>N/A (%)</th>
<th>No Income (%)</th>
<th>Least Income (%)</th>
<th>Average Income (%)</th>
<th>Most Income (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program income-generating projects</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation charges</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment/pharmacy fees</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratory, imaging and other outpatient fees</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inpatient fees</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary and Conclusion**

The main challenge experienced in the informal sectors where all of the above-mentioned programs are implemented is poverty. The unemployed from informal settlement setups cannot access medical insurance to cover...
their medical bills and hence cannot afford quality health care; this in turn forces the CRS to offer free health care to the very poor and vulnerable groups of people. All of the HIV/AIDS programs run by CRS are dependent on international partners for their implementation, so that once funding and support is no longer available, CRS are forced to reduce their basic services to patients. Since patients do not pay for the services, CRS have to resource for financial aid in order to provide the much-needed health care. Clients need social and economic empowerment so as to provide for their own basic needs, such as proper nutrition, in order to keep healthy even in the face of funding shortfalls for these initiatives. Indeed, CRS are sometimes left feeling hopeless, as poor people are genuinely in need of help. There is the added challenge of alcoholism among the populations that CRS serve, which stems from unemployment, ignorance, and lack of education. Clients who recover from AIDS desire small-scale income generating projects for their own sustainability.

Amidst these many challenges, CRS have been unable to explore a myriad of opportunities available to them; for example, they do not have a networking system to learn from each other; nor have they been aggressive in exploring measures for sustainability. CRS must look beyond their traditional funding agencies and engage new partners at all levels. Information technology will continue to be useful in this regard.

Involvement, collaboration, and participation are essential in order for a transformative partnership to be realised. I agree with the National Resource Center (2010) that all partners implementing community HIV/AIDS programs should be encouraged to have shared goals and aims that are understood and highly accepted by each partner as being important. This will lead to improved coordination of policies, programming, and implementation, thus allowing sustainable and improved service delivery.

In order to enhance partnership among CRS, donors and all other partners should increase their funding to enable CRS to mitigate and address the new and most challenging needs as they continue to arise. Programs should increase their efforts in developing self-sustaining projects that flow down to the target beneficiaries for sustainable impact. Given that these beneficiaries come from very poor communities, and earn less than three USDs a day, it is very important to have initiatives geared towards supporting them with income-generating projects at an individual level so as to reduce dependency, poverty and vulnerability in general in a manner that is favourable for each individual.

Development partners, in collaboration with the implementing partners, should ensure that all projects are fully funded and implemented, so as to ensure a measurable impact on the beneficiaries. In most cases, poorly funded or partially implemented projects end up being a waste of money, time, and other resources that would otherwise be used for a better cause.

The development partners should find time to visit the projects physically so as to be in touch with the reality of community needs. This will enable them to accurately assess program impacts so that even as they resource for funding, they are aware of the priority needs of the people. It will also be a motivating factor for all the stakeholders to share a common table for discussing how best the programs can impact the intended beneficiaries.

The main findings of this study were that all of the projects depended on international donor partnerships for program implementation, that the programs have positively transformed the lives of many HIV-infected and affected persons, and that there is no guaranteed sustainability for these projects once the international partners withdraw their support. It is recommended that all collaborative development partners come up with sustainability measures (social economic empowerment) targeting individual clients as well as the actual projects for continuity of care, because HIV/AIDS remains a major challenge to the achievement of the third United Nations SDG on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages.
References


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**PART II**

**WOMEN RELIGIOUS, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION**
Advocating for Women Religious in Africa: Experiences in an International Partnership

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MacCormac College

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Abstract

African women religious serve vital, transformative roles as educational, social, political and spiritual leaders committed to supporting human rights and dignity while challenging injustices and inequalities. Advocating for their continuing personal and congregational development is vital as we look to societal transformation in Africa. The authors of this chapter have held leadership positions and/or implementation roles in an international partnership responsible for a competency-based undergraduate degree completion program based in Kenya. This collaboration, with women religious as a targeted population, was designed to help develop future successful and effective leaders and managers for Africa. In this chapter the authors share, through their authentic lived experiences, observations and perceptions about how this transformative partnership has through its advocacy efforts contributed to positive change, growth and leadership development of women religious.

Keywords: African women religious, Transformative partnership, advocacy.

Introduction

If you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation. –African proverb

Like our founder, Conrad N. Hilton, we recognise sisters as resourceful, efficient, and powerful agents of social change. –Hilton Foundation website

African women religious have been on the forefront of the revitalisation of Africa. Described by Williams (2014) as “One of the most significant, yet underreported, social revolutions of Black women in the contemporary era” (p.2), they often transform old social and educational institutions and create new ones that work to heal the wounds of a world full of racial, sexual, socioeconomic, educational, and religious oppression and violence.

For example, the Catholic Church’s early evangelisation of Africa, rooted in male hegemony and the ideology of worldwide white supremacy that was used to justify European colonisation and enslavement of African peoples, favoured African men for educational and leadership opportunities, while marginalising women in general and in religious life (Madueke, 2014; Williams, 2014). This external cultural force also reinforced patriarchal structures that were operating within some traditional African communities (Bitrus, 2017).

Against tremendous odds, however, African women religious successfully impact society through provision of direct services, advocacy and community development efforts, while challenging the Catholic Church to adhere to its own social teachings. These are women like Sr Rosemary Nyirumbe, the first African nun included in Time magazine’s list of the most influential people in the world (2014) in recognition of her work with the “lost girls” of Uganda and Sudan who have experienced civil war and sexual violence. Sr Rosemary and other African women religious function as transformative educational, social, political, and spiritual leaders committed to supporting human rights and dignity while challenging injustices and inequalities. Advocating for their continuing personal and congregational development is vital as we look to societal transformation in Africa.

We, the authors of this chapter, are religious and lay women of African descent, born in Kenya, Uganda, and the United States. We have held leadership positions and/or implementation roles in an international partnership responsible for a competency-based undergraduate degree
completion program based in Kenya. This collaboration, with women religious as a target population, was designed to help provide access to higher education and to support empowerment and leadership development for marginalised and underserved adult learners in Africa. The intended outcome of this program was to help develop future successful and effective leaders and managers for Africa.

What follows are our reflections on this specific international higher education partnership through the lenses of our distinctive racial/cultural, gender, religious, pedagogical, and disciplinary backgrounds. We share how this transformative partnership has, through its advocacy efforts, contributed to positive change, growth, and leadership development for women religious (as well as men religious and lay women and men), on the Continent. Consideration of our authentic lived experiences, observations, and perceptions of the program speak to how international collaborations such as ours can promote societal transformation and transformation in the lives of women religious in Africa. At the same time, we candidly present some of the lessons learned, challenges that we faced in our collaborative work, and unanswered questions that may help us better understand the full impact of transformative partnerships such as the one described herein.

The Partners and the Partnership

Tangaza University College (Tangaza) is a constituent college of the Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA) that is also co-sponsored by the Midwestern Province of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States. It is based in Nairobi, Kenya. Tangaza comprises a conglomeration of academic institutes in various disciplines such as theology, teacher education, social ministry, youth ministry, social communication, and African studies. The primary institutes participating in the partnership described below were the Institute of Spirituality and Religious Formation (ISRF) and the Institute of Social Mission and Ministry (ISMM), later to be joined by Christ the Teacher Institute of Education (CTIE) and Amani Counselling Centre and Training Institute (Amani). Before this international partnership was created, the primary approach to higher education at Tangaza was the formal British system.

The School for New Learning (SNL), DePaul University, based in Chicago, Illinois, has provided innovative individualised competence-based higher education to adult learners since 1972. It, too, is a Catholic institution. Students, also referred to as “learners,” work with a faculty mentor and a professional advisor, an expert in their academic area of concentration. This academic committee, with peer membership optional, is responsible for supporting the student through their self-directed academic program. College credit is awarded based on evidence of learning through current or prior classwork from accredited higher education institutions, and independent learning through life and/or work experience.

In 2004, academic leaders from Tangaza and SNL met and, seeing mutuality in mission, needs, and goals of their respective institutions, collaborated and began the process of developing the SNL/DePaul University-Tangaza University College BA degree completion program, with a focus on leadership and management. The purpose of the program reflected each institution’s espoused commitment to provide access to higher education for underrepresented and marginalised groups, and to build capacity so that Catholic congregations could carry out their missions and contribute to strengthening a revitalised Africa (Tolliver, 2010). Prior to the partnership, many women religious in East Africa who were earning diplomas had few or no opportunities to continue to complete the baccalaureate degree. This new program made this more possible.

The innovative joint venture adapted the SNL competence framework to the Kenyan cultural context, framed in African-centered values and practices, as identified by Kenyan leadership. Kenya-based Tangaza faculty provided instruction for students, while Chicago-based SNL faculty provided consultation, support, and advice regarding what became affectionately known as the “SNL methodology.” Program funding by the Conrad Hilton Foundation provided for operational expenses and scholarships for women religious who had successfully completed their diploma studies. However, men religious and lay students of all denominations also participated in the program. There were eight cohorts of students in total from 2008 through 2015. Upon completion of the 18-month program, students earned a DePaul University BA degree.

Transformative Partnerships, Advocacy, and Culture

A transformative partnership is one in which partners leverage their individual and collective strengths to bring about anticipated mutually
beneficial outcomes. The parties come together to pursue a common purpose and create the possibility of generative growth and change through mutual interaction as they apply their resources to addressing complex problems (Brown et al., 2006). The need to agree upon and maintain a shared vision around the transformative space as a whole is critical. Outward shows of solidarity in creating and sustaining the vision, as well as internal assessments of shared and separate infrastructures, can both contribute to the potential in higher education partnerships for transformation of the learner, the faculty, and the institution (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Transformative partnerships focus on reciprocity, values held in common, mutual benefits, capacity building, learning that makes a difference, and creating new knowledge and opportunities (Brown et al., 2006, p.2). Moreover, transformative partnerships reflect elements that are outlined in transformative learning theory, with paradigm shifts in thinking and action (Mezirow, 2000). Partners engage in a shared endeavour, and as implied above, they are changed through the experience they share (Karpik, 2000, p.38).

Similar to what Preece (2003) notes about transformative leadership, the inspiration to enter into a transformative partnership can involve a desire to change and challenge the status quo on the personal as well as the societal or group level. In the case of our academic transformative partnership, it was not just a matter of making a difference in the individual lives of learners; there was also the desire for a level of institutional and community impact. Both SNL/DePaul University and Tangaza University College were devoted to a purpose greater than their individual priorities and agendas, which is a hallmark of transformative partnerships (Butcher, Bezzina and Moran, 2009).

Admittedly, there is a resource and power differential within the SNL/DePaul University and Tangaza University College partnership, with DePaul being the more resourced and technologically advantaged of the two institutions. In an ideal case, the transformative partnership produces a smooth dovetailing of skills, expertise and contributions, regardless of the relative access to power, assets, and resources (Corrales, 2015). The partner from the more resourced country contributes expertise as well as other special resources that may not be as readily available in the less advantaged institution. The partners in the lesser resourced institution can provide local specialised and contextual knowledge. Lucas (2005) notes that in these situations, contributions in kind from the lesser resourced partner can complement the partner who has greater access to financial supports. In the case of this partnership, DePaul worked with the Tangaza IT department to build an up-to-date computer lab that would meet the technology needs of the BA degree program students. Tangaza provided the space and identified the carpenters who would build the furniture; DePaul paid for the costs of hardware, software and labour for the build-out. IT specialists from DePaul and Tangaza worked together to make sure the lab was up-to-date. Each learned from the other about their mutual areas of expertise.

The partnership between SNL/DePaul University and Tangaza University College has taken great care to avoid being perceived as one where a highly resourced, authoritative Western partner exploits the vulnerability and enables the dependency of the lesser-resourced African partner. The SNL faculty of African descent were particularly vocal about not wanting to replicate a colonial or neo-colonial relationship between the partners. The inspiration for entering into this partnership was to be connected through accompaniment, walking and working alongside each other, as opposed to this being a “welfare project” (Lamberty, 2015). Members from both institutions wanted to confer clear benefits to both partners without abuse. And while recognising our intention and efforts to prevent a superioriority-inferiority relationship with each other, there is justifiable concern about attendant risks and dangers because of the real and/or perceived unequal power dynamics (Owuor, 2007). This is a place of learning and potentially a place of transformation within the partnership between our two institutions.

Advocacy is an integral component of the transformative partnership. As defined by UNICEF (2010), advocacy is concerned with seeking changes in governance, attitudes, power, social relations, and/or institutional functions. Its goal is to address imbalances and inequity and to promote human rights. It has a social justice purpose which, in the case of the SNL/DePaul-Tangaza degree completion program, is in the service of promoting women religious’ agency in their living and learning and their likelihood to contribute to an invigorated African continent. In this partnership, the progressive advocacy agenda invokes opportunities for empowerment, awareness raising, and social mobilisation. It has championed, promoted, and supported the development of African women religious in becoming academically grounded, more effective managers and leaders in their home countries, across the continent, and globally.
Advocacy has been a central aspect of the authors’ involvement in the partnership. After the two partners had developed the degree completion program and students had been accepted into the first cohort, an issue arose at the leadership levels of the two institutions, resulting in a decision by the Chicago-based SNL faculty to terminate the relationship. The Dean of SNL and the faculty chair at the time (Tolliver Atta), along with the faculty of African descent, rallied to hold the School accountable for the covenant we had made with students. The message was, “Let the parents work things out but don’t punish the children.” With more information and appeal to the moral aspects of the situation, not wanting to recreate promises made and broken as has been experienced historically between the West and Africa, faculty revisited the earlier decision and vacated the vote to terminate. The investment has since been applauded by many of those who initially voted no.

On another occasion, a DePaul University committee, looking at the financials, recommended that the partnership be dissolved because it was not generating income. At this time, members from both institutions helped to make the case for the continuation of the partnership, again appealing to the mission-driven purpose. It was decided by the President of DePaul at that time to continue to financially support the work of the collaboration. Our appeal to the heart, soul, and spirit of the institution regarding the value and work of the partnership and our responsibility to honour commitments made had a positive impact on the institutions’ decisions, transformative, indeed.

Other advocacy efforts engaged in by the partners included grantwriting and fundraising to find scholarship support for students; networking with congregational, educational and spiritual leaders to inform them of the educational opportunity to enroll in the degree completion program; developing additional pathways into the program beyond the initial Tangaza institutes; advocating for Tangaza leadership and faculty to travel to Chicago to learn more about the competence-based framework and the SNL methodology first-hand; and arranging for Chicago-based faculty to participate in immersion activities while in Kenya in order to better understand the cultural context in which we were partnering.

The role played by culture, and the rituals that reflect back cultural values, cannot be stressed strongly enough when considering how partnerships, particularly those that are international and perceived to be transformative, operate. Culture and its parent, worldview, are always present, and must be acknowledged as factors in partnership relationships. The realities of current and historical legacies of cultural domination, control, and hegemony that can privilege one culture over another make honouring cultural differences and clarifying cultural needs and contexts paramount in assuring optimal transformative potential. In this sense, the expression “When in Rome, do as the Romans do” is more than an instruction solely for travellers. It also points to the need to honour, respect, and incorporate reflective practices that will mark critical moments in the transformative process and signal achievement and success in ways that will resonate most with partner constituents (in this case, learners, faculty, administrators, staff, community members and institutional systems, etc.) as they are, where they are. Cultural rituals that are infused with transformative meaning and are given the space and time needed to engage in them can be powerful demonstrations of empowerment and change.

We encountered many manifestations of culture, including race/ethnicity, gender, and religion, within the partnership (Tolliver, Holton, Grooms, Nyambura & Dralu, 2014). Sometimes it was the celebration of the diversity in cultures; at other times, it was addressing the impact of cultural hegemony, patriarchy, and sexism. The cultural variations both within SNL/DePaul University and Tangaza University College and between the two institutions provided many opportunities for transformative learning and advocacy across this dimension. For example, during one year, a male student was chosen by his cohort to represent the group as the commencement speaker, even though several of the women religious had stronger academic performance and communication skills, which were the selection criteria that had been used previously. The reason given was that he was a man. It was difficult for Chicago-based SNL faculty to resist intervening with a directive to make a different choice, but resist we did. The cohort eventually revisited their choice and designated one of the stronger women students as class speaker. Their new reasoning reflected a willingness and comfort with challenging a perceived status quo that did not fit the developing sense of selves among both women and men.

The authors have had interesting encounters among ourselves, interesting because although we are all of African descent, our experiences and expectations around race sometimes vary because the cultural context regarding race in Africa and the United States is not always the same. Openness to communicate about the various dimensions of cultural
diversity, even when it appears that the cultural experience is shared, is crucial in supporting transformative opportunities in this international partnership. Our Tangaza partners helped the Chicago-based faculty become more informed about various aspects of traditional African culture and its manifestations in the workplace.

While we, the authors, have been open to and willingly grapple with these issues amongst ourselves, it has not always been as easy to do so across racial lines. Discomfort with facing instances of racial insensitivity, disrespect, or expressions of perceived racial superiority directed toward faculty, staff and/or students within and between partners often led to minimising or disregarding important issues that needed to be addressed. The development of cultural humility can support the healthy functioning of partnerships.

Cultural humility has been defined as the “Ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the [person]” (Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington & Utsey, 2013, p. 2). One powerful example of when cultural humility was at work involved a situation where one of the Kenyan-born partners needed information from the office of an older white member of the Kenya-based implementation team. Rather than the white colleague going to her office to retrieve the needed documents, her Kenyan colleague did so instead. Although the Kenyan-born partner held a leadership position, she later shared that given her socialisation, “there was no way I could let her (the older person) pick the file because of her seniority in age.”

The initial reaction of the US-born partners, both of whom were of African descent, was that the Kenyan-born leader need not defer to the white colleague. This stance was based on what they assumed to be and sometimes observed as racial power dynamics inherent in this type of situation. They engaged with their Kenya colleague, who explained how her cultural perspective differed from their own.

In subsequent conversation with the African-born Kenya partner, the US-born partners came to a better understanding of her authentic lived experiences and the parameters of eldership in this Kenya context. Through their openness to reflect upon what they thought they knew and their acceptance of not being expert on all aspects of the partner’s culture, the US-born partners deepened their connection with their Kenyan-born colleague which further enhanced their professional relationship. By enlisting the hallmarks of cultural humility – listening, hearing, reflection, lifelong learning, and open-mindedness – the partnership was strengthened through the intentional and respectful processing of cultural issues as they emerged between partners.

Discussion

What follows are reflections from the authors about some of the lessons learned and challenges they faced as they consider their involvement in this transformative partnership between SNL/DePaul University and Tangaza University College. The authors are differentiated by their initials.

AA. The six-year period of working in the SNL/DePaul University-Tangaza University College BA program brought an encounter with learning in ways never experienced before. This experience enabled an open growth of knowledge where the teaching and learning environment became more collaborative. Summative assessments are often a favoured method of proving that learning has occurred at the end of a set period of time. However, it was evident that an emphasis on formative assessment in the partnership allowed a spirit of “I can do this, I can fly” to emerge and grow in ways that were amazing to witness as we watched learners transform from being very timid at the point of entry to “soaring” when they came through at the end of fifteen months of their BA completion program. The paradigm shift to concentration on what happens to students as they move through a program was evident in facilitators of learning. I learned the function of “facilitation of learning” in the place of lecturing and instruction. The focus for faculty shifted from the students in their classroom to the learners within their program, and learning became much more interactive. Responsibility for learning became a shared partnership between faculty members and learners.

SNL wasn’t going to stay at Tangaza forever. Like a baby who, when born, isn’t going to stagnate forever because she marvels at her sitting or crawling stage, Tangaza would have to move on to the next level. This was understood right from the start such that SNL, the mother program, and Tangaza, the child, built sustainability into their partnership plan. Notably, valuable lessons were to be learned here too. We are all familiar with the analogy of winning over a baby, which (other things being constant)
doesn’t happen in a day or overnight. DePaul Centre for Leadership and Management (as we now call ourselves) at Tangaza had great lessons to learn from the mother program through a well-planned faculty development program, intended to leave an adequately prepared cadre of faculty to carry on with the new methodology that had come into Kenya through the SNL program. The reflective and collaborative model of staff development encompassed a TUC-wide faculty base and empowered local faculty to take the program on beyond the period of the pleasant partnership with DePaul University. Through all of this, what was absolutely necessary was the creation of a sense of autonomy and responsibility to the child program that remained in Kenya, housed in Tangaza University College. The current DePaul CLM BA program (constructed after seasoned scrutiny and several years of shifting, mainly guided by the SNL methodology of learning) emerged as one of the best college-level programs according to feedback from the Commission for University Education in Kenya in 2016.

**KG.** A key lesson learned in this transformative partnership is informed by what Wals and Schwarzin (2012) identify as community characteristics that can inhibit progress and organisational dialogue. These characteristics reflect the tendency to “avoid dealing with conflict, and the presence of hidden hierarchies” where some people on the team see themselves as leaders and others feel marginalised (pg. 17). For a cross-cultural project like the SNL/DePaul-Tangaza BA Degree Completion program to be successful, every member of the team has to see the value of the role they play on the team. Each team member has to bring an active voice to the table; then, in exchange, they need to be respected and heard. To achieve this, the team has to embody a collective aspiration with the intention of moving the project forward (Wals & Schwarzin, 2012). This partnership had dedicated team members who acknowledged conflict among team members when it emerged but did not allow the conflict to interfere with the work. Through resilience and commitment, the partnership became the focal point. With the partnership as the focal point, when leadership in Chicago and in Kenya changed hands at various times over the six years of the program, the project moved forward fairly smoothly and without interruption.

The way forward for this partnership included graduating 142 students from nine African countries. The student composition consisted of 91 females and 33 males and included 57 Catholic nuns from Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi, Ghana, Nigeria, and Congo. The program also provided professional development in the philosophy and methods of adult competence-based education to over 25 Kenya-based faculty members, fostering cross-cultural program development through sharing, bonding and creating. This collaborative learning environment sparked new programs, such as the Kenya-based Bachelor of Arts in Leadership and Management positions and the Leadership Guild (TLG), a professional development group formed by BA degree completion alumni. These programs have offered hundreds of Sisters in senior leadership positions, community leaders, and lay persons the opportunity to develop leadership competence. This ongoing work to continually develop leaders for Africa and the world is reflective of what Wals (2010) describes as sustainability competence, which is to “think in a forward-looking manner, to deal with uncertainty and with predictions, expectations and plans for the future” (pg. 386). This transformative partnership continues beyond what many of us imagined when we started.

**DH.** Perhaps the greatest challenge for me was maintaining perspective from three distinct vantage points, for my role there was three-fold. First, I was a member of the faculty team there to support student success through my participation as an observer and visiting faculty mentor. My second role was both evaluative and instructive. I evaluated implementation of the Foundations of Adult Learning course (FAL, a core course of SNL), and provided training to the newly appointed Kenya Assistant Coordinator, to explain the program in detail, clarify nuanced questions about the program, and support student achievement. I created documents that further clarified the relationship between FAL and other competencies within the lifelong learning domain, particularly with regard to the Externship, which for the Tangaza program was rooted in experiential and service-based learning. My last role required that I participate in conversations with various levels of administration within Tangaza College as well as at national education leadership levels. For example, in an effort to expand the Tangaza program for sustainability as a model for the Kenyan future, we sought partnership with other institutions while we continued to clarify and strengthen the core program. An on-ground review of the curriculum and its impact on graduates was of great interest.

It almost goes without saying that from all sides, effective communication, sensitivity to cultural differences and similarities, an optimistic perspective, and patience go far in buoying best intentions when involved in any intercultural international relationship-building.
Transformative Partnerships

Advocating for Women Religious in Africa

From my three capacities, I had a unique vantage point from which to observe how communication plays a critical part in a program’s success. As “ambassadors” to Tangaza, we, from the United States, were not only tasked with faculty-driven responsibilities in a student-driven program. We were also expected to serve as informed participants committed to the development of our partnership and the growth of the program. Those interactions required careful nuancing of shared language; any faux pas on our part could lead to unfortunate programmatic consequences and jeopardise the sustainability of the program. At the heart, it was the students who mattered most. For the program’s success, the students had to be at the center of their learning.

Perhaps the greatest lesson I learned came from the students. From them, I learned alternative ways to conduct committee meetings. I learned peer support at a deep level – the success of one depends on the efforts of all. This principle revealed itself most when students held their committee meetings. Each student had a peer, and the peer had an active part to play in the primary student’s academic committee meeting, whether it be leading committee members in prayer before the meeting’s start, or taking minutes, or serving as an accountability buddy, or other non-decision-making roles. In this way, the students infused their education with their commitment to their spiritual practice and culture – one goes hand in hand with the other. I learned that the three meetings I observed were characteristic of how all student meetings took place. Although in the United States we “live” at a Catholic institution which is DePaul University, the introduction of prayer into a committee meeting I’d not experienced in my then twenty years of service as an SNL faculty member. I found the Tangaza students’ practice inspiring.

NS. There are certainly many stories of this collaboration that may go untold, by everyone who was on board. These narratives could be from the ladies who cleaned our offices. How did they experience the Kenyan-American experience? Did we (SNL/DePaul University-Tangaza) fit in, like the other institutes where they had cleaned before? When the Chicago-based DePaul faculty visited, and there was a truly different air at our basement offices, how did our cleaning staff experience this? Were they ever greeted by any of the visiting staff? Or do their narratives talk largely into the discourse of the American foreign policies? There are stories from our students and the neighbouring institutes that may never be heard, but this does not make their experiences of us invalid. In fact, a reflection of how others may have experienced us may be an eye opener to some of the intricacies in partnerships. I recall, just when we were starting out, there were many unheard voices of dissent. You would not quite hear these bluntly, but they were there. The students questioned the program, they questioned the methodology, they even questioned us, the faculty. Our visiting faculty also questioned us. They felt they deserved more pay. Why? Was it because of the American connection? Certainly, as the administrators, we were perturbed. Who was saying this, who was the source?

It took us quite a while to realise that the actual set up of Tangaza, being a conglomeration of several institutes, which are sponsored by several religious orders, did actually enable these dissenting voices because of competition for students and other issues, including career, social, racial, and gender-related intricacies. It took us a while to also realise that some of the visiting staff, whom we had engaged from the various institutes, were the voices behind these voices. Certainly, what has been untold has been the silent wars, disclaimers and dirty games that have been at play before this success. And yes, those wars contributed to the success we now talk about. Once we learned who was “for” us, working within the reality of the silent wars became easier.

How did we negotiate this murkiness? A lot of strategising was involved, and negotiating back and forth between the partners, and compromises, and drawing of boundaries, but the most effective activity was the creation of the Centre, because now we could wrestle with the other institutes on a better platform, not as simply some program from the United States. Laying down of structures at the Centre, liaising with the Tangaza administration, and providing more support to the college than to the Centre probably contributed to endearing us to the whole college. I suspect that in some cases, buying off the dissenting voices through academic development and visits to DePaul may have eased the opposition that we greatly experienced.

The ingenuity of the program has been the focus on women religious; their need for the skills provided through the degree was immeasurable. Once they got settled into the program, the narratives that they shared were academic gems for research and I recall that, for the most part, the women religious chose as topics for their Advanced Project (comparable to a senior thesis) issues that affect them, such as being given responsibilities out of
line with their educational background or their personal interests, mid-life crisis, financial issues that bedevil the local religious communities, etc. One of the effects of this program that we observed, and perhaps need to investigate further, is the transformative impact not only for our students but also for the faculty. We observed our students being transformed from very timid, shy, fearful, passive students, to very confident, passionate leaders. Interestingly, the program had such an impact that we even received several students from the religious community who, after being denied an opportunity to come for the course, opted to leave their religious order for the period of time needed for the coursework. I think The Leadership Guild is another ingenious creation of this partnership, and I hope that if both partners can benefit from the lessons learned in the past, they will be able to retain their relevance.

Conclusion

The transformative partnership between SNL/DePaul University and Tangaza University College has been successful in its goal to positively impact leadership development for women religious in Africa. Through the collaboration of these two institutions of higher education, transformative spaces have been opened through an innovative pedagogy, a curriculum that is adapted to the needs and realities of Africa and the global community, and sustainability efforts that intentionally worked to place control and responsibility of the academic enterprise in the host country, thus fostering empowerment and changing perceptions of possibilities of achievement and accomplishments.

Alumni have taken on major leadership responsibilities in their congregations, disseminated findings from their academic research, and networked within their cohorts and into the larger local, national and, for some, international communities, to apply their knowledge and competence about leadership and management, and, in short, become change agents. Their stories are powerful as represented in the following illustrations:

- the Leadership Guild, with women religious as leaders within its alumni-run operational team, which is developing stellar networking, personal, and professional opportunities that are conceptualised within a framework of self-empowerment, agency and social justice – these opportunities have been engaged in by participants both within and outside the SNL/DePaul-Tangaza partnership;
- the young woman religious whose commitment to her own education led her to leave her congregation when she was told that she would have to interrupt her schooling for an extended period of time – this was an action and modelling of self-advocacy and empowerment;
- women religious alumni who are now actively involved in social justice advocacy for issues related to albinism, female genital mutilation (FGM) and HIV/AIDS in community-based organisations after doing their advanced research on these topics toward the end of their program;
- an alumna whose exploration of the experiences of middle-aged women religious has led her to work with Church leadership to better meet the needs of her elder Sisters;
- an alumna who attributes her position in fiscal management within the congregation to her learning within this competency-based partnership program;
- women religious reporting their increased confidence and willingness to challenge the patriarchal paradigms that impact them within the Church and other institutions.

What this all points to is that advocacy in the development of leadership is worth the investment (Wakahiu & Salvaterra, 2012), and thus SNL/DePaul University and Tangaza College, in partnership, have made an important impact in this regard.

While this partnership has primarily focused on a specific group of students and institutes at Tangaza University College, its impact reached far wider than the eight cohorts of students and the faculty and staff who worked with them. For example, partnership-sponsored faculty development efforts included workshops on competency-based education, adult learning pedagogies, African-centered approaches to education, enhancement of student writing, and assessment of student learning – all of which were open to the larger Tangaza University College community, even personnel who were not directly involved in the SNL/DePaul-Tangaza program. Additionally, as women religious in various congregations became familiar with the undergraduate degree completion program, they inquired about
the possibility of providing more formal academic instruction in leadership at the postgraduate levels for women religious who were currently holding executive leadership positions. In response to these requests, a new program focusing on articulation and strengthening of leadership competences has been developed. It, too, is sponsored by the Conrad Hilton Foundation and represents a collaboration between DePaul University and Tangaza University College that is mission–and value–driven.

The relationship between these two educational institutions continues to develop, as one would hope with any transformative partnership. With the shift from a DePaul University-based undergraduate degree to a Kenya-based undergraduate degree, which is a nod to the intentional move to sustainability, the newer iterations of the partnership continue to flourish as it takes in the local and continental cultural contexts in ways that may have been more limited because of the accountability to some DePaul structures and expectations. The movement towards autonomy can be seen as both liberating and empowering. As noted by Brown et al. (2006), the engagement in shared endeavours in transformative partnerships creates the possibility of generative growth.

As a result of the SNL program at Tangaza, I fell in love with Africa again. – SNL alumna, Cohort #3

We close taking note of this human element. With all the accomplishments and achievements noted through participation in this collaboration, what stronger testimony of its importance and transformative nature than this assertion? Renewed love suggests renewed commitment. Isn’t that what we need to prepare leaders who will revitalise Africa and the world?

References


Women religious are agents of social change who work in some of the most demanding and difficult life situations and operate in stressful environments. Like other human persons, women religious need periods of rest and retreat to revitalise their spiritual and physical energy. Overwhelmed by the demands of their mission, occasional cases of burnout may be experienced. In 2002, the congregational leaders of all women religious in Kenya, in a joint life giving venture in partnership with other interested stakeholders, procured a piece of land and built a center where Sisters could retreat and take a rest. It was at this new center, Chemchemi ya Uzima, that the psycho-spiritual Saint Anselm Sabbatical Program was initiated to respond to the need of the religious for rest and revitalisation. Demand for admission into the program is high; of the over 120 applicants annually, only 70 to 80 participants can be enrolled each year. Despite the program being in existence for over ten years, there has been little study of its efficacy and effectiveness. The current study seeks to assess, establish, and document the effects of the psycho-spiritual Saint Anselm Sabbatical Program on women religious graduates in Kenya and beyond. A case study design was used. For the purpose of this in-depth research, participants were purposively sampled given their high level of knowledge of the St Anselm program; this afforded vivid testimonies. The study participants who were interviewed included graduates, congregational leaders, and program staff. Archived program documents were analysed to determine the selection procedures and requirements for admission. Program contents and learning activities were examined.
to shed light on the factors that encouraged creation of the enabling atmosphere that is necessary for growth. Participants’ end-of-program evaluation sheets were also examined to assess students’ satisfaction levels and suggestions on the program. It is hoped that the study’s findings about the effects of the psycho-spiritual Saint Anselm Sabbatical program on women religious in Kenya will offer inspiring insights into the existing ongoing formation of religious men and women.

Keywords: women religious, integral growth, revitalise, inner energy, psycho-spiritual, sabbatical, self-awareness

Introduction

The third of the seventeen UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) addresses health and well-being. A sabbatical rest is one initiative that is responsive to the SDGs; indeed, to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being is the real goal of a sabbatical rest. The word “sabbatical” is drawn for the word “Sabbath”, which goes back to the book of Genesis. After all the work of creation, God rested on the seventh day and made this day holy (Genesis 2:2-3). The Sabbath day of rest became one of the Ten Commandments; “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour, and do all your work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. Neither will the servants and cattle work. They shall all rest” (Exodus 20:8-11).

In the book of Leviticus, God commands the people of Israel to observe the seventh year as a year of Sabbath rest, saying, “When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a Sabbath to the Lord. For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of Sabbath rest, a Sabbath to the Lord. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. The fiftieth year will be a year of jubilee. It will be a year of family reunion. The slaves will be released. The land will fallow. It belongs to the Lord” (Leviticus 25:2-12).

In the book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 15, the sabbatical year was a period where every debt was cancelled and the slaves were freed. With the passage of time, the spirit of a sabbatical rest seems to have been lost, and it became vaguely understood, if not totally misunderstood. Several incidences mentioned in the gospel of Jesus involve conflict with the Jewish leaders of his time on the question of Sabbath. Was it not right that “a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?” (Luke 13:10-17). The Sabbath observance became a central issue and a source of conflict. Jesus gives this law its authentic and authoritative interpretation, and with compassion declares the Sabbath for doing well (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2013, p. 2173). In Mark, Jesus clarifies that the Sabbath was made for man and not the opposite, and declares himself the Lord of the Sabbath (2:28).

Pope Francis (2015) demystifies the essence of the Sabbath rest and relates it to the resurrection:

On Sunday, our participation in the Eucharist has special importance. Sunday, like the Jewish Sabbath, is meant to be a day which heals our relationship with God, with ourselves, with others and with the world. Sunday is the day of the Resurrection, the “first day” of the new creation, whose first fruits are the Lord’s risen humanity, the pledge of the final transfiguration of all created reality. It also proclaims “man’s eternal rest in God”. In this way, Christian spirituality incorporates the value of relaxation and festivity. We tend to demean contemplative rest as something unproductive and unnecessary, but this is to do away with the very thing which is most important about work: its meaning. (Pope Francis, 2015)

In our globalised world, where activism is crowned, productivity is the measure of one’s worth, and gratuity is understood as inactivity, Pope Francis (2015) stated:

We are called to include in our work a dimension of receptivity and gratuity, which is quite different from mere inactivity. Rather, it is another way of working, which forms part of our very essence. It protects human action from becoming empty activism; it also prevents that unfettered greed and sense of isolation, which make us seek personal gain to the detriment of all else. The law of weekly rest forbade work on the seventh day, “so that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and the son of your maidservant, and the stranger, may be refreshed” (Ex 23:12). Rest opens our eyes to the larger picture and gives us renewed sensitivity to the rights of others. And so the day of rest, centered on the Eucharist, sheds its light on the whole week, and motivates us to greater concern for nature and the poor. (Pope Francis, 2015)

The keeping of the Sabbath has become one of the Catholic Church’s norms. States and governments have labour laws that grant and safeguard
for all people a day of rest, a day of worship. Recollection days and annual retreats are means given in the church for rest and reflection. The sabbatical rest has not been given much importance.

The Saint Anselm Sabbatical Program

The Saint Anselm Sabbatical Program is one of the first programs to be offered at Chemchemi ya Uzima Center, and targets women religious who have been in the ministry for many years and need rest and renewal (Ngure, 2015, p. 389). The name Chemchemi ya Uzima simply means “a spring of life”. The center was founded in 2002 by the Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya (AOSK) to respond to the needs of women religious in Kenya for holistic formation.

The Saint Anselm Sabbatical Program seeks to offer a welcoming space, as expressed by the program’s motto, “Come as you are.” The applicants, who are drawn from different congregations, age groups, specialisations, experiences, and nationalities, are required to hand off all of their commitments and reside at the Center for four months. This encourages an inward journey of self-discovery geared towards strengthening relationships between self, God, and others through a holistic and integrative healing process. The terminology used is a “journey from the head to the heart”. Great emphasis is placed on personal development of the participant: psychologically, spiritually, socially, and physically and emotionally. The program also provides avenues for experiential renewal processes through individual and group therapy (AOSK, 2014).

Program Structure

The program structure is organised in such a way that all is geared toward inner process. The various activities in the program include:

i. Personal growth with accompaniment. The participants receive growth facilitation once a week. This is an integral part of the program. Members are helped to explore their issues on a one-on-one basis. Each is assigned to a qualified counsellor.

ii. Lectures and workshops. The lectures and workshops cover a wide spectrum of topics and present ample material for personal reflection, self-awareness, and integration. From the lectures and workshops, participants are challenged to work on triggered issues and gain new perspectives, and are invited to bring these materials to their one-on-one and growth group counselling sessions. The lectures inform and create awareness in the participants’ life journeys, and thus call for inner growth.

iii. Growth group. In a group setting, and facilitated by a qualified group counsellor, members identify their needs, potentials, and self-assertion, and challenge their beliefs and misconceptions. The members help each other to explore the root causes of their issues, and to find new ways of being. They receive emotional support, encouragement, affirmation, and challenge from each other. This leads to new understanding and to behaviour change.

iv. Large group. The programs being residential, promote an experience of relationships in a large group setting. The members are tested in their unconditional positive regard towards themselves and each other, and are challenged by their peers and facilitators. Thus, in a more empirical way, they mutually help each other to grow in healthy and constructive relationships.

v. Community Group (Multi-cultural): Participants are divided into small communities to enhance quality relationships, where they take turns to lead the other members. This is a forum for practicing Gospel values in the community with the Blessed Trinity being the model of their relationships. It is understood that the relationships evolve as members continue to share and bond in the community. This is only possible when there is authentic love, and these groups become a forum to help them to foster their growth towards that direction.

The program embraces a psycho-spiritual approach as inspired by Len Kofler’s personality model, which aims at helping the participants take an inner journey of self-discovery geared to holistic healing, renewal, and integration taking the Holy Trinity as the model of all relationships. Kofler is the founder of the Institute of Saint Anselm in England program.
Kofler’s Personality Model

After several years in counselling and many interactions with religious men and women, Kofler started to explore how spiritual resources are used in the process of counselling. He pondered, “How can we be more helpful to clients whose religious belief system is central to their lives? How can we use their spiritual resources in the process of counselling? Do we not limit the healing process, if we just use traditional psychotherapeutic approaches, which do not take the spiritual dimension into consideration? Why do we hesitate to use the language of spirituality and the religious framework from which it is derived, when these are meaningful for so many clients? …. The client’s religious belief system and spiritual convictions need to become a focal point for integration” (Kofler, 2011, p. 9).

In the quest of seeking understanding, Kofler formed his owned personality model which is a holistic and integrative model that integrates Clarkson’s five therapeutic relationships. Kofler (2011) asserts that the human personality is composed of the lower self (unconsciousness self) which is similar to the Jungian concept of the unconscious, the middle self (consciousness self), and the higher self (the spiritual self), which is the most enlightened aspect of the human person and where God communicates with us. The spiritual self is God’s dwelling and at times is far from us because of our limitations. Through true prayer and meditation at this level, we are illumined and we get in touch with the inner wisdom and power that counselling and psychotherapy tries to access and actualise in a counselling situation. Being in constant touch with our higher self brings great happiness and new life, love, and peace.

Kofler refers to these three selves as the trinity of selves: body, mind, and spirit. The three selves must co-exist and overstressing either one of the three may lead the human person to be pathological (Kofler, 2011, p. 19). God is perfect relatedness. Human beings are social by nature. Human relationship is the most important and beautiful aspect in the life of a human being. Paradoxically, human relation contains the seed for all the most terrible and damaging things that human beings can do to each other, yet healing of a wounded soul can only occur in the context of human relations. Kofler notes that “therapeutic relationship is the true locus, the heart, of all therapeutic efforts. It is the heart of formation work. It is the heart of pastoral work. It is the heart of community living” (Kofler, 2011, p. 27). Counselling then can be clearly understood as the deliberate and professional use of relationship for the healing of the client.

Exploring the relationship between psychology and spirituality in a bid to understand psycho-spiritual counselling is important.

Psychology and Spirituality

Although much has been written on counselling, not much has been written about psycho-spiritual counselling until recently. There is a drama in our world today of separating psychology from spirituality. The human person is a unity of body and soul. Psychology and spirituality have been viewed as contrasting ends with no relationship. The human psyche incorporates the body, mind, and spirit.

While psychology is the study of the mind, spirituality describes the state of the soul. Psychology, according to Garret (1995), is concerned about what a person feels, understands, knows, chooses, and actually does, as well as with the question of how and why this happens (Garretti, 1995, p. 6). Spirituality as understood in this study is the recognition of a higher power in one’s life. It is an expression of one’s desire to connect with this transcendent being and find the meaning of one’s existence in the world and among other people. The integrating of psychology and spirituality is essential for human growth. Logan (2015) asserts that spirituality is not just beneficial but a critical piece of the puzzle, and he notes that there is a visible synthesis of spiritual, cognitive, behavioural, somatic and other techniques that are known to be highly effective methodologies in counselling (Logan, 2015). It has taken scholars and practitioners years to draw the relationship between psychology and spirituality. In recent decades, spirituality has become a prominent focus of psychological inquiry (Fitzpatrick & Daniels, 2013).

Pope Benedict XVI (2009), in his encyclical letter Caritas in Veritate on the development of peoples and technology, contributes this to this discussion: “One aspect of the contemporary technological mindset is the tendency to consider the problems and emotions of the interior life from a purely psychological point of view”. He further notes that “the state of emptiness in which the soul feels abandoned, despite the availability of countless therapies for body and psyche, leads to suffering” (Pope Benedict XVI, 2009). Psycho-spiritual counselling employs an integrated approach,
considering body, mind, emotions, and spirit. Faith and reason are two sides of the same coin; so are psychology and spirituality.

Tannenbaum agrees that there are several ways to view life and its ups and downs, each involving different philosophical and spiritual perspectives; therapists can apply several spiritual belief systems, incorporating eastern and western approaches, to achieve the goal of spiritual counselling. It is important to note that there is also traditional therapy in Africa. Mpolo (2005), discussing healing and care, refers to traditional therapy in Africa and posits that the “restoration of broken relationships, the restoration of social equilibrium and the revitalisation of the individual identity within the context of the renewed community are the major means and dynamic end underlying traditional African societies” (Mpolo, 2005, p. 13). Traditional therapy in Africa is one of the mysteries that even missionaries could not grasp. Mokgobi (2015) states that “people do not seem to understand how traditional healing is related to God and religion/spirituality.” Tannenbaum, comparing traditional therapy and psycho-spiritual counselling, seems not to grasp the truth about traditional therapy when he writes, “Traditional therapy helps the client understand the workings of the ego and psycho-spiritual counselling helps the client understand the ego and looks at ways to transcend the ego at the same time. The psycho-spiritual therapist tries to help the client identify with something beyond the self”. Tannenbaum admits that this is not easy “because the client has to develop a healthy ego to be ready to let it go and understand what lies at the foundation of his or her existence” (Tannenbaum, n.d.). This may be understood as indicating that traditional therapy did not go beyond the ego, yet God was in everything that Africans did and spirituality was part and parcel of traditional healing.

Research Problem

How has the Saint Anselm Sabbatical Program been responding to people who are seeking a deeper understanding of their own lives? How is the program responding to the needs of those who are deeply traumatised and are despairing in life? How has the program contributed in shaping the lives of the participants in relation to their community living, prayer, and apostolates?

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this research was to explore the effects of the Saint Anselm Sabbatical Program in supporting the ongoing formation for women religious in Kenya. The study sought to appraise, establish, and document the effects of the psycho-spiritual Saint Anselm Sabbatical Program in Kenya. It is hoped that the findings will shed light on the full spectrum of benefits afforded by a sabbatical break in relation to ongoing formation and apostolic life.

Research Design and Methodology

For the purpose of this comprehensive research on the effects of the Saint Anselm Sabbatical Program, the assessment is based on the goals and objectives of the program.

Purposive sampling method was used which involved “selecting a sample on the basis of knowledge of research problem to allow the selection of typical persons for inclusion in the sample” (Ngigi, Wakahiu, & Karanja, 2016, p. 67). For the purpose of this study, thirty-five past graduates of the program, twelve congregational leaders and four long-serving program staff were interviewed to provide vivid testimonies of their experiences in the Saint Anselm program. Random recruitment files of application forms were utilised to determine the selection procedures and requirements for admission. The program contents and learning activities were used to determine the dynamics that were employed to create a qualifying atmosphere crucial for personal growth.

Three sets of questionnaires were used to collect data from program graduates, congregational leaders, and program staff. The questionnaires had four parts. The first part consisted of multiple choice questions where participants were asked to give reasons for their answers. The second part of the questionnaire was on specific aspects of the program, contents and learning activities, and asked the participants to indicate whether each was more beneficial or less beneficial and to give reasons. The third part of the questionnaire had two questions on the challenges participants encountered in the program and suggestions for improving the program. The last part of the questionnaire asked participants to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the provided statements using one of four answers (“strongly agree”, “somewhat agree”, “somewhat disagree”, and “strongly disagree”),

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with an additional column that allowed the participants to provide additional feedback. All the data collected was placed under emerging themes.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the research, respecting the participants’ views while exploring the effects of the Saint Anselm Sabbatical Program in supporting the ongoing formation of women religious in Kenya.

Criteria Used in Selecting Candidates for the Saint Anselm Sabbatical Program

The age of the participants. This question was directed to the 36 graduates of the sabbatical program at Chemchemi ya Uzima. Of the 36 graduates, 33 responded. Three percent of the participants were between 25 and 35 years of age, 40% were between 36 and 45, 30% were between 46 and 55, 12% were between 56 and 65, and 15% were between 65 and 70 years of age, as indicated in Figure 1.

Most of the students were between the ages of 36 and 50, a range situated within the seventh of Eric Erikson’s eight stages of psychosocial development. This is the age of generativity versus stagnation. The vital question at this age is what and how one can make one’s life meaningful. This is the age of commitment to care and nature, and an age of great choices where inactivity and meaninglessness become major concerns. Generativity comprises procreativity, productivity, and creativity, and thus the generation of new ideas, including a kind of self-generation concerned with further identity development (Erikson, 1998). When life is lived well, despair or stagnation will not have a threshold. Linn et al. note that “stagnation is the feeling of having forfeited my contribution to life in my age, a contribution that I would have handed down to future generations” (Linn, Fabricant, & Linn, 1988, p. 183). To have a sabbatical break at this age is the best gift one can make to one’s self.

How participants came to learn of the program. Seventy-two percent of those interviewed knew about the sabbatical program from their congregational leaders, 25% learned about the program from spiritual directors or from friends who had attended the program before, and another 3% knew of the program from brochures or the website. Of the 36 participants, about 81% requested to enroll for the sabbatical program and about 19% were asked to go by their superior. From the study sample, it is clear that a majority of those who attended the sabbatical program requested to go; in fact, one Sister confided that she had to wait three years before her sabbatical was finally granted.

Criterion for selection of candidates for sabbatical program. Of the fifteen congregational leaders who were interviewed, only eleven responded to this item, and this is what they had to say. Most participants who attended the sabbatical program were offered the chance because they were given a new appointment, had performed a long term of service without a break, were facing difficult circumstances, or had a personal need for the program. Figure 2 presents these findings.

![Figure 1. Age groups of participants by percentage.](image_url)
One staff member shared her experience, saying, “Some came just because their congregational leaders enrolled them for the program, but at the end of the course they went away full of joy and gratitude. It is an individual person who must make the decision to begin the process, regardless of whether they requested for it or it was proposed to them by their congregational leaders.” Another staff confirmed that “Journey into the self is a hard journey, and some resistance is expected, but with a counsellor who has her skills and people at heart, and a willing client, all is possible.” In the event that a participant is unwilling to begin the counselling process, and is affecting the development of the growth group processes, the staff through consultations may request this person to discontinue the program.

One would assume that Sisters who choose or request to take a sabbatical program would have it easy. This is not so. There are persons who willingly accept the offer to take a break from apostolate and attend the sabbatical program at Chemchemi ya Uzima but who ultimately do not go through the process. As one staff member explained:

> Often times we experience persons [who are] intellectually developed but may not be in touch with their spiritual aspect or emotional or psychological aspect, or they are not even able to relate with self and others. They may be great charismatic leaders but they cannot reach out to God, simply because some aspects of their lives were emphasised [more] during their development than others.

A client may have the smartest counsellor the world can offer, but the counsellor is just an instrument. A counsellor can help the client discover the resources within self, indicate the way, and facilitate the journey, but it is the client who must take the journey (Kofler, 2011).

Congregational leaders have a duty to provide and offer possibilities of ongoing formation to their members (Ngure, 2015). It may happen that they enroll members who have great health issues, or psychological or emotional challenges, in the hope that transformation will occur. A sabbatical break would not be enough to assist people who have deep and painful past experiences. Some might need a life support and not just a sabbatical program. Therefore, the sabbatical program is not meant to take participants with a serious history of health issues, or serious mental/behavioural health cases, for they can hardly bear the demands of the standard program. The Saint Anselm Sabbatical Program was initiated to

**Figure 2. Criteria for selection of candidates for participation in the sabbatical program.**

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<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal need</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>New appointment</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Those in difficulties</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long services</td>
<td>40%</td>
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</tbody>
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welcome and accompany women religious in a renewal course, given that because women religious serve assiduously, at times in very remote areas, fatigue and stress are inevitable (Ngure, 2015).

Pope John Paul II stressed that, “Formation should…have a profound effect on individuals, so that their every attitude and action, at important moments as well as in the ordinary events of life, will show that they belong completely and joyfully to God. Since the very purpose of consecrated life is conformity to the Lord Jesus in his total self-giving, this must also be the principal objective of formation” (John Paul II, 1996). Later, Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation (2016) emphasised that formation of seminarians needs appropriate integration of spiritual, doctrinal, and psychological formation. Some of them come from troubled backgrounds and experiences. Some come from troubled families, with absent parents and lack of emotional stability. There is a need to ensure that all stages of the formation of religious men and women enable them to attain maturity and psychological balance needed for their ministry. (Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Amoris Lætitia, 2016, p. 203).

The role of the Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya through the Saint Anselm Sabbatical Program is to guarantee that the Sisters and all who attend formation programs get what it takes to achieve an appropriate integrated formation at all levels of the human person.

Exploring the Course Design and Interviewees’ Feedback

Course content should be aligned to the desired results. Interviewees shared their thoughts on what was the most and least helpful content and underlined the challenges they encountered. The following areas were the subject of discussions: one-on-one growth facilitation, growth group, large group, community group (multi-cultural), lectures, workshops, reflection time, and rest.

Study participants were presented with an item asking them to indicate what aspect of the program they found most beneficial. More than 60% of the graduates felt that one-on-one growth facilitation was most beneficial to them, 33% mentioned lectures, and 3% found reflection and rest most beneficial. One-on-one growth facilitation was singled out as one of the most beneficial component of the program for the healing it facilitates. One member of staff noted:

Most of the feedback given at the end of every sabbatical course indicated that the participants who took the course seriously valued personal encounter in one-on-one sessions with their counsellor very much. They felt accepted for who they were, listened to, caringly challenged and empowered. Most of them said that in one-on-one session, they also learned many skills from their counsellors. Once one exclaimed, “If I had experienced this in my earlier life, I could have been better than I am.”

While in the focus group, the graduates were asked whether the counselling experience they had in the last four months was similar to past sessions of counselling in which they had participated before coming into the program; they unanimously said that it is completely different and with no equal. Participants felt free to share, were not afraid of being judged, and felt accepted as they are. The environment was conducive, the whole process was personally driven, and counsellors valued each word they said and never imposed solutions. They got in touch with an inner power, with God, and with others in a way they had never experienced before, which gave them great esteem of self in spite of the issues that surfaced daily that needed healing. One graduate in the focus group confessed, “I can’t believe it that in four months I shared so much that I have not been able to do in the last five years in counselling.” And everybody nodded or said it was also true for them. Another graduate candidly shared, “It was my first time to open up my life to someone and I realised that keeping secrets of life does not help.” Still another graduate had this to share:

There was a lot of digging into the childhood, adolescent, and adult stages of life. A lot of insights were discovered which were challenging and needed to be healed and lived better. I have a better knowledge of myself through the accompaniment.

The one-on-one growth accompaniment helps the individuals to encounter their inner selves while clarifying issues in a way they have not done before. They have an environment, a personal forum in which it is safe to do so, in the presence of someone who does not judge them (Kofler, 2011).

There was a general consensus that one-on-one growth facilitation was also the most challenging experience. Some participants recalled how scared they were at the start of the sabbatical period, “Initially I had difficulty in starting the processes, but later I came out of myself. It was my first time to come across counselling; I was scared, but my
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that once some participants resumed their work, the fruits of the sabbatical experience sadly waned. This research reveals also the need for a follow-up program.

All of the participants interviewed agreed that they would recommend others to go through the experience, and 94% of the graduates were interested in training and getting more skills in psycho-spiritual counselling so as to engage in counselling themselves. As one graduate explained simply, “I desired to become a psycho-spiritual counsellor.”

Recommendations to the Saint Anselm Sabbatical Program

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study:

1. Saint Anselm Sabbatical Program should consider offering alternatives to the four-month sabbatical program; this could be in terms of both duration and course content, with follow-up programs for past participants.

2. Saint Anselm Sabbatical Program staff should visit other sabbatical programs to share learnings and learn from others.

3. The program should consider the inclusion of clergy, religious men, brothers and lay people.

4. It would be opportune for the Saint Anselm Sabbatical Program to offer courses on psycho-spiritual counselling skills to both formation directors and congregational leaders.

5. The program should consider introducing a monthly newsletter or magazine on different formation issues and case studies.

6. AOSK should study the possibility of having other similar centers and programs to respond to the growing demand.

7. AOSK should consider periodic program impact assessment.

8. AOSK should invite and involve more partners. This would help AOSK to replicate this program elsewhere in order to reach more people.
The study also generated the following three recommendations for other congregations and institutions of learning:

1. It is very encouraging when people and organisations come together to respond to common needs that affect their members and offer possibilities for members to access the services they require.

2. It is recommended that all counselling programs in other institutions and congregations consider integrating psychology and spirituality in their trainings and practice.

3. The congregations should encourage more Sisters to enroll into the program.

**Conclusion**

Partnership is the way to go. When organisations come together for a common purpose and agree on the way to go, they achieve more than they could as individuals. The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal 17 (SDG 17) singles out partnership as a key operating strategy. This research has presented the achievements of such partnerships, in this case among congregations of women religious in Kenya, as validated by the study’s findings on the effects of the psycho-spiritual Saint Anselm Sabbatical Program. The contributions of this program as part of ongoing formation, and the inner transformation it brings to those who have undergone the experience, qualify it as a unique and exemplary program that can be adopted for other formation programs in Africa and beyond.

The analysis of the interviewees’ perceptions and experiences in the sabbatical program reveals that the program is achieving its goals and objectives. The program helped participants to start an inward journey of self-discovery that led to an increased self-awareness, a greater deepening of one’s relationship with self, and a deepening of one’s relationship with God, with others, and with the environment. The participants were further helped to find avenues for experiential renewal, to understand the relationship between psychology and spirituality, to reinforce their relationship and leadership skills, to express their feelings, to appreciate their calling, and above all to begin a journey in healing past memories. Participants were re-energised, acquired skills, and returned to their ministries and communities with a mission to better other people and to help other people. They had grasped the true meaning of a sabbatical program; it is not just rest or inactivity, but another way of working, which is another important aspect of our essence.

The findings are clear that the psycho-spiritual integrated approach to counselling touches the core of the human person and is applicable to the African context. The clients discover an inner power and energy that enables them through a journey from the head to the heart, which leads to a holistic healing, renewal, and integration. A psycho-spiritual sabbatical period is a time for cancelling debts; that is, it is a time of personal healing and forgiveness. Each person is a creditor and debtor to the self. So there is a liberating power, a healing, that allows the participants of the sabbatical to be free and to free others. It is reflected by the joy that accompanies them after the four months as they resume their apostolic and community life.

None of us is indispensable. There is much a sabbatical rest can do to protect our services from becoming mere activism, to reduce medical bills, and to promote harmonious community living and more productive apostolates. Sabbatical rest as described in this chapter is for people who want to live a more meaningful and integrated life. Only God is the Creator and to Him belongs all that came to be.

To promote strategic, social, and sustainable change for women religious in Africa requires the joint intentional effort of all agencies, foundations, and institutions. Integral formation and availability of renewal programs for the women religious will have a great effect on the lives of many, given the vital role they play in society.

**References**


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RELIGIOUS WOMEN AND EDUCATION IN KENYA: CONTRIBUTION OF THE SALESIAN SISTERS OF DON BOSCO AND SISTERS OF MERCY.

Naomi Mwangi
Sisters of Emmanuel

Abstract

Nearly everyone has witnessed the good services rendered by women religious especially in the field of education. This chapter examines the contributions of the Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco through application of the preventive system and the Sisters of Mercy through education for the marginalised living in slums. Rather than implying something negative that stops or hinders something, the preventive system incorporates the intention of foreseeing and forestalling anything that would give rise to negative experiences. Education is a basic human right and a catalyst for poverty reduction. Providing education to the marginalised, especially in the slums, is one way of alleviating poverty. The two congregations were chosen for their uniqueness and their contributions. The study is framed by Bloom’s taxonomy (Benjamin, 1956), and was guided by the following research questions: What unique contributions are these congregations making in education? What challenges are they encountering? What recommendations can be made regarding the future of education ministry? The study employed a qualitative approach. The design adopted was the case study. In-depth interviews, focus groups, observation, and a document analysis guide were used as the instruments of data collection. The sample consisted of 25 respondents including Sisters, teachers, parents, social workers, and students/pupils. Purposive and convenience sampling were employed. Narrative reports were used to analyse the data. The findings show that the Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco have contributed to education through the preventive system, which offers holistic education and sponsorship for the poor. The Sisters of Mercy offer holistic education in the slums by providing sponsorship and skills to the poor and those with disabilities.

Keywords: women religious, holistic education, preventive system, contribution, poor and marginalised.

Introduction

Religious women have been concerned about education as a major means of radiating values that foster a deepening commitment of Christianity. They deal with the major levels of the person, namely the spiritual, intellectual, moral, and emotional balance. Canon 795 states:

Education must pay regard to the formation of the whole person so that they may attain their eternal destiny and at the same time promote the common good of the society. Children and young persons are therefore to be cared for in such a way that they may attain a greater sense of freedom and be formed to take active part in social life. (John Paul II, 1983, Code of Canon Law 795)

The Church in this document earnestly encourages the institutions that make use of Catholic education in their mission to uphold it. When the Church speaks of education, it refers to holistic education. Bennaars (1993) asserts that this kind of education is an alternative education, which results in alternative development. Education in general leads to the maturity of the human person and also the knowledge of salvation and right living. Moreover, Catholic education is not simply about learning doctrine but also about developing the full potential of the human being. This includes a religious dimension, which is integrated into the intellectual, physical, and moral being of a person. Catholic schools, then, are to be imbued with a Christian spirit in all they undertake. In this chapter, the central concern is Catholic education, which through its focus on multiple dimensions of human development leads to a personal synthesis of faith and life for each student. Growth in all areas – physical, emotional, moral, and spiritual – prepares students for a meaningful life of service as committed Christians building the kingdom of God in a pluralistic society.

In his address during the welcoming ceremony upon his arrival at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on July 23 2013, Pope Francis articulated the mission of the church. He maintained that we must create the material and spiritual
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Education and training, the world of work, and adult roles and responsibilities (World Bank 2005). According to Roberts (2015), education has the power to transform lives. It broadens people’s freedom of choice and action, empowering them to participate in the social and political lives of their societies and equipping them with the skills they need to develop their livelihoods. For the marginalised, education can be a route to greater social mobility and a way out of poverty. According to Mandela (2008), inclusive education broadens opportunities and helps to build an inclusive society.

Caring for the poor is everyone’s responsibility. Preferential care should be shown to poor and vulnerable people, whose needs and rights warrant special attention in God’s eyes. Jesus taught that God asks each of us what we are doing to help the poor and needy: “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40). Reaching the poorest and most marginalised people often requires greater effort in discovering where they are to be found. This sometimes means that additional resources of time and money are required.

In this chapter, two congregations have been selected to better illustrate the contributions of women religious in the field of education in Kenya: The Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco and the Sisters of Mercy. These congregations were selected for the study because of their major contributions to education, especially the provision of holistic education to the poor and marginalised and the application of the preventive system of education. On the basis of this research, suggestions are made for improving the congregations’ contributions to education. Adoption of these proposals will help the education stakeholders in Kenya and Africa at large. These principles can also be applied by other religious congregations who are educationists.

Methodology

The study applied a qualitative approach. According to Manson (2002), qualitative research aims to produce factual descriptions based on knowledge acquired during face-to-face encounters with individuals and social groups in their natural settings. Case study design was used. Becker (1970) explains that the case study is a detailed analysis of an individual case, and presupposes that one can properly acquire knowledge of a phenomenon from intensive exploration of a single case.
Data Collection Methods

In-depth interviews, focus groups, observation and a document analysis guide were used as the instruments of data collection. In the interviews, the researcher interacted with individual participants on a one-on-one basis guided by research questions. For the focus groups, the researcher assembled those who were conducting the same vocational training course, then moderated and recorded the discussions. Direct observation was used to obtain information about the interaction between teachers and students and the physical facilities. The rest of the information was obtained through the document analysis guide and the internet.

Sampling Methods

The sample was selected using purposive and convenience sampling. Purposive sampling was done to select Sisters, teachers, alumni and students/pupils. Twenty-five individuals were interviewed, and two focus groups were conducted. Convenience sampling was used to select the Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco in Makuyu, where they operate a secondary school, primary school, vocational training and rescue centers. The same approach was utilised at Mukuru Promotion Centre, where the Sisters of Mercy operate six schools, vocational training and rescue centers.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents the finding of the study. Narrative reports were used so that situations can be described as they occurred in the natural settings. Reports were guided by the following themes: the system and philosophy of education of each congregation, the contributions and impact of their education in society, and the challenges they are facing. Conclusions were drawn and finally recommendations were made.

Theoretical Framework

This study is framed by Bloom’s taxonomy, which is based on holistic education of students. The highest function of education is to bring about an integrated individual who is capable of dealing with life as a whole.

The taxonomy of education objectives, often called Bloom’s taxonomy, is a classification of the different objectives and skills that educators set for their students. The taxonomy was proposed in 1956 by Benjamin Bloom, an educational psychologist at the University of Chicago. Bloom’s taxonomy divides educational objectives into three domains: affective, psychomotor and cognitive. According to Orlich (2004), the goal of Bloom’s taxonomy is to motivate educators to focus on the three domains in order to create a more holistic form of education. Education should be understood as the art of cultivating the moral, emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of the child.

Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco and their Contribution to Education

Historical Foundation

The congregation of the Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco, also known as The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, was founded by St Maria Mazarello in 1872 to work alongside Don Bosco in his teaching projects in Turin. His mission was to be a friend to the young who are poor and abandoned. Most of the work of Salesians is with young people in schools, oratories, youth centers, technical and professional training centers, parishes, foreign missions, and activities in the realm of mass media and social communications. Salesians arrived in Kenya and East Africa in June 1980. They have schools in Makuyu, Embu, Marsabit, Nairobi, and Siakago. One Salesian Sister summarised the work of her congregation:

We commit ourselves to the new evangelisation of the youth. Impelled by our charism, we evangelise by educating. We open up new ways for education of the young, deepening within them an attitude of respect for the dignity of human person and openness to life in all its forms. We commit ourselves to a community lifestyle which is poor, simple, welcoming and able to create a new educative presence among the poor youth. (Sr Laurencia, Personal Communication, October 2016)

St Mary Mazzarello and St John Bosco were known to have endless patience with young people. In fact, Don Bosco said, “Never send negligent pupils out of the classroom. Be patient with their light-mindedness” (Lemoyne, 1972). It could be said that joy and optimism were part of Don
Bosco and Mary Mazzarello’s way of looking at the world and all of reality. In all things, they could not help but see their potential. St John Bosco also said, “Always tend to think well of other people. Give them credit at least for their good intentions. Never throw back into their face wrongs already forgiven, do good to all; harm to no one” (Lemoyne, 1972). That is how Salesians today look at young people, as God’s works that are so full of potential.

Don Bosco and Mary Mazzarello encouraged their followers to work hard and tirelessly. The motto St John Bosco chose for his work begins with the phrase “Da Mihi Animas “give me souls”, and in choosing this as the first half of his motto, St John Bosco was choosing to put work first—to put his work for the salvation of the young at the fore. To this day, Salesians are known for being hard-working individuals who are never afraid to sweep the halls, get to class on time, or to teach. As one Sister expressed, “We love hard work” (Sr Laurencia, Personal Communication, October 2016).

**Contribution to Education through the Preventive System**

The word preventive is derived from the Latin praevenire, “to precede”, “to anticipate”, and “to go before with spiritual help”. In this sense, its orientation is positive. The term may evoke associations with deep intuitions, precise options, and methodological criteria, all lived with particular intensity. For the Salesians, prevention includes the art of positive education by putting forward what is good through appropriate experiences which call for the involvement of the pupil. It also includes the art of producing growth in the young persons “from within” by appealing to their inner freedom to oppose external conditioning and formalism (Lemoyne, 1972).

Each young person is first responsible for his or her own growth and maturity. Therefore, Salesians apply a holistic learning approach. According to Flake (2000), holistic education is an educational experience that promotes a more balanced development of the human person and links the different aspects of an individual. These aspects include the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social, and aesthetic dimensions. As such, it is a competence-based approach, interlinking knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for life in society. Holistic learning is also differentiated learning. The learning activities should address a range of learning styles that accommodate multiple intelligences and occupy the cognitive, emotive, social, and technical domains. According to Avallones (1999), the education system of the Salesians is called the preventive system. Don Bosco drew up an educational method which was the fruit of spiritual life, practical experience, and dialogue with other educators. He expressed it using a brief formula of anecdotes and advice to educators. Article 20 of the Salesian constitution speaks of the preventive system in two different but complementary ways: in dealing with the Salesian spirit, and in relation to their educative and pastoral plan. The preventive system is described as a way of living, of spreading the gospel message, and of working with and through the young for their salvation. The practice of this system is all based on the words of St Paul, who says: “Love is patient, love is kind... it bears all things... hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Corinthians. 13:4-7). For this reason, only a Christian can successfully apply the preventive system. Loving kindness, reason, and religion are the means the educator should make constant use of if he wishes to be obeyed and attain his goal (Salesian Youth Ministry, 2000).

**Loving-kindness.** According to the Salesians, loving kindness is expressed as unconditional acceptance, constructive positive rapport, sharing of joys and sorrows, and the ability to manifest educative love by signs. This loving kindness is expressed in three different ways: through physical presence, a word in the ear, and correction and punishment.

**Physical presence.** Here the Salesian or the teacher shows his love for the young person by being with them; this is a great proof of love. The working style of the teachers is assistance of young people. Within the assistance, the teacher should have an eye for the group as well as for the individual, focusing on those young people who need the most attention without forgetting about the group. In the first place, attendance means to be actively present. The teacher is amidst the young people and takes part in their daily life (Sr Laurencia, Personal Communication, October 2016).

**Word in the ear.** This refers to the custom of whispering an encouraging word, a correction, or an exhortation. The teachers encourage young people in their ongoing development. They do this by recognising the young people’s achievement and positively challenging them. Confidence is won by overcoming generation gaps or age barriers. This is accomplished by a certain familiarity. Outside the classroom, teachers and Sisters mingle...
freely with pupils and enjoy their laughs and jokes. Such occasions give students an opportunity to see teachers as trusted friends (Peter, Personal Communication, October 2016).

Correction and punishment. Don Bosco was very insistent that correction be administered in private as much as possible, and that corporal punishment should be altogether avoided. The teacher gains confidence and respect of the pupil through love, not fear. This is achieved through warm and expansive kindness, through perseverance and patience, and by avoiding harshness and sarcasm. A friendly, kind approach is used in counselling or correcting. When the student realises that a friend is at hand, his heart will open, and anxieties and needs will unfold. The teachers do not behave in an authoritative manner, and do not decide on harsh rules and sanctions. It means also that they do not impose false expectations but indicate what they think is acceptable and why (Ann Mutegi, Personal Communication, October 2016).

Avallopes (1999) states that among the many problems facing youth today is a sense of hopelessness. Many young people do not see the way out of poverty and impossible home conditions. They need someone who cares and helps them to believe that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. The teacher has to create an environment where the family spirit reigns. This is achieved through rapport, friendliness, presence, respect, attention, dedication to service, and personal responsibility. Gymnastics, sports, music, theater, and outings are most efficacious means of obtaining discipline, benefiting spiritual and bodily health, as long as they do not sin. As a family, they celebrate together the feasts of Don Bosco, Mary Help of Christians. They also have a Gratitude Day, where they remember the Help of Christians. They have a Gratitude Day, where they remember the Help of Christians. They also have a Gratitude Day, where they remember the Help of Christians. They have a Gratitude Day, where they remember the Help of Christians. They also have a Gratitude Day, where they remember the Help of Christians. They have a Gratitude Day, where they remember the Help of Christians. They also have a Gratitude Day, where they remember the Help of Christians. They have a Gratitude Day, where they remember the Help of Christians. They also have a Gratitude Day, where they remember the Help of Christians.

Reason. Since the young people are expected to perform their duties with love, it is important that they understand what they are expected to do, and why they do it. For Don Bosco, reason includes judgment, prudence, understanding, naturalness, and moderation. This is shown in various ways. First, clear ideas and aims are accompanied by flexibility toward circumstances and person. Second, help is given to the young to act out of conviction. And finally, a calm atmosphere is created around them and importance is given to instruction as well as cultural and technical formation. The sole purpose of this system was the integral salvation of the young. Hence in this system, it is God who comes first, and the explicit Christian idea does not brook any neutrality, nor accept any other ideology. Here Don Bosco wanted the young to reason out the purpose and need for judicious discipline when the time came that it was called for. The cultivation of an open and spontaneous attitude, he felt, is of prime importance, to helping the young person grow into maturity.

How can reason be used effectively in the difficult art of teaching? It provides the teacher with an excellent disciplinary means to lay down rules for behaviour and to ensure that they are followed without having recourse to punishments. Njoroge (Personal Communication, October 2016) offered some important tips for keeping the rules reasonable: keep them few, or you will curtail spontaneity, and keep them simple, to help students understand them. It is also best to involve the child in the formulation of a rule, especially if they have reached the age of reason; this will help them to understand the purpose of the rule. Rules should be communicated clearly, with tactful reminders from time to time, and implemented with firmness. Rules have functional value. They are but an aid to fulfill a purpose outside them.

A teacher is seen as a bridge which demands constant presence and open dialogue with the youth. It also implies a deep respect for the young, and a willingness to spend time with them in order to get to know them. The teacher is entirely consecrated to the welfare of his pupils and should therefore be ready to face every difficulty and endure fatigue in order to obtain his object, which is moral, physical, spiritual, and intellectual education for his pupils. All need patience, diligence and prayer, if rules are to be truly effective (Njoroge, Personal Communication, October 2016).

Religion. For Don Bosco, holiness is one of the ideals that the youth have to achieve. This must be demonstrated in certain basic attitudes, such as a place of encounter with God. Don Bosco relied very much on religion in his approach to education. He took up many Christian religious practices as a means to achieve his goal of forming young people into good Christians and honest citizens. In the preventive system, this is done by supporting the young people in their search for meaning in their life by teaching them to be respectful towards others regardless of race, age, nationality, appearance, religious belief, or physical and mental ability. This imparts the values of kindness, forgiveness, empathy, and optimism,
and helps to create a fair and welcoming society for all (Sr Laurencia, Personal Communication, October 2016).

The role of a teacher is to teach the young about moral and spiritual values which have great influence in their lives. Bansikiza (2001) says that restoring moral formation prepares individual minds to be internally consistent and harmonious with themselves. According to Elizabeth (Personal Communication, October 2016), life skills lessons are taught especially on topics which are affecting the young people, such as drug abuse, sexuality, self-awareness, the adolescent stage, social skills, and many others. Weekly spiritual movements include a Bible movement, the Focolare Movement, and a Young Christian Students pastoral program. Students participate in Mass, prayers, and Bible reading on a daily basis. Catechetical instructions for those who are not baptised or confirmed are also offered. The priest is available for confessions, and brothers work together with the priest to facilitate seminars and workshops.

According to Avallones (1999), one characteristic of Salesian schools is paying close attention to those who are marginalised and at the fringe of the society. They seek to foster freedom and openness, where the center of the educative project is the student. Salesian schools aim at creating a youth community. Teachers are to be found with their students because of their personal interest in their student’s welfare. This requires the constant presence of the educator, as Don Bosco said, “Understand that as far as I am concerned I am for you day and night, morning and evening, and at whatever time. I have no other intention than that of providing for your moral, intellectual, physical and spiritual advantage. But to succeed in this I need your help. If you give it to me, I assure you that the help of the Lord will not be lacking and we will also do great things together” (Lemoyne, 1972).

Auffray (1959) notes that this system calls only for that discipline necessary to keep a school as orderly as befits an educational institute, while it closes an eye to all unnecessary trifles. Students are taught the value of hard work and time management. They practice the policy of movement by running. Self-discipline is emphasised whereby the students are supposed to do the right thing without being followed (Jemmimah, Personal Communication, October 2016).

Musaazi (1985) adds that education is an activity which involves the cooperation of teachers, parents, children, and the community as a whole, especially in Africa where people believe that they live for one another. Since the family is the first social environment of the child, he/she is likely to trust his/her parent. Parenting appears to be the most important factor associated with educational achievement. Parental involvement in education seems to be a more important influence than poverty, school environment, and even the influence from peers. Parents are essentially involved in the formation of the young people. Their involvement is supported in the schools through parents’ seminars and workshops on how to practice the preventive system (Sr Laurencia, Personal Communication, October 2016).

**Challenges Facing Salesian Sisters in Implementing the Preventive System in Education**

The challenges discussed here were cited by all ten respondents (100%) encountered through face-to-face interviews. The main challenges mentioned were:

1. Participants, especially teachers, reported that the preventive system is not easy to implement; it requires one to be actively present. The educator is among young people and takes part in their daily life during moments of education, meals, reflection, and games. This is very demanding for a teacher, and one has to sacrifice. On the other hand, it must be remembered that it takes time for new staff members to adapt to the system.

2. Many parents do not understand the system well, and this becomes difficult especially when they are involved in disciplining the students. They cannot understand how a student can be disciplined without using corporal punishment and harsh words.

3. Some of the students take advantage of the preventive system, and become undisciplined because they know the Sisters and teachers will be patient with them.
The Sisters of Mercy and their Contribution to Education

Historical Foundation

The Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy were founded in 1827 by Catherine McAuley, who in her educational endeavours sought to bring freedom and a better quality of life to the poor and to lead all in her care to a deeper faith in Christ Jesus. The focus of her attention was the poor, the uneducated, and those without opportunity. Her approach was collaborative, and she sought to influence those at the center of wealth and power to share in her efforts. Her concern for the spiritual and material welfare of the disadvantaged, especially women, was expressed in the setting of the house of mercy, where women were trained for work that enabled them to earn their living. Through her policy of self-help and teaching of crafts and skills, she pioneered technical or vocational education half a century before such education was officially recognised.

The Sisters of Mercy arrived in Kenya in 1956. They have schools in Nairobi (serving the Mukuru slums), Lodwar, Kitui, Kambu, Kapenguria, and Mwingi. Sr Mary Killen is the founder of Mukuru Promotion Centre, which serves five schools located in the Mukuru slums of Nairobi. These include St Elizabeth Primary in the Lunga Lunga slum, St Bakhita Primary next to Masaai village, St Catherine Primary School in South B, Mukuru Primary School in Mukuru Kaiyaba, and St Michael Secondary School next to Masaai village. The Mercy Vocational Training Centre and Songa Mbele Na Masomo, a school for disabled children, are also part of Mukuru Promotion Centre, which caters to the needs of the street children and those who live in the slums. Sr Mary Killeen, founder of Mukuru Promotion Centre, has stated that the aim of the center’s creation was for the children to become literate and empowered.

With an estimated 400,000 residents, the cardboard-and-tin slum of Mukuru is the second largest slum in Nairobi, and one of its poorest. Like all shantytowns, it is densely populated and has inadequate sanitation and water services. In 1985, in response to the slum’s many needs, the Irish Sisters of Mercy founded Mukuru Promotion Centre. Today, assisted by Irish Christian Brothers and Marianist priests, over 6,000 slum children receive a formal education, and 60 street boys are taught a trade.

The Sisters of Mercy Philosophy of Education

Inspired by Catherine McAuley, “Mercy education” is that which is committed to holistic development and achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged and marginalised. It is influenced by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ on care, respect, and joy. According to the Mercy philosophy of education (Mercy Sisters, 2001), McAuley’s close liaison with the family through home visitations pointed to the need for family education. Her greatest influence as a teacher came from the recognition that she lived the values she imparted. In 1956, the Sisters of Mercy extended their activities into Kenya at the invitation of the Archbishop of Nairobi at the time, John Joseph McCarthy. The Sisters have missions in Nairobi, where they operate schools in the Mukuru slum. Mercy education is committed to ongoing holistic school development, in collaboration with the Board of Management, staff, parents and the wider community.

The school community. The Mercy School community consists of parents, students, teachers, social workers, support staff, and management personnel sharing a common vision of Mercy education. Each member of this community participates in the educational process by the example of a Christian way of life and by recognising the dignity of each individual, rich or poor.

The students. The Mercy philosophy of education is concerned with providing a learning and teaching environment that is conducive to the holistic development of the student and the formation of Christian attitudes and values. Mercy education strives among other things to enable the students to become fully developed and integrated, calling them to grow in freedom, understanding, and love. It enables each student to develop spiritually, morally, intellectually, emotionally, and physically. All of the schools have a pastoral program and catechesis every Friday. Mass is also celebrated regularly. Moral formation for both parents and students is given first priority, since there are many challenges in the slums. Topics like drug abuse, self-protection, human rights, health, and hygiene are also taught (Charles, Personal Communication, October 2016).

The school staff. The principal, teachers, and support staff are all committed to the Mercy philosophy of education. They have a central role in implementing this philosophy. The staff is expected to possess such qualities as integrity, gentleness, compassion, and competence. The
The Mukuru slums are highly populated and poverty is widespread. There are poorly structured houses in Mukuru which are very congested. High poverty and unemployment rates affect the pupils. Child education in slum areas is also greatly affected by these poor socioeconomic conditions. A low literacy rate and high dropout rate indicate that children have to face many barriers to their education. Due to large family sizes and low monthly incomes, parents cannot afford to educate all of their children. Many children must also hold jobs while enrolled in school in order to earn money to help support their families. Among girl-children, poverty has increased the dropout rate, as well as the number of early pregnancies and early marriages. Moreover, economic problems, crowded living conditions, and regular problems related to alcoholism in a parent all create disinterest among children about their studies (Lucy Kerubo, Personal Communication, October 2016).

Primary Education

Through Mukuru Promotion Centre, Sisters of Mercy strive to introduce holistic education where emphasis is placed on the building of self-esteem, learning through play and discovery, and a positive approach through music, art, and acrobatics. Sr Mary Killeen reported that, since its inception, Mukuru Promotion Centre has focused on education. She reiterated that “education is a precious gift”. The quality of a society is determined by it, and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals state that education is a right of all children, and not a privilege. The Sisters of Mercy consider primary education an important element in the empowerment of a community. Over 5,300 children attend one of the Mukuru primary schools in the congregation’s catchment area. All of the primary schools are committed to the mission and goals of Mukuru Promotion Centre. The Kenya Constitution Act of 2013 states that primary education is free. However, there are many extra costs, such as firewood, excursion, and exam fees, which prevent people from attending school. Through its sponsorship program, Mukuru Promotion Centre provides funds for 500 primary school students.
According to Mary Killeen (Personal Communication, October 2016), students are very conscientious and diligent because they are aware of the preciousness of the gift of education. The sponsors have played a great role in education at Mukuru Promotion Centre. Sponsors include, but are not limited to: the Sisters of Mercy, England, Ireland, and Australia; Mukuru Project Liverpool; Friends of Mukuru, Western Australia; Milimani Lions Club; Child Fund Kenya; Airtel; and Topin Industries. When the World Food Program for pre-primary and nursery students was discontinued, a generous donor, Mr Shah from Topin Industries, intervened and now provides over 330 daily lunches to the pre-primary and nursery students at the four schools. Mr Shah also provided over 200 very needy students at the St Elizabeth and St Bakhita schools with new uniforms. Sisters of Mercy offer holistic education that aims at developing the whole person intellectually, spiritually, physically, socially, and morally. Counselling sessions are offered to the street children, as well as spiritual movements, a pastoral program, and catechesis. Sports and music festivals are part of the extracurricular activities in the schools (Charles, Personal Communication, October 2016).

### Secondary Education

The four schools sponsored by Mukuru Promotion Centre are located in a very densely populated slum of Mukuru. The success of the four primary schools motivated the Sisters of Mercy to create a secondary school. This would facilitate further education of both boys and girls from the four primary schools who do well in exams but fail to proceed to other secondary schools because of prohibitive fees. Therefore, the Sisters developed St Michael’s Secondary School, a community school which opened in 2008. A significant number of students are sponsored, and the school fee is subsidised. All of the facilities are provided by the Sisters of Mercy (Charles, Personal Communication, October 2016).

### Technical and Vocational Education

Over the years, the Sisters of Mercy learned that not every child who goes to primary or even secondary school will end up in formal employment. The notion that technical education could provide an alternative to many children by enabling them to acquire skills and competencies necessary for making a living gave birth to the skills learning center. Our Lady of Mercy Vocational Training Centre provides training in computers, hairdressing, beauty therapy, dressmaking, art and crafts, plumbing, masonry, and catering. There are more young women than men who avail themselves of the training; there is also an adult learner component in the computer classes. Students who complete the two-year program graduate with a technical certificate from the center, as well as a Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) certificate or similar credential from another body that administers exams. This makes it possible for many of the students to find employment in the hotel and hospitality industries, either as housekeepers or as garment makers; some even start their own businesses in the beauty and hairdressing industries, among other trades (Sr Mary Killeen, Personal Communication, October 2016).

### Education for Children with Disabilities in Mukuru Slums

*Songa Mbele Na Masomo* is a center serving children with disabilities and other special conditions in Mukuru. It also serves children who have never been to school, or who have dropped out of school, by giving them academic coaching and later integrating them into the mainstream institutions. *Songa Mbele Na Masomo* is a Kiswahili phrase that means “moving forward with education.” The center was founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 2010 to serve the most disadvantaged children: those living with disabilities in the Mukuru slums. The center is managed by a board and has Sisters of Mercy as trustees. The disadvantaged children it serves face many challenges in the slums, including being locked inside their houses, violent neighbourhoods, and a lack of exposure to the world of opportunities that can allow them to realise their potential. The center welcomes the children and provides individualised interventions without discrimination. One of the greatest challenges in the slums is poverty, and this adds to the challenge of having a disabled child in the family. The center provides opportunities to these children, through rehabilitation and daycare, which enable them to grow like any other child. The children have different types of disabilities, such as mental disorders, autism spectrum disorder, and cerebral palsy (Sr Mary Killeen, Personal Communication, October 2016).
Most parents leave their houses early in the morning and return late in the evening as they move about to look for jobs for daily wages. Previously, for many children this meant being locked up in the house on their own. Now, however, the center has employed special guides who transport children to and from the center every day, by piggyback or wheelchair. This ensures that the children’s attendance is good, and the parents are able to look for jobs freely during the day.

**Education Challenges Facing Sisters of Mercy in Mukuru Slums**

Sisters of Mercy encounter challenges as they provide education in Mukuru slums. The following challenges were shared by nine respondents (90%) through face-to-face interviews.

1. Air pollution in slum settlements is high due to close proximity to industries, dust from unpaved roads, poor waste disposal, and heavy use of solid fuels such as charcoal and wood. This causes respiratory infections in the workers.

2. Land grabbing is another challenge that the Sisters are facing. Sisters of Mercy had a court case for allegedly blocking the development of a plot that had been grabbed by developers.

3. There is a lack of adequate funds to cater for the growing number of students who need sponsorship in the slums. The cost of salaries is also high, especially for the teachers and social workers who are employed by Mukuru Promotion Centre.

4. The center for the children with disabilities is located in the slums, which are congested and have illegal structures. Children need to play, and there is a need to level the ground so that it is disability-friendly.

**Recommendations**

1. The government, in conjunction with the church, should ensure that sound policies are put in place for the common good. The poor need not slide further into abject poverty, while the rich continue to take the lion’s share. Equal distribution of resources as a result of good policies can move slum dwellers to a habitable environment. The law ought to treat all equally.

2. With the provision of free education, there is a need for the government to employ more teachers to accommodate the increased number of pupils in schools.

3. More donors need to be sought to support for the growing number of needy students in secondary schools. Sponsorship needs to continue to the college level.

4. Donations are important, though they are not an end in themselves. There is a need to encourage more skills, because ‘It is better to teach people how to fish than to give them a fish.”

5. In any given field or project, ongoing monitoring and evaluation is essential. This helps the stakeholders to ascertain whether the projects are sticking to the stated vision and mission, while at the same time responding to needs as they arise. It is only when projects are monitored and evaluated for alignment with mission and vision that the congregation can establish the impact it is making, and how best this can be improved.

6. In serving the vulnerable children in the Mukuru slums, Sisters of Mercy need to promote local and international networks for purposes of partnership. They also need to work with the government in advocating for protection and care of the children.

7. Sisters of Mercy need to conduct community awareness on issues of disability and especially on discovering early signs of disability and introducing immediate interventions.

8. There is a need to formalise an alumni program for the Mukuru Promotion Centre and Don Bosco Schools to facilitate the mentoring of ongoing students by alumni and encourage financial donations.

9. The Salesian sisters of Don Bosco need to provide training to the lay teachers in order to ensure that they have full knowledge of the preventive system and its application.

10. Parents should also be educated on the preventive system so that they can cooperate in applying it.
11. The presence of the educator with the young people during extra-curricular activities and class breaks needs to be taken seriously, because these are good opportunities for shaping the young people.

12. The government could incorporate the preventive system of education in all schools.

Conclusion

A majority of the respondents (90%) revealed that the Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco have contributed to education by offering holistic education and sponsorship programs to the poor students, and by inculcating in the students a joyful and satisfied attraction to what is good, correcting deviations, and preparing them for the future by means of solid character formation. The preventive system is very relevant in Kenya today, because corporal punishment has been abolished in schools. It can be a solution to the many disciplinary problems plaguing schools across the country – some of which are even manifested through strikes and the burning of schools. The preventive system is based on reason, religion and loving kindness. Because of this, it excludes every violent punishment, and tries to make do without even mild punishments. It seems that this system is preferable for the following reasons: being forewarned, the student is not disheartened when he does something wrong, as happens when such things are reported to the one in charge. Nor does he become angry from being corrected, because there has been throughout the process a friendly voice forewarning him. Through the system, one generally manages to win friendship.

The repressive system can stop a disorder, but only with difficulty can it improve offenders. One observes that young people do not forget the punishments they have suffered, and generally remain embittered, wanting to throw off the yoke and even to take revenge. On the other hand, the preventive system makes a friend of the student, who in the assistant sees a benefactor who gives him good advice and wants to make him good in order to shield him from unpleasantness and dishonour. The preventive system offers the student previous warning, in a way that the educator can still speak to him in the language of the heart. The educator, having won loving respect, will be able to greatly influence him, warn him, counsel him, and also correct him.
Figure 1. Street children learning art skills at Mercy Vocation Centre.

Figure 2. Reconstruction of St Bakita Primary School next to Maasai village.

Figure 3. Dressmaking class at Mercy Vocation Centre.

Figure 4. Songa Mbele Na Masomo, a center for disabled children.
References


QUALITY ASSURANCE MEASURES AND PERFORMANCE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS HEADED BY RELIGIOUS SISTERS IN UGANDA

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Abstract

This chapter examines the quality assurance measures enforced by schools headed by women religious in Uganda in relation to students’ performance. The researcher explored the relationship between the quality measures enforced in schools headed by Sisters in Uganda and the promotion of good performance and pragmatic leaders in societies.

Colonial and missionary education in Uganda was denominational; the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Uganda, and the Muslim religion each owned their own schools. The aim of denominational education was for each religious group to indoctrinate followers in its ideologies. Colonial and missionary education was morally based; it endeavoured to inculcate into students the value of being upright, responsible, and hardworking, of respecting public funds and property, and of managing time effectively (Ssekamwa, 1979). Catholic schools have maintained the measures that were left by colonial missionaries, and these measures, including code of conduct, core values, and Catholic philosophy, have been strongly manifested in schools headed by Sisters, thus producing exemplary citizens in the country.

It is against this background that the researcher examined the quality assurance measures enforced by Catholic schools headed by religious women in Uganda in relation to students’ performance. The research was based on the following objectives: 1) identify the quality of education offered by Catholic schools headed by Sisters in Uganda; 2) ascertain parents’ perceptions and attitudes towards Catholic schools, particularly those headed by Sisters; and 3) examine the academic performance of students studying in Catholic schools in Uganda.

The study was carried out in four schools headed by Sisters in Uganda and focused on the quality assurance measures enforced in those schools in relation to students’ performance. A mixed methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative techniques was used for this research project. A cross-sectional design was used because of its potential to collect rich qualitative and quantitative data (Kombo & Tramp, 2006). Purposive sampling and random sampling techniques were used to identify respondents. A total population of 1,327 respondents was identified; an actual sample size of 338 respondents was drawn from the four schools, with sizeable numbers of different categories from each school. Questionnaires, guided interviews, and focus group discussions were utilised to collect data.

Keywords: quality assurance, Catholic schools, performance, women religious

Introduction

A school is a public institution whose existence and activities involve many people. The head teacher responsible for the administration of a school knows well all the major agencies, groups, and individuals whose interests satisfy the school, since it is the responsibility of the head teacher to protect the interests and investments of all stakeholders. This section therefore provides a description of the quality of education offered by the religious Sisters in Uganda using the quality measures enforced by the Catholic schools in relation to student performance.

In education circles, the word quality simply means “fitness for purpose,” but there is no agreement on a precise definition of the term. The terms in which quality is most frequently used include quality assurance, quality control, quality audit, and quality assessment; the word quality is also used frequently in relation to academic standards.

Quality assurance means that mechanisms have been put in place to guarantee that the education is “fit for purpose”; i.e., that it is good (National Council for Higher Education, 2011, p. 3). In this particular study, “quality
assurance measures” is the umbrella under which are placed all mechanisms that Catholic schools enforce to ensure academic excellence. These include core values (hard work, value for time, respect for authority, prayer, being responsible, and accountability), code of conduct, and Catholic philosophy; these lead to holistic education with pragmatic leaders who are ready to transform society with their acquired skills.

**Historical Background of the Study**

With the arrival of missionaries in Uganda in 1877 and the French Fathers in 1879 came formal education that would help Ugandans to become literate. From 1898, British Protestant teachers and Roman Catholic teachers from Great Britain and France began to build a Ugandan education infrastructure based on the formal Western education system as they knew it back in Europe.

The first high school in Uganda was founded by Mill Hill Missionaries in 1902 at Namilyango; it was followed by Kings College Budo and Gayaza High School in 1905. The Roman Catholic missionaries then set up Rubaga High School in 1906; this school, which started in the home of Stanislaus Mugwanya at Rubaga as St Mary’s High School Rubaga and in 1926 was transferred to Kisubi village some fifteen miles from Kampala, is currently known as St Mary’s College Kisubi, or SMACK (Ssekamwa, 2008).

Many other schools soon followed, including Nabumali High School in Mbale District (1911), Ngora High School (1912), Mbarara High School (1912), Duhaga High School in Hoima (1913), and Kyebambe High School in Kabarole District (1913). One of the primary reasons for the establishment of these high schools was because the missionaries wanted to enable a group of students from different tribes to live together in order for each to realise the qualities of the other; members of different tribes were at loggerheads due to tribal conflicts, and it was hoped that the students would come to appreciate each other’s strengths and even form friendships.

**British direction of educational policies in Uganda.** The British colonial administration took over the administration of Uganda in 1894. Initially, it left education activities to missionaries and the people, since this system had long produced adequate workers for the British administration. However, it soon became evident that the government needed to regulate the way that Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries were establishing and administrating schools. Children from these denominations were not allowed to attend schools administered by other denominations or religions. The government also wanted to provide education for those groups of people who had no missionaries to build schools for them. Muslim children, for example, had nobody to cater to them educationally, and parents found themselves sending their children to schools where they feared they would be influenced by Christian views.

The British colonial administration also wanted to prevent Ugandans from going abroad for further studies, lest they come back to Uganda with new viewpoints that were opposed to colonialism. Colonial officers in Uganda feared that people who studied overseas would come into contact with, and be influenced by, anticolonial figures and ideas; for example, Ugandans who travelled to the United States could be exposed to Marcus Garvey, a Black politician who was then preaching against the oppression of Black people by Whites (Ssekamwa, 1979). It was for these reasons that the British colonial officers decided to start involving themselves in the direction of educational policies in the country, and one way of preventing the traffic abroad was to set up an institution of higher learning; in 1922, the colonial administration founded Makerere College, which is now known as Makerere University.

**Denominational schools versus private schools in Uganda.** While missionaries were guarding their positions in education systems, there came African teachers who also asserted that they could start their own schools and run them side by side with the missionary schools. These African teachers had been trained by the missionaries and had themselves taught for some time in missionary schools. One of the primary reasons why these African teachers elected to found their own schools is that missionaries had a very strict moral code, values, and religious philosophy by which they did not believe they could abide. This study investigates these same quality assurance measures, which were initiated by missionaries to ensure that education is fit for the purpose of schools headed by religious women in Uganda, in relation to student performance.

The ideal in Uganda today is for teachers of both private and government schools to be trained at teacher training schools in Uganda, for teaching to be done under one syllabus, and for all schools to use...
the same examinations per the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB). Other legislative efforts to achieve the expected quality measures for the government include the Education Act of 2008 and the creation of the Uganda National Teachers’ Union (UNATU), an association for educators. Despite these measures to ensure academic excellence, there is still an outcry countrywide that schools should perform better and produce more pragmatic leaders – although it should be noted that, in general, the Catholic-founded schools maintain high levels of performance due to the measures that were inherited from the colonial missionaries.

Study Purpose

This study was conducted to examine the quality assurance measures and performance of Catholic schools headed by Sisters in Uganda, with an aim of examining the relationship between quality assurance measures enforced in those schools (i.e., code of conduct, values, and Catholic philosophy) and student performance.

Theoretical Framework

The study was based on the behaviourist theory of John B. Watson. The fundamental principle underpinning the theory is that the nature of the environment in which a person grows nurtures that individual. This simply means that human behaviour and conduct is but a more complex version of the behaviour displayed by other individuals. Watson believed that children have no inborn tendencies. How they turn out depends entirely on their environment; thus, parents and teachers are significant people in the lives of children, and the ways in which they treat them is of critical importance.

In relation to the study, most of the schools headed by religious women (Sisters) in Uganda produce students who tend to exhibit good discipline and religious tendencies, which eventually allow them to excel in life, both academically and morally; this is because of the environment in which they have been brought up, according to Watson, who clearly states that an individual’s behaviour and conduct is a product of the behaviour displayed by other people.

Research Design and Methodology

The study used a mixed methods approach, which is a combination of the qualitative and quantitative research techniques. A cross-sectional design was used because of its potential to collect rich qualitative and quantitative data; questionnaires and guided interviews were used, as advanced by Kombo and Tramp (2006).

Questionnaires for school administrators, teachers, and students were used in measuring the two variables, that is, quality assurance measures with their attributes (i.e., code of conduct, core values, and Catholic philosophy), and performance (respect for authority, academic standards, and accountability). Measurement of variables was done using the five-point Likert scale that includes 1 = strongly disagree (SD), 2 = disagree (D), 3 = not sure (NS), 4 = agree (A), and 5 = strongly agree (SA). Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS Version 16; data was organised and coded and information was summarised into percentages and frequencies.

Purposive sampling and random sampling techniques were used to identify sizeable samples of respondents from each school. A total population of 358 respondents was obtained from all the schools with sizeable numbers of different categories. Interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect data from parents and head teachers.

Table 1
Descriptors of Participating Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of School</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Admission Policy</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Sampling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Queen of Peace s.s.s</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>selective</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Random</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Joseph s.s.s Ndeeba</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>selective</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>Random</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St John’s s.s.s Buyambi</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>open</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>Random</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardinal Nsubuga s.s.s</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>selective</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>Random</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. s.s.s = Senior Secondary School.
The purposive sampling technique was largely used to select participants from among the head teachers and parents who had students studying in those schools. The random sampling technique was used for identifying students and teachers. Qualitative data was collected using questionnaires administered to parents of different schools.

Table 2

Total Sample Size of All Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Respondents</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>1250</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers/Administrators</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1327</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total population of students was 1,250 and the total population of teachers and administrators of all schools was 77; sample size was determined using the calculation method of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) as shown in the Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3

Student Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confidence level</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence interval or margin of error</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>1,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample size</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Validity and Reliability

Coolican (1996) defines validity as the extent to which a research instrument measures what it is intended to measure. It may also mean the accuracy, correctness, and appropriateness of the research instruments, procedures, and findings. In order to test and improve the validity of the questionnaire, the researcher used Cronbach’s alpha as shown in Table 5.

Table 4

Teacher and Administrator Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confidence level</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence interval or margin of error</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample size</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5

Validity and Reliability of Instruments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Assurance Measures for Students</th>
<th>5 Anchor</th>
<th>Performance for Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.943</td>
<td>.837</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Assurance Measures for Teachers/Administrators</td>
<td>5 Anchor</td>
<td>Performance for Teachers/Administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.659</td>
<td>.741</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reliability and validity results in Table 5 show that the instrument was both reliable and valid, since the variable coefficients were above 0.5 scale. A pilot study was undertaken to establish the reliability of the
Transformative Partnerships

Quality Assurance Measures and Performance of Catholic Schools...

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Bracket</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Valid %</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-20 years</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-35 years</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 shows that 37.5% of the participants were in the age range of 12-20 years, and 62.5% were in the age range of 21-35 years. The researcher sampled few students from the lower classes in all schools, preferring to use mature students who would be more likely to provide valid data; furthermore, with the advent of universal secondary education (USE) in Uganda, many students attend school when they are mature.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Valid %</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 shows that 39.3% of the participants were male and 60.7% of the participants were female; one of the schools that participated in the study was a girls’ school, which accounts for the greater number of questionnaires completed and returned by female respondents.
Table 9

Ages of Teacher and Administrator Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Bracket</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Valid %</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21-30 years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40 years</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>74.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>93.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 and above</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 shows that 29.3% of the participants were in the age range of 21-30 years, 44.8% of the participants were in the age range of 31-40 years, 19% of the participants were in the age range of 41-50 years, and 6.9% of the participants were in the age range of 51 years and above.

Table 10

Education Levels of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Valid %</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>79.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate diploma</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>94.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 shows that 5.2% of the participants had a diploma and 74.1% of the respondents had a degree, while 15.5% of the respondents had a postgraduate diploma and 5.2% of the respondents had a master’s degree. This indicates that the teachers and administrators of Catholic schools have the qualified staff needed for academic excellence.

Relationship Between the Study Variables

The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine the degree of relationship between the study variables, as shown in Table 11.

Table 11

Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>QUALITY – ASSURANCE MEASURES</th>
<th>PERFORMANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QUALITY_ ASSURANCE MEASURES</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERFORMANCE</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.405**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 11 shows a significant positive relationship between Quality Assurance Measures and Performance ($r = .405$, sig $<.01$). Based on the Pearson correlation of the study variables, results indicated that there is a strong positive relationship between the Quality Assurance Measures and performance of students in Catholic schools headed by Sisters in Uganda. This is due to the fact that Catholic schools tend to exhibit high levels of integrity based on the measures put in place, thus producing pragmatic and responsible citizens.
Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was used to examine the level of Quality Assurance Measure and Performance in Catholic schools headed by Sisters in Uganda.

Table 12

Regression Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardised Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardised Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>28.131</td>
<td>7.199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>QUALITY_ASSURANCE_MEASURES</td>
<td>.708</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12 presents a linear relationship between Quality Assurance Measures (Sig=0.01), which greatly explained student performance in Catholic schools headed by Sisters. Quality Assurance Measures (.405) related more to performance. This implied that quality assurance measures led to improved performance.

Quality of Education Offered by Catholic Schools Headed by Sisters in Uganda

The researcher found that the education which is offered by Catholic schools headed by Sisters is diverse as far as their quality measures in different aspects is concerned. Among respondents, 62% strongly agreed that under the code of conduct, discipline for both teachers and students is vital to the achievement of academic excellence. Furthermore, 80% of respondents reported that the quality of education offered aims at transforming the whole human being, not just transferring knowledge. Education aims at producing people who are to be successful in the world in terms of employment. In teaching and learning, 70% of respondents agreed that in Catholic schools, loving God and neighbour and enriching society with the gospel are manifested; this helps learners to share freely.

Parents’ Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Catholic Denominational Schools Headed by Sisters in Uganda

When the researcher interacted with parents about their perceptions during the interviews, she found that most parents take their children to schools headed by Sisters because these schools manifest high levels of discipline, and morals are instilled in their children. One parent when interviewed informed the researcher that “In Catholic schools headed by nuns, cases of embezzling student funds [for] examinations are unheard of”; she continued, “nuns value hard work and discipline is paramount”.

Parents’ perceptions can be summarised under the following points:
1) Catholic schools value a life of prayer and believe that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom; 2) Catholic schools are well-stocked with instructional materials, which promotes academic excellence; and 3) there are improved chances of receiving scholarships while in Catholic schools, because donors remain interested in funding school projects given these schools’ demonstrated transparency and credibility. One respondent noted that Sisters have always encouraged school-community relations and have always encouraged students to unleash their potential by participating in different activities, thus discovering their talents. Additionally, teachers approach learners based on their individual needs and abilities.

Academic Performance of Students Studying in Catholic-founded Schools Headed by Sisters in Uganda

The researcher found that although there is an outcry that schools should excel in academics and produce pragmatic citizens, the Catholic denominational schools are doing better than other schools, both in terms of academic excellence and in producing upstanding citizens. When the factor analysis was performed, the researcher found that respect for authority, academic standards, and accountability were the key factors explaining performance, with a total cumulative percentage of 98.572,
respect for authority with 78.019%, academics standards for 13.579%, and accountability for 6.386% of performance variable. The 78.019% for respect of authority with its variables signifies that Catholic schools perform better because learners and teachers are well disciplined, following the mode of conduct as it was inherited from the colonial missionaries.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends that religious congregations should send their Sisters for higher education, especially in administration, so that they can effectively run the Catholic schools and other institutions needed to help the country to form good citizens who are patriotic and God-fearing. As one civil leader mentioned during the study, “Civil leaders who are not upright and honest must have gone through schools which were not upright;” this participant added that Catholic schools headed by Sisters “are strict and they train a child and you can never regret.”

The researcher recommends that the Episcopal conference should enact a policy requiring that all institutions opened under the umbrella of Catholic denominations should be headed by religious men and women rather than lay people. Sisters who are already heading institutions should have access to regular refresher courses, so as to widen their knowledge as far as administration and finance is concerned; on this note, the ASEC and SLDI programs should especially target the head teachers of schools, so that they may speak with authority.

**Conclusion**

The study concludes that Catholic denominational schools headed by Sisters exhibit good morals and discipline which lead to excellence, thus producing pragmatic leaders who continue to lead societal transformation. This has been manifested among leaders in the society who received their education from the Catholic denominational schools, especially those headed by religious men and women in Uganda.

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**References**


Introduction

In this chapter, we report the findings of interviews we conducted with eight faculty at Marywood University who taught in the Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA) program. Specifically, we examined faculty experiences and perceptions gleaned from teaching in the HESA program. Participants discussed how participating in the HESA program impacted their online teaching, teaching international students, and teaching in general. They also reflected on HESA's burgeoning influence on the African Sisters and their communities, as well as on their personal growth.

Review of the Literature

Very little research has been conducted on the role of education for empowering African women religious. Butcher, Latchem, Mawoyo, and Levey (2011) caution that “Today’s paucity of published research on distance and e-learning across Africa may wrongly lead those in the rest of the world to conclude that the world’s least developed continent is least developed in applications of distance education and e-learning” (p. 150). Butcher et al. recognise that individuals within their own African communities possess knowledge of the inherent challenges associated with e-learning, but also have the capacity to navigate and overcome the challenges to enact change. Although organisations from other parts of the world offer pathways to educational advancement via distance education, Africans are meeting goals and taking the initiatives that will empower them to transform their lives and communities.

In a study of 25 religious Sisters in leadership positions across several African countries, participants recognised the role of education in building self-esteem and empowering religious Sisters to enact change in their communities (Wakahiu, 2015). They also perceived that technology removed barriers pertaining to travel and communication with Sisters who were more geographically isolated. Furthermore, Wakahiu’s study indicated the impact of technology, particularly the role of distance learning for improving Sisters’ skill sets and acquisition of educational degrees.

Although there has been a surge in online courses and programs in higher education (Butcher et al., 2011), faculty often lack support needed to provide an optimal learning environment. Faculty are motivated to
Some logistic challenges in distance education include frequent Internet disconnections, limited access to computers, lack of instructor presence, ill-prepared local tutors, unfamiliarity with typing and computer technology, poor technical support, and lack of engagement in the learning environment, to name a few (Muhirwa, 2009). Key personnel are needed to assist learners with the necessary information and training that will facilitate their success in distance learning environments (Onuka, 2015). Walingo (2011), a professor at Maseno University of Kenya, urges educators to tailor their classes in accordance with the needs and goals of their international students. She suggests a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates interactive, collaborative community projects.

In summary, distance education has the potential to significantly impact individuals in communities that have had limited higher education access. However, there are several challenges that could affect the quality of distance education, particularly for institutions serving students in foreign countries, including limitations in technology and also cross-cultural differences. The purpose of our study is to examine faculty perceptions of the quality of the Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA) program and its influence on African religious Sisters and their communities. We also examined how faculty perceived that this experience impacted them and their teaching.

Method

Context and Participants

We conducted individual face-to-face interviews with eight instructors (1 male, 7 females; 8 Caucasian; age range 46-79, with a mean of 62.9) who participated in the online-onsite Higher Education Sisters in Africa (HESA) program. Time spent in higher education ranged from 4 to 47 years; instructors had an average of 22.8 years of teaching experience. All but one of the respondents had extensive teaching experience. Two respondents were adjunct faculty, one was professional staff, one was retired from a tenured position, and the other four were tenured faculty. Seven of the eight had earned doctorates. Five had been Catholic or public school teachers for a number of years before earning their doctorates. Six also had some prior online teaching experience, although in several cases
these were workshops and/or hybrid classes. Three had participated as students in online courses or workshops.

The study took place at Marywood University. The HESA program, developed by the African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC), was established in 2012. ASEC’s mission is to facilitate access to education for women religious in Africa, leading to the enhancement and expansion of the education, health, economic, social, environmental and spiritual services they provide (African Sisters Education Collaborative, n.d.). The HESA online-onsite model is a cohort model wherein African religious Sisters complete 27 credits of college/university coursework at a partner institution in the United States, then transfer to a partner college/university in Africa. African Sisters who enroll in the online-onsite program attend an orientation where Sisters bond and receive skills essential to online learning and university success. Sisters also receive a laptop and a stipend for books. Sisters enrolled in the HESA program live in ten African countries. Faculty interviewed for this study taught students in Kenya, Uganda, and Zambia. Recent data provided by ASEC indicate that 103 African religious Sisters have participated in the online-onsite HESA model; of these, 43 have graduated.

Faculty at both Marywood University and Chestnut Hill College in the United States teach in the HESA online-onsite program. When faculty agree to teach in the HESA program, they attend an orientation session focusing on the interactions of cultural competence, global awareness, and perspective consciousness. The orientation aims to foster an understanding and appreciation of cross-cultural diversity, as well as cultivating attitudes that embrace difference. To facilitate the fundamentals of online course development, ASEC secured the assistance of an instructional designer who mentored some faculty about the structure and delivery of their online course content.

Data Sources and Analysis

Interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and were audio-recorded. Instructors were asked to respond to open-ended questions about how participation in the program informed their teaching and attitudes toward teaching. One participant was unable to travel to our campus for a face-to-face interview; that interview was conducted via Skype.

Data were transcribed verbatim. The researchers used a constant comparison method (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) to identify common themes and threads running throughout the data. Participants were asked the following interview questions:

1. How did you prepare for your HESA online courses?
2. In retrospect, are there ways that you could have been better prepared? Are there things you realised as you were teaching that would have been helpful to know in advance?
3. What are some of the challenges you faced teaching Sisters enrolled in HESA?
4. How did teaching in the HESA program compare to your experience of teaching other online courses? To your experience of classroom teaching?
5. Did participation in HESA inform the way you teach online?
6. If you taught online previously, did teaching in the HESA program change the way you will teach online? How?
7. Did participation in HESA inform the way you teach in the classroom? If yes, how?
8. Did participation in HESA influence your attitude toward (or inform your practice) teaching students from foreign countries? If yes, how?
9. To what degree did participation in HESA impact you? Please describe. Probes: Did you feel teaching in the HESA program was beneficial to you? If so, how? Were there differences between the benefits of the HESA experience and the benefits you had previously gained from teaching in general? From teaching online (if applicable)?
10. Did teaching in the program inform/influence your feelings/thinking about the role higher education can play in the African continent’s development? If yes, how?
11. Is there anything you would like the world to know about this program, about the Sisters who enroll in HESA, or about the impact of American universities on African higher education?
Results

All faculty reported that teaching in the HESA program positively impacted them, most in a very profound way. It is difficult to describe in this chapter the level of emotion we observed in the faculty we interviewed. They spoke of this as a humbling experience, one that is time-consuming, but worth the effort. Despite initial challenges, they all perceived this to be an exceptional opportunity. Describing the Sisters enrolled in the program, one instructor noted that “Their kindness, their grace comes through in their writing and our conversations…so I get an education from them as a teacher.” Some faculty members indicated that it made them grateful for the education they’ve received. One of the Sisters who taught in the HESA program summed up the experience described to us by many: “I read the world differently, because you cannot have an experience like this and not realise how blessed you are and not appreciate the vast differences and the vast sameness.” She used the analogy of a banyan tree that has branches that reach the ground, take root, and become another trunk; “You get this whole massive thing that looks like a forest, but it’s only one tree.”

The interviewed faculty members spoke of this program’s impact on the African Sisters. One instructor shared, “I feel almost like a missionary who’s never had a passport in terms of instruction with Sisters. They share an awful lot at the personal level; it’s humbling as well as inspiring.” Another participant, a religious Sister, elaborated further on the needs of African Sisters, stating, “I know that a lot of the African Sisters have very difficult lives, and this is such a great opportunity for them.” The significant impact and the meaning she found in teaching in the program is further illustrated in her statement that “The HESA experience gives me a sense that I’m doing something to do practical repentance for colonialism, because I think that is our responsibility.”

How Teaching in HESA Differs from Teaching Other Courses

HESA faculty members were asked to describe how teaching in HESA differed from teaching other online or face-to-face courses. Many respondents mentioned the Sisters’ attitudes and spirit, including their motivation, an appreciation for education and enthusiasm for learning. One instructor stated, “There was a maturity level and there was an absolute thirst for knowledge [that you do not always see in a typical classroom.] When you have Sisters that are in situations that are dangerous, in situations…when they have very limited resources and they have to work with what they have, and still they show up, they’re prepared, and they want to learn more; that tells you a lot about their character…and that ability to be able to suck everything up and retain it and say, ‘Please, I’m hungry for more. Give me more!’”

Another theme that emerged was the Sisters’ spirituality. An instructor who is a religious Sister noted the common vocation and ministry that they shared, remarking that “there was a beautiful bond that started…a basis of familiarity in terms of ministry.” A male faculty member observed, “There is a spiritual element; there is a kindness that’s built in, I think from the disposition of the training that the nuns have. Waking up and going to your inbox with ‘good morning’ and ‘Blessings; I hope your family is wonderful,’ before there is any question about my grade or assignment…plays a welcome part to wanting to teach the course.”

All instructors remarked on the profound impact the experience had on them personally. One respondent was brought to tears several times during the interview. She stated, “I’ve had a lot of lovely experiences in my life, I’ve had a chance to meet some lovely people in my work,…but this really tapped my core. Teaching the African Sisters proved to be a pivotal point in her life. “I truly believe that sometimes in life you need a little wake-up call, a little shake . . . just to kind-of get it together,” she observed. “And when I saw the joy that these Sisters had in wanting to learn, and I saw what they had to work with, it makes some of the trivial things, … ‘oh, this is not a good connection, oh look at the quality of that computer’ – how could I say that? They’re working with the best they have and doing the best they have at what they can do, and yet, even though they were not in the best of circumstances, they always had joy. Always, always, always.”

The African Sisters’ enthusiasm for the course and dedication to learning overshadowed any challenges the instructors experienced. One respondent explained, “And, you know, I know that they put their best face forward – we all do – but they’re human beings; they have frustrations; they have fears; they have worries, and they shared them with me…I learned more from them than I think they learned from me. It just touches your heart, doesn’t it? Because it’s genuine.” She contrasted the Sisters’
Transformative Partnerships

Faculty Perceptions of the Impact of Online Education...

When we asked the faculty members to consider the role that higher education plays in the African continent’s development, responses highlighted the perceived multiplicative effect of ASEC on the communities in which the African Sisters live. As one participant commented, “I’m just fascinated by the power of the outreach of this program….Thousands of Sisters have been in the program, and every one of them is mentoring somebody else. If you asked me what are the proudest things of my life? I have some pretty nifty accomplishments in my life. This is on the top of the pile.”

The Role of Higher Education in the African Continent’s Development

Finally, faculty members remarked about the significant impact that Sr Jane Wakahiu, the Executive Director of ASEC, and her vision have had on the program, the African Sisters, the faculty, and the African continent. One participant stated, “Sr Jane...is a singular woman who’s really kind of outlined a program and a vision for the entire continent. It is an amazing program.... The vision produces results...it’s impacted thousands of Sisters who then go out and impact hundreds of thousands of others.” Another respondent further elucidated this point, stating “The way that Sr Jane has led it as a careful administrator, as an adept administrator at managing the finances, of oversight of the educational program, she’s done a careful, thoughtful process. There’s a humility in it. The purpose is to educate the African Sisters for community development within the region where they live. It’s not about making a buck; it’s about doing good. That’s what motivates her; that’s why we [want to] be involved in it.” Several participants noted the alignment between the ASEC program/HESA project with the mission of Marywood University. They pointed out that Marywood has always had a commitment to educating first generation students, and this project reflects that commitment.

Challenges

In addition to attending an orientation where they viewed a PowerPoint slide show, faculty members also received additional written materials and varying degrees of instructional design support to prepare for their HESA courses. Some instructors worked with the instructional designer for an
extended period of time and found this helpful in facilitating online course development. Others, however, felt that this assistance came too late in the process and added to the pressures of developing a class rather than facilitating the endeavour.

Most responded that they initially struggled and would have been grateful for added direction and practical information. Two of the respondents had never before taught online and had less than accurate assumptions about the course structure. “For me in my mind and in my ignorance, when you think of an online course, you think maybe one-on-one, you’re going to be seeing some sort of a classroom setting, and I had no idea about the virtual setting, and I had no clue that these 21 women would be from all parts of Africa with a time difference in between – not only my time difference but their time difference,” one participant explained. Another was mentored by a Marywood professor with online teaching experience. Still, she recalled, “I floundered around. I finally floundered into a format.” She continued, “I was used to having interaction with the students, and I couldn’t figure out how I would get that sense of interaction in an online course.” Similarly, another respondent mentioned, “My practice was to look over the shoulders of the students constantly, constantly. [In the online class] I can’t do that. I’m trusting [the mentors in Africa] to do that.” This respondent was one of the first to teach in HESA’s online program, where she had team-taught an introductory course. She reported candidly, “The first time we taught it, it was a pilot, and it indeed was a pilot, because everything that could go wrong, did go wrong.”

Specific challenges the respondents experienced during their HESA teaching experience fell into three major categories: 1) technological difficulties, 2) the diversity among the students, and 3) the cultural differences related to education, inclusion, and social mores.

The relatively unsophisticated technological resources available to most of the African Sisters varied across countries and presented challenges to all the respondents. Faculty talked about the different ways they dealt with the frequent power outages and the lack of bandwidth. “We have internet connectivity problems sometimes, so I’m teaching three countries at the same time, so we have three connections going on and Uganda drops out, and you’ve got Zambia and Kenya there, and you’ve gotta keep going and then you have to roll back and bring the others back in,” one instructor reported.

Although a few of the respondents had spent time in Africa working with the Sisters, many had not and realised that this put them at a disadvantage. “One [challenge] is simply me not having firsthand experience in Africa,” a respondent explained. “That’s why a lot of my lessons will often revolve around, please describe the room, please describe your community, please describe the place where you work in as rich detail as you can, because it’s informing me. Let me know where you are. Let’s get a sense of place.” One respondent who is a religious Sister felt that her experience on the ground in Cape Coast Ghana helped her know what to expect when teaching online in the HESA program. “You can’t [virtually replicate] that experience of being there and seeing the conditions and meeting the variety of capabilities and circumstances of the sisters,” she reflected. “[It] helped me when I got to the HESA program to anticipate what kinds of things to expect.”

Most were somewhat unprepared for the wide range in preparation levels that the Sisters brought to the classroom. They discussed the considerable level of diversity among the African Sisters; this included cultural diversity, as well as diversity in academic preparation. “You have some that have had college classes, and some who really are coming out of high school or a certificate program. That’s really not very much,” one participant explained.

Participants also remarked about the cultural, linguistic, and communication differences between the African Sisters and themselves as instructors. This sometimes created confusion, but participants reflected on it fondly. For example, one instructor stated, “One of the things I have my students here do is take a large number of biblical events and put them on a timeline, because they have absolutely no sense of history. And then I ask the sisters to do that, and they have no idea what a timeline is....” She attempted to explain the notion of a timeline and further suggested that they create “a timeline that they can use as a bookmark.” When this suggestion sparked confusion and dismay among the students, the instructor’s queries led her to the realisation that the students’ idea of a bookmark was the narrow ribbons inserted in prayer book bindings to mark pages. “So they’re trying to figure out how to place these biblical events in order on these [laughter ensued]. Yes, so we were all very confused.” Similarly, another respondent stated, “The language of academia is a foreign language to them, and you have to try to catch where the jargon is, where there are things they have never heard before. You’re talking to people who have never been in a public library, so when you start talking about journals and
periodicals, they don’t know what’s being said.” However, shortly after the instructor had enlightened her students about the nature and use of journals to share scholarly research, another instructor asked her students “to keep a journal” as part of their coursework. The nuances of language and meaning presented ongoing, but amusing, challenges to students and teachers alike.

The wide range of preparation extended to technology. Although technological course prerequisites existed, they were often ignored. “So, if you say the Sisters coming to this course should have basic computer skills, sometimes they’ve never seen a computer,” remarked one respondent. Instructors were resourceful in overcoming the challenges. Some instituted “live chats”, since these worked well with the available technology.

Cultural differences extended to education, course structure, and expectations. For example, a faculty member who is a religious Sister indicated the importance of addressing cultural differences in communication. “Culturally, they’re not apt to tell you that they don’t understand you. It’s impolite; it’s disrespectful, and so you have to give a lecture about, in this circumstance it is disrespectful not to speak up. You have to tell them how this is different from what they’re used to,” she explained.

One faculty member who is also a religious Sister commented that many of the African Sisters had difficulty with hypothetical thinking. For example, in one course, this problem arose after Uganda instituted severe laws against homosexuality. “So, you can go to jail if you’re a homosexual. I think maybe you could even be killed by this legal system. And if your family doesn’t report you, they can go to jail,” she explained. Amid the usual greetings, blessings and opening conversations during their chats – “‘Happy Feast Day’ ... ‘I hear you got a new Bishop,’ that kind of thing, I get to the Sisters in Uganda: ‘Congratulations on what your government has done,’” the instructor recalled. “Now I have not been responding to those little niceties. What should I say?” After discussing the issue with Sr Jane, the instructor decided to discuss whether homosexuality was an issue of personal choice, environment, or heredity and genetics, which was a component of her course. “I can’t expect sophistication that’s not there. That’s not right. Neither can I let things go that I think are too potentially harmful actually. I mean, who is dealing with these young men and women, often in boarding schools, but these Sisters?”

This respondent noted that globalisation and aid delivered to African countries contingent on the elimination of what are perceived as human rights violations has sparked resentment and anger. “The Western world is coming and changing their culture, and changing what is thought to be moral...They’re not happy when we say, ‘If you don’t do it according to our morality, our understanding of social justice, we’re going to withdraw aid,’” she explained.

Issues of morality, rights, and culture also arose in response to the textbook’s mention of albinism. “A big challenge is helping them understand what is important and what isn’t important. There’s a big textbook, not all of it is important. If you teach people face-to-face, they know what’s important. What’s on the PowerPoint is important, what’s in the objectives is important. And what I’ve learned to do is to stress that again and again,” a participant explained. She went on to say that “One of them asked a question that I didn’t get a chance to answer completely, which is: How can you, if people are White, how can you tell who’s albino? It’s a very good question.” The instructor shared her intent to make a video with a Marywood University student with albinism to address this culturally awkward topic.

Despite these initial struggles, faculty reported that their courses quickly took shape. One of the respondents who was team-teaching explained, “We learned very quickly what worked and what didn’t work, and we helped each other notice what was going on and make adjustments as we went.”

Discussion

Many of the findings from the literature extend to the HESA program. Onuka (2015) stated that professors who teach distance education to students in Africa need training on the presentation of materials. Those among the HESA faculty who had the assistance of instructional designers in time to effectively help them prepare reported the value of this assistance.

DeBuckelaur et al. (2012) found that open-mindedness and empathy are essential to effective cross-cultural teaching. Open-mindedness and empathy were evidenced by HESA instructors in their attitudes toward the Sisters’ level of education and understanding of concepts. For example, one faculty member remarked about the insignificance of the topic of albinism, yet came to realise why the Sisters were interested in the topic. Yang et
al. (2014) similarly state that an openness and awareness of unfamiliarity contribute to positive cross-cultural learning processes in distance education courses. There were several aforementioned instances where confusion emanated from lack of familiarity (e.g., creating a timeline on a bookmark; the use of journals), and in each case, faculty realised that the confusion resulted from lack of cross-cultural exposure and experience.

Walingo (2011) recommends that educators should consider the needs and goals of their international students when creating their courses and suggests implementing collaborative community projects. The HESA faculty attend an orientation wherein they learn about the African Sisters’ cultures and educational needs. In addition, several faculty members described projects they assigned that were collaborative and community-based. The respondents who had been to Africa reported more accuracy among their expectations, but the others quickly adjusted to the realities of international online teaching. One spent hours making sure videos were easier for her students to grasp than the material in the textbook. Others worked with students individually through Skype and online chat rooms. Instructors responded not just to the educational needs of their students but also to questions of ethics, morality, life and death.

Prior literature reports challenges inherent in international online education, and the HESA program was not immune to these. There were technological limitations, cross-cultural differences, as well as pragmatic issues such as synchronizing schedules across four time zones. Teachers varied in their preparation to teach African students in an online format, and students varied in their educational and technological preparation. All of these issues were noted in both the literature (Butcher et al., 2011) and in the HESA faculty narratives.

The literature also mentioned problems with lack of engagement in the learning environment and lack of instructor presence. These issues, however, were markedly absent from the narratives of the instructors participating in this study. Rather, the opposite seemed to occur; students were remarkably engaged and grateful for the opportunity to learn. They expressed their eagerness and gratitude readily and often. This, along with their ability to assimilate the course material, further engaged the instructors who were teaching in the program. Students and teachers alike persisted despite the Internet outages, the inconvenient timing of some of the activities, and the uneven preparation of the students. This joint commitment to making the classes work, to overcoming the technological glitches, to responding to each others’ efforts, and to jointly work to promote development for a continent in need overshadowed any difficulties that emerged.

All the participants in the study responded to the African Sisters’ motivation and to the thoughtfulness the Sisters bestowed toward their fellow students and teachers alike. It was not unusual for the interview to end with the immeasurable impact the experience had had on the instructor and the exponential impact the Sisters are extending to their communities and beyond.

Conclusion

We came to realise that the success of this program was largely influenced by Sr Jane, the Executive Director. As a religious Sister who is also a Kenyan native, Sr Jane possesses knowledge and intuition about the varied needs of the African Sisters, both educationally and culturally. She also travels frequently to Africa to meet with partners and to discuss program needs. All faculty members in this study identified Sr Jane as a major factor for this program’s success.

As faculty members in this study shared their experiences about teaching in the HESA program, it became clear that this program significantly impacted both the African religious Sisters who enrolled in HESA and the faculty members who taught in the program. Faculty members exhibited humility, empathy, and an appreciation for the opportunity to contribute to the program. Faculty members were motivated to teach in this program, despite the time demands, because they perceived that the African Sisters had enormous challenges, yet appreciated the faculty and education they received.

References


Abstract

For ten years (2006-2016), DePaul University (United States), Tangaza University College (Kenya), and the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation Catholic Sisters Initiative collaborated to expand university education opportunities for Sisters in Africa. The prime mode at the outset was a Bachelor of Arts degree in Leadership and Management. As word of the success of the partnership spread, leaders from a number of congregations of women religious approached the universities to ask if Tangaza and DePaul could provide advanced education for Sisters who were serving in or moving toward executive leadership positions. DePaul and Tangaza agreed and collaborated with Faith and Praxis, a leadership program based in Rome, to present senior leadership workshops to the Sisters. In the planning stages, the partners noted that they would benefit from a framework from which to design. The Hilton Sisters Initiative had defined a vision: “Enhanced vitality of congregations throughout the world, enabling them to advance human development more widely and effectively.” What qualities, knowledge and skill would a Sister need to lead her congregation toward that goal? What would constitute a
contemporary African model of leadership to serve women religious in ministry? A study team of Sisters and lay faculty formed. The members engaged in library and field research in African leadership traditions, the history of congregations of women religious, international leadership theory, and current issues facing congregations, especially in Eastern Africa. Their findings led them to identify three distinct but interrelated roles for the leader – leader as servant, leader as strategic influencer, and leader as steward – and to articulate competences for each role. This chapter describes the process, defines the roles, presents the competences, and suggests ways congregations and educators can use the framework to guide formation, selection, development, and assessment of future leaders.

Keywords: leadership, women religious, African Sisters

Introduction

Congregations of women religious are uniquely positioned to contribute to the human development of the people of Africa. They have the requisite authority, experience, and zeal – as well as the gift of grace – and are eager to further their knowledge, understanding, and skill to meet the demands.

In his historic visit to Kenya, Uganda, and the Central African Republic in November 2015, Pope Francis perceived the beauty of the people and the land of Africa, but acknowledged the depth of need. “A cry is rising up from humanity and the very bowels of the earth itself, a cry that needs to be heard,” he said, referring to environmental degradation but also to the material poverty he witnessed, describing it as a “new form of colonialism” (Gettleman, 2015). Troubling to him was corruption to which leaders confessed as well as the human suffering wrought by intense commitment to tribal identity within many nations. At every stop he urged the people to refuse tribalism and to build “the solid foundations of mutual respect, dialogue and cooperation, a multiethnic society which is truly harmonious, just and inclusive” (Gettleman, 2015).

After visiting Kangemi, a sprawling, densely populated but makeshift area on Nairobi’s edge, the Pontiff said, “The dreadful injustice of social exclusion leaves the poor with an unfair distribution of land and lack of access to infrastructure and minimal basic services…. Our world has a grave social debt toward the poor who lack access to drinking water because they are denied a life consistent with their inalienable dignity” (Associated Press, 2015).

But touched as he was by pain he witnessed, Pope Francis, not known for dodging hard truths, conceded that he was inspired by what he saw, including – maybe especially – efforts by women religious. During his last hours in Uganda, as he stood before the priests and sisters, he put aside his prepared remarks to speak intimately. “Do not forget” became a refrain. Do not forget to remain faithful to the poor, he said repeatedly.

Optimism filled his closing remarks. “Truly I leave Africa with great hope in the harvest of grace which God is preparing in your midst! I ask all of you to pray for an outpouring of apostolic zeal, for joyful perseverance in the calling you have received, and, above all, for the gift of a pure heart ever open to the needs of all our brothers and sisters. In this way the Church … will truly prove worthy of its glorious heritage and face the challenges of the future with sure hope in Christ’s promises” (Pope Francis, 2015).

The Inspirational/Pragmatic Role of the Sisters

Fundamental to the Pontiff’s optimism is trust in the present and future efforts of Catholic Sisters. This is a confidence shared by many of the leaders of congregations of women religious, as well as of DePaul University, Tangaza University College, and the Hilton Foundation Catholic Sisters Initiative.

The Initiative was, after all, conceived by Conrad N. Hilton, who directed his philanthropy to support Sisters’ work, believing Sisters to be among the most creative, effective, and efficient workers in human development. “Be ever watchful for the opportunity to shelter little children with the umbrella of your charity,” he charged his board. “Be generous to their schools, their hospitals and their places of worship. Give aid to their protectors and defenders, the Sisters, who devote their lives and life’s work for the good of mankind” (Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, 2009, p. 35).

In 2006, what was then called the Fund for Sisters had defined three areas of emphasis:

- Leadership: exercise leadership effectively and develop new leaders
- Membership: attract, form, educate, and retain members
The fund supported the launch of a partnership between Tangaza University College and DePaul University to deepen the knowledge of Catholic sisters in Eastern Africa and develop their capacity to manage and to lead. At Tangaza College, which had been exclusively for men studying for the priesthood, two breakthrough diploma programs had been developed; the Institute for Spirituality and Religious Formation (ISRF) was created to advance the skill of sisters who had been made responsible for formation of new members of their congregations, while the Institute for Social Ministry (ISMM) was created to advance the skill of sisters expected to direct their congregations’ external ministries to help transform society.

The directors of those diploma programs, convinced that the quality of the sisters’ work was baccalaureate level, though not yet recognised within the formal educational structure, sought a way to explore that option. DePaul University became the ideal partner. Founded under the auspices of the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians), one of the orders responsible for Tangaza College, DePaul included two unique internal entities: the School for New Learning, a college dedicated to adult undergraduate students, and Vincent on Leadership, a unit dedicated to research on the leadership style of Vincent DePaul in order to pass along the legacy of his “organisational genius and leadership skills in the service of others.”

In 2006, Tangaza and DePaul, with Hilton Catholic Sisters Initiative support, initiated a baccalaureate program in leadership and management within the context of the Catholic Church in Africa, tailored to Catholic sisters but open to persons working in related ministries.

The curriculum, based on emerging theory about adults and learning, included an intentional mix of experience and study – of theory and practice. Although the degree design followed the American tradition of general education, area of emphasis, and electives, all elements were customised for the African setting. To meet physical science requirements, for example, students studied natural resource management (particularly water), and public health (particularly the impact of HIV/AIDS); an example of a physical science course in this curriculum is “Public Health Issues in Africa.” To meet social science requirements, students examined human growth and development, as well as individual and group behaviour, with an emphasis on contemporary Africa and the life of the religious. Sample courses include “Religious Life in Africa: A Challenge for the Future,” “Cross-Cultural Communication,” and “The Anthropology of Christian Vocation.” To meet humanities requirements, students studied spirituality and theology, of course, but also creativity. Sample courses include “Spiritual Discernment” and “Spirituality and Formative Reading.”

To develop leadership and management, students studied the nature of organisations and the challenge of leadership. Implicit is their need to be able to understand the structures and functions of an organisation as well as the behaviour of individuals and communities. Sample courses include “Quantitative Reasoning and Financial Management,” “Community-based Action Research,” “Community-based, Faith-based, and Non-governmental Organisations,” “Global Perspectives on Ministry,” and “Ministering in a World of Conflict and Injustice.”

Between 2006 and 2016, more than 150 students, the majority of them Catholic sisters, earned undergraduate degrees, and by 2016, when Tangaza University College assumed responsibility for the degree, the Commission for Higher Education in Kenya told its directors it was “rated as one of the best programs in Kenya.”

The Idea of Competence

Key to the collaborative degree’s structure is competence. From its beginning, architects of the adult college at DePaul rooted the curriculum in the idea that the educated man or woman is a person with a deep understanding of self, a coherent understanding of the human condition, an awareness of the natural world, and an array of skills – such as complex problem-solving, creativity, entrepreneurship, the ability to manage self, and the ability to be a lifelong learner (Anderson, 2012). The pedagogy is associated with “progressive education,” in that faculty expose students to the dominant theories, challenge them to test the ideas by applying them in their own professional or personal lives, and expose them to problems to solve, ideas to test, or options to explore.

Competence is defined as the ability to know and understand concepts and to apply knowledge and abilities to perform critical functions. Instead of providing a list of courses for students to complete, they defined a set
of competences for students to gain and demonstrate. Students do learn in formal courses, but each is designed with a competence as the expected outcome. Faculty choose readings and design assignments to enable students to attain a particular competence.

Sample competences students are expected to develop for the bachelor’s degree at Tangaza University College include:

- Can explain a system of law that governs a society
- Can compare substantially different theological or philosophical systems
- Can use one or more theories of human psychology to understand and solve problems
- Can explain the development, roles, and maintenance of social institutions
- Can describe and explain the roles of individuals, groups, societies or states in histories
- Can interpret experience in relationship to the perspective of a significant thinker
- Can explore a model of spiritual development and apply it to oneself or others.

The degree program culminates in a final project – such as a management report, situation analysis, strategic plan, or budget – and an analysis in which the student determines whether her findings confirm or contradict theory. Examples of final papers of graduates include:

- Cross-Cultural Communication as a Tool for Effective Leadership of Women Religious Formation Programs in Africa
- Leadership in the Period of Transition in International Women Religious Communities in Nairobi, Kenya
- Challenges Faced in Forming Young Women Religious Coming from Contemporary Society
- Challenges Facing Young Women Living with HIV/AIDS in Kibera, Guadalupe Parish
- Effects of Institutional Care on Parenting Styles of Young Mothers: A Case Study of Efelvale Children’s Home.

Tangaza established the Centre for Leadership and Management to oversee and expand this work and, at the urging of alumni and with the support of the Hilton Foundation, founded the “Leaders Guild,” an outreach effort through which graduates remain current on leadership theories and models. The baccalaureate program, now an established part of the Tangaza curriculum and integral to the offerings of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, is approved under the auspices of the Kenyan Commission for University Education.

The Call for Executive Education

In 2014, superiors of some of the congregations whose Sisters were in the BA program approached Tangaza. Their congregations were experiencing multiple challenges, they argued, and they wanted advanced skills for themselves and others in leadership – both in general and for the particular charism for their particular congregation. The superiors asked whether DePaul and Tangaza might help.

The Tangaza-DePaul program directors, who had already received similar requests from graduates, acknowledged the wisdom of the request and moved forward on two fronts. They acknowledged that they would benefit from a framework from which to design. The Hilton Sisters Initiative had defined a vision: “Enhanced vitality of congregations throughout the world, enabling them to advance human development more widely and effectively.” What qualities, knowledge, and skills would a Sister need to lead her congregation toward that goal? What would constitute a contemporary African model of leadership to serve women religious in ministry? What skills would help:

- current superiors perform useful self-assessment and seek coaching in areas they want to improve?
- Sisters in mid-level leadership roles anticipate what they would be expected to do and find training to prepare for executive leadership?
- congregation members identify future leaders, provide coaching, and conduct formative assessment?
- educators design and offer effective materials?
- foundations shape priorities and guide applicants in conceptualising program proposals?
The universities formed a study team to find out. Simultaneously, with additional help from the Hilton Initiative for Sisters, the Centre for Leadership and Management at Tangaza, the School for New Learning, Vincent on Leadership, and Faith and Praxis, a training and development program for superiors and councillors based in Rome, they initiated a series of senior leadership workshops.

The Voice of Sisters in the Future Church

The project assumed added importance on June 3, 2016, when Pope Francis re-classified the day in the ecclesiastical calendar devoted to Mary Magdalene as a feast day, effectively acknowledging her as an apostle of Jesus – a peer of the twelve men traditionally accepted as apostles, and thus a person capable of understanding, interpreting, and passing on the gospel of Jesus. With this shift, the role of women in the Catholic Church would likely expand to include advising on faith and practice. Among the first to be included would likely be superiors of congregations of women religious.

Discerning the Essential Competences

Studying the various theories of leadership written by scholars in Africa (Ayittey, 2006; Maathai, 2009; Soko et al., 2012) as well as the United States, Europe, and Asia, the research team decided the definition by Northouse (2013) was most apt: “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influence a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.”

Dimensions of Leadership, the work of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), became an important resource, as did Creating a Home: Benchmarks for Church Leadership Roles for Women (Merkel, 1996). The authors of Dimensions of Leadership perceived leadership in congregations of women religious as having three key elements – spiritual, relational, and organisational – and drew a conclusion that seemed particularly suited for the contemporary context in Africa: “Effective leaders grasp the significance of the human quest for meaning, purpose and order. They bring to the outer world the strengths of their inner worlds and unleash spontaneity, diversity, and creative imagination” (LCWR, 1997).

Among the most important findings was recognition that leaders must have a sense of the global environment as an influence on the members of their congregations as well as the people they serve.

Over the course of a year, the study team, in conversation with Sisters in communities in Africa, determined that leading included embracing three roles: Leader as Servant, Leader as Strategic Influencer, and Leader as Steward.

Leader as Servant: The Context

Leader as Servant is an ancient concept, of course, traceable to early Chinese philosophers, as well as to Jesus, who said that “Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be servant to all” (Mark 10:42-5). According to Maathai (2009) and Ayittey (2006), it can be traced to traditional African village governance as well, in that the elder was expected to care for the needs of all the people based on their individual gifts.

The servant-leader role has been nuanced by contemporary leadership scholars (Greenleaf, 2002; Bennis, 1989; Sipe & Frick, 2009; DePree, 1987; Spears, 1998) to include secular roles as well – particularly in business, governmental, and non-governmental organisations, and feminist scholar Deborah Elcher Catt (2005) cautions against seeing “servant leadership” as soft, feminine, and ergo lesser. Among the most profound findings are those of Ghanaian economist George Ayittey (2006), who suggests that traditional African servant leadership constructs were harmed by colonialism, to the detriment of the continent, and must be restored.

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The team studied new demands being placed on leaders of religious congregations in Africa by the trends Pope Francis noted – the difficulties of tribalism, the pressures of consumerism, and the tensions around different views on culture and communication technology. Their findings led them to define servant leadership within a contemporary context:

A core dimension of leaders of religious congregations is to understand leadership within the Catholic Church as servant leadership. This requires the capacity to place a high priority on principles of reflection, hope, affirmation, and the aestheticism of dialogue and conversation. Leaders who are servants inspire others with their example of service by practicing leadership as
of a contemporary organisation must create what he calls a learning organisation. “A leader’s sense of stewardship operates at two levels: stewardship for the people they lead and stewardship for mission that underlies the enterprise” (Senge, 1990).

Leaders who are effective stewards preserve the congregation’s patrimony and can attend to the present. Recognising the pressure to remain keenly aware of developments in the external world as well as within their congregation, the team defined stewardship in a contemporary context:

Leaders of congregations of women religious must understand and attend to the needs of the organisations for which they have been chosen as steward. They must be able to describe an organisation’s mission within the context of contemporary world and define means to enable the organisation to remain consistent while responding to the permeability of boundaries as conditions shift. They must describe the nature of contemporary global realities – social, economic, and political – and assess how they impact the individual’s sense of self and an organisation’s sense of identity and mission.

Specific Competence for Leaders of Congregations of Women Religious

Over the course of two years, the team tested these ideas with superiors of local and international congregations (and through them with general membership). Having confirmed the general framework, they developed specific competences for each role and an overview of outcomes:

Sister-Leader as Servant Leader: The Competences

The Sister-Leader must attend to her own spiritual life. The leader who develops as a servant can:

- practice the art of contemplation and prayer.
- demonstrate understanding of relationship among self, context, systems and faith.
- put their faith and congregational charism into action.
- use principles of discernment in making decisions.
- recognise the course of human development over a lifetime, accept both strengths and weaknesses in self and others, and responsibility, rather than as a position, and by serving others regardless of position, race, gender, religion, nation, or ethnic community of origin.

The competences that relate to this role influence the spiritual life of the sister-leader as well as her human relationships with the members of her congregation, the overall ethical dimension of her relationship with the world, and her courage in the face of challenge.

Leader as Strategic Influencer: The Context

_Leader as Strategic Influencer_ is a dominant theme in much of the leadership literature, especially those emerging from the study of the large organisation. John C. Maxwell (1993) oversimplified the concept of leadership, saying, “Leadership is influence – nothing more, nothing less.” But influence is definitely critical, and Soko et al. (2012) note that the six principles of persuasion laid out by Robert Cialdini in 1984 – reciprocity, commitment and consistency, social proof, authority, liking, and scarcity – are relevant to the religious congregation.

The team recognised the particular pressures of the present to blend the needs of members of the community who joined during a time of significant international influence (colonialism) and those who joined in the years after independence. Within the role of strategic influence, as well, they recognised the primacy of the leader retaining her spiritual rootedness. These findings led them to define strategic influence within a context.

Spiritually enriched leaders understand the conscious and unconscious processes in communities and groups and use the findings to improve the effectiveness of the group. They are able to articulate a dynamic sense of charism in a compelling way to rekindle the passion of existing members and attract new members.

Leader as Steward: The Context

_Leader as Steward_ appears often in literature because so much of the scholarship has been conducted on leaders of enterprises in which resources are key. But here, too, the dynamism of the current age calls for heightened awareness. Developments in information technology, diversity, and globalisation inspired Peter Senge to suggest that the leader...
embrace personal change within themselves, those they lead, and those they serve.

The Sister-Leader as servant must understand the human nature of the organisation she has been invited to lead. She can:

- demonstrate that understanding leadership as service informs a person’s performance in a leadership role.
- appreciate the place of self and other in a changing, evolving universe, in which the interconnectedness of humans and the environment requires living responsibly.
- identify benefits of compassion and forgiveness for organisational renewal and actions for putting them into practice.

The Sister-Leader as servant must recognise the overall place of her community in the world and create a place in which the members can interact and live out their vocations. She can:

- demonstrate and inspire ethical standards rooted in gospel values.
- identify conflict and confrontation as opportunities to grow and openly welcome feedback and challenges from others.
- instill a sense of safety and security within the organisation and respond to a crisis or emergency in the context of mission.
- read the signs of the times in order to create opportunities for new ways of responding appropriately.

Finally, the Sister-Leader as servant must show a particular form of courage. She can:

- welcome innovation even when it involves risk.
- demonstrate commitment to excellence.
- motivate others by setting clear objectives and staying involved with a task until it is completed.

Leaders who develop these competences value the process of learning by experience and use it to advance their own learning and that of their organisation. They develop a spirit of inquiry and exploration in the organisation they lead and see the role of a leader as one of constant learning. They thus offer new perspectives and ideas and welcome changes from others, including looking outside of an organisation for ideas and opportunities for improvement.

**Sister-Leader as Strategic Influencer: The Competences**

The Sister-Leader as strategic influencer must excel in communication. She can:

- facilitate open communication of ideas and plans.
- promote understanding of the cultural, historical and political context in which they are working and make informed decisions.
- treat persons with respect and dignity and welcome all who come to them with different ideas and personalities.
- identify differences between people and communities that lead to conflict, and find solutions.

The Sister-Leader as strategic influencer must understand the nature of organisations. She can:

- assess the authority and responsibilities of a given role within an organisation to move into that role effectively.
- understand the role of power and authority in a society and, when encountering injustice, give voice to the causes as well as the results.
- make best use of mind, heart, and will to know what they are doing (to avoid bias, prejudice, cynicism, and fear).

The Sister-Leader as strategic influencer must understand human differences. She can:

- promote an understanding of team-building within the community and councils, and encourage collaboration to solve problems and make decisions.
- appreciate the psychodynamics of conflict and confrontation and lead others to manage differences.

The Sister-Leader as strategic influencer must build the skills of others. She can:

- help others become better leaders by delegating appropriately.
discern factors that impede or promote an individual’s or a community’s openness to change by reading the signs of the times.

• develop a range of leadership styles and use them in appropriate settings.

Leaders who develop these competences are able to focus on the health, cohesion, and energy of the organisation, articulate its identity and the nature of the charism, revivifying it and carrying it forward into new contexts. On an ongoing basis they are able to identify critical issues of interconnectedness of people across cultures, maximise benefits of diversity through practices of inclusion and collaboration.

**Sister-Leaders as Stewards: The Competences**

The Sister-Leader as steward must see her congregation in context. She can:

• inspire and set a clear vision of the organisation, base decisions on a strong sense of mission, and articulate directions for the organisation’s future to members, potential donors and friends of the organisation.

• identify and explore existing resources that can be used to address inequalities and other problems in society, and manage them effectively.

The Sister-Leader as steward must keep an eye on the future. She can:

• oversee dynamic programs of recruitment and formation to enable new members to integrate their personal sense of mission to that of the congregation.

• lead and manage well by viewing their organisation from multiple perspectives and as a living system that involves purpose, inputs, outputs, and outcomes.

The Sister-Leader as steward must anticipate and manage change. She can:

• define and implement a process for discerning a mission within emerging options, identify changing conditions, and design an exit strategy.

• use the dynamics of managing change to enable a community to retain clarity of mission while being able to change.

The Sister-Leader as steward must solve problems. She can:

• identify behaviours or conditions within an organisation that may impact the mission negatively and use available counsel.

• identify underlying causes of situations deemed “unsolvable,” and take action.

• understand the nature of systems and interconnections to serve the organisation and identify why a system, and which part(s), needs a particular change at a particular moment.

Leaders who develop these competences are able to manage well, overseeing the acquisition, management, and disposition of property in accordance with the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church and managing human resources according to civil and Church law. In all matters concerning the life of the organisation, leaders will practice transparency and accountability.

**Conclusion**

Throughout 2015-16, the 36 sister-leaders participating in the first executive training sessions at Tangaza University College provided valuable insights and feedback into the idea of developing contemporary African models of leadership to serve women religious in ministry. In October 2015, Sisters joined the study team to work closely on the details. Throughout 2016, the document continued to evolve as members gained new insight through reading and experience. The team believes the collaborative effort has resulted in a uniquely powerful guide that individuals can use for self-assessment, that congregations can use for selection and support, that universities can use for program design, and that funders can use to stimulate and inspire development.

In October 2016, the team was ready to present its product, “The Sister Leader: Competences to Empower Leaders of Congregations of Women Religious in Contemporary Africa,” to the Hilton Foundation Catholic Sisters Initiative for further testing and wider distribution.
References


A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SISTERS’ EDUCATION LEVELS IN TWO CONGREGATIONS IN TANZANIA

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Abstract

This chapter is a study of two indigenous congregations of women religious that were founded at almost the same time. The goal of the study was to identify the levels of education of both congregations’ members and to determine the successes attained and challenges encountered in educating their Sisters. All 886 members of the two congregations formed the study population. Data for each member of the two congregations was obtained from congregational archives and by calling individual Sisters whose data in the archives were incomplete. The study utilised both quantitative and qualitative approaches. SPSS was used to determine relevant statistics and for tabulating relationships using crosstabs. Interviews with prior congregational leaders and those involved in the Sisters’ education were also conducted to establish the successes they attained and the challenges they faced in educating Sisters. These participants were selected based on their involvement in the decision-making about Sisters’ education. To this end, one past superior or leadership team member from each leadership cycle was selected. The study concludes that in most cases, Sisters who belong to these congregations entered religious life with only a primary education. In fact, very few (less than 1%) had a secondary school education. It was also established from this study that efforts are being made to educate Sisters; superiors’ support for Sisters’ education is unquestionable, and the need for Sisters’ education was a recurrent theme throughout the interviews conducted for this study. Identified challenges include a lack of educational funding, which limits superiors’ educational initiatives, and Sisters’ advanced age, which hinders opportunities that may be available to them for higher education; other impediments included Sisters’ employment commitments, a lack of online educational facilities, and the lack of sufficient church institutions to absorb various careers. The study recommends that stakeholders continue to support the education of Sisters because the need is real and urgent. Congregations are also advised to foster ways of instilling secular education aspects in the formation process in order to balance the spiritual and educational needs of the Sisters. Congregations need to seek government education loans and attach them to individual Sisters in case they leave the community. Congregations should also venture into uncommon ministries in order to reach more people. More studies related to the education of African Sisters are also recommended.

Keywords: African Sisters, educational levels, educational successes, educational challenges.

Introduction

Religious sisters’ contributions to the Church have always been very significant (Kinyanjui, 2015). Over many centuries, educated Sisters have transformed people’s lives, particularly as educators and health care providers. As reported by Mary Kenny (2013), had it not been for the Irish nuns who ventured into the Australian desert in the 19th century, young Australian women would have lacked education. Some women who have lapsed from the faith, says Kenny (2013), continue to value the education they received from the Sisters who schooled them. Thus, education went beyond the Sisters’ convents, and those educated by them feel a debt of gratitude towards them.

Indeed, the contribution of the African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC), an organisation that empowers African Sisters through education, is commendable and timely. ASEC believes that once educated, Sisters can have a tremendous impact on the people they serve (ASEC, 2016). Equipping African Catholic Sisters with education and skills to serve Africa is indeed necessary and urgent. How can stakeholders know the educational needs of the Sisters in each congregation? One way is through congregational educational data. Unfortunately, however, educational data about congregational members is not available, making it challenging to develop realistic educational strategic plans for African congregations.
Sisters, whose work is commended, possess religious qualities of service and love and were academically prepared with relevant professional skills. An educated person certainly has an advantage over someone without an education when faced with work challenges. While those without education will work based on their own experiences, following the same path and practice of the people they know, an educated person is more open-minded, drawing from their knowledge about the world and its people (READ Foundation, 2014), while also creating new knowledge through experience and studies. A person’s academic qualification is a catalyst of personal, community, and economic growth. A congregation is not a business entity as we know it, but aspects of business are prevalent. Sisters are leaders and managers of schools and health centers who plan, organise, lead, and control congregational resources. Therefore, additional credentials for service are needed today more than ever before. A study conducted by Besley and Montalvo (2011) which aimed at finding whether the identity and education of a leader matters for economic growth found that educational attainment is very important for growth. Therefore, the leaders of congregations serving in today’s competitive environment should make the education of their members one of their top priorities. Indeed, higher education is crucial, and is a powerful tool for African Sisters to gain skills, become effective, and serve with confidence (Kinyanjui, 2015; Mukaka & Chitseko, 2015).

**African Sisters’ Education: Indispensable and Timely**

Consecrated women’s need for education cannot be overemphasised. They have to be knowledgeable in order to qualify for various ministries (Wright, 1981). Sisters are the church’s creative channels for providing a socially valid structure for a sustained and authentic community of a life of prayer and human service. Their constitutions today, therefore, should respond effectively to the signs of the times (Neal, 1990). Education may in fact lead African Sisters to rediscover their mission. Pierce (2007) argues that the “Mass is never ended” but that believers are sent to carry out the mission of Jesus using the lens of their mission. Suffice it to say that the founders’ mission is never ended. It has to be multiplied beyond what the founders ever imagined, because evangelisation challenges today require more knowledgeable and skillful women religious who can address societal issues adequately. As rightly put by Ngajeh (2015), all apostolates today demand women religious who are highly qualified with relevant skills to address the demands dictated by today’s environment. While conducting this study, one religious Sister had this to say:

More than 25 years ago, I did not have a university degree when I was requested to head an important department in one church organisation. The major qualification I had was holding a diploma and being trustworthy. The two qualifications proved to be inadequate. Due to lack of relevant education to the post, I used to depend on my subordinates to accomplish my work. Thank God for one religious priest who recognised my talent (and probably my deficiencies) and offered to work on my scholarship abroad. Years later, I came back to Africa with a Master degree and I can now contribute to the society with confidence. Education is indeed an eye opener.

In Tanzania, the National Form IV and VI examination results are given great weight. When the Canossian Secondary School, based in Dar es Salaam, produced the best Form IV student in the 2015 National Examinations, religious Sisters and the Tanzanian Church felt proud. What’s more, three other students in the national top ten came from the same school. These students are products of Catholic Sisters’ hard work; they were taught by Sisters who are dedicated but well educated and in possession of relevant skills.

When Bugando Medical Centre in Mwanza, Tanzania faced a crisis due to a shortage of medical staff, religious Sisters were called upon to rescue the situation. These were not just Sisters, but professionals with skills that were needed in this consultant hospital at that particular time. There are many Sisters who sponsor and administer institutions such as schools, hospitals, and hostel services which perform exceptionally well when compared to other government and non-government entities. Examples include St Francis Secondary School, St Maria Goretti Secondary School, Huruma Hospital, and Amabilis Hotel in Morogoro, among many others. Religious Sisters’ mission now requires Sisters who can adequately address today’s needs, who are visionary and capable of expanding congregational missions to the next level. Since Sisters need to be educated, analysis of their educational data is the first step towards identifying their educational needs.

Recognising the importance of Sisters’ education, this study sought to identify educational levels of the members of two congregations. It is
envisaged that results from this study will enable the two congregations to have a database with current educational levels of their Sisters. In addition, this database will equip Superiors of these congregations with relevant information regarding Sisters’ careers, practice, and retirement age – all in one file. Meaningful strategic planning requires data. This database may also act as a resource for decision making when applying for educational grants and when mapping future congregational ministries. Furthermore, the study sought to find the challenges encountered and successes achieved in the education of the Sisters so that congregations with similar backgrounds can learn from them. An in-depth study of the Sisters’ education can throw light on what is happening in the congregations in terms of educational successes and challenges.

While data is required for making informed decisions, most congregations of African women religious have no data bank on their members’ educational levels. Organisations without data on their employees are unable to utilise past experience to predict the future and assess their successes and challenges in preparation for what lies ahead. Analysing organisational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats depends on data. The same applies to religious congregations. Educational data for Sisters may help Superior Generals to analyse the existing strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities of a congregation. Similarly, the same set of data may enable Superior Generals to answer questions such as: How many Sisters have certain qualifications? Do we have enough Sisters with the mission-related qualifications needed to be able to address future challenges? How many Sisters in a certain ministry are likely to retire every year, and which plans are in place for educating and training replacements? With data, congregational leaders become proactive, capable of aligning their congregations’ aspirations with anticipated future challenges.

**Tanzania and Higher Education**

Higher education institutions were limited in Tanzania until recently. This had an impact not only on the Sisters but also on society at large. Before 1992, Tanzania had only two universities, namely the University of Dar es Salaam and Sokoine University in Morogoro. That being the case, a limited number of Tanzanians could acquire a university education within the country. A few privileged individuals were able to enroll at other universities in Africa or outside the continent, supported mainly by the government. Privatisation gave room to private universities and more possibilities for Tanzanians to acquire a university education within the country. As of February 22, 2016, Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) reported 12 public universities which were accredited and chartered or with full accreditation. There were 21 private universities, 2 public university colleges and 13 private university colleges. In addition, there are also several university centers and institutes (TCU, 2016). Since opportunities for higher education are now available in the country and in the region, more Sisters can get their education locally if they qualify.

**Leadership, Education and Change**

Change is often resisted, and this attitude is especially pervasive in religious circles. Sustainable change for women religious in Africa requires good education. It entails total transformation of the mindset. Fear of the unknown has always been a challenge, and is a source of superiors’ reluctance to send their Sisters to school, and particularly for higher education. Will their members remain in the community after achieving a higher level of education? Will they maintain religious integrity and adhere to vows once they attain a certain level of education? These questions have always been on superiors’ minds when planning for their members’ education. While a superior’s hesitations may sometimes be valid, the challenges the Sisters face in their ministries support the argument for acquiring more education. Will their members remain in the community after achieving a higher level of education? Will they maintain religious integrity and adhere to vows once they attain a certain level of education? These questions have always been on superiors’ minds when planning for their members’ education. While a superior’s hesitations may sometimes be valid, the challenges the Sisters face in their ministries support the argument for acquiring more education. Today there are many internal and external forces for change which have an impact on committed religious. Superiors have no choice but to accept change. They have to accept education as an urgent need of the time and of the future. Globalisation has an impact on everything we do, including Sisters’ ministries. The time to change their attitudes towards the need for educating their Sisters is now. Challenges encountered in service delivery today are a call for change. Congregations have to grow, and growth will force change, because “we have always done it this way” no longer works. Congregations should avoid becoming conditioned to the status quo or comfortable with what is known, thus failing to venture into new possibilities as a way to expand their mission. Sisters should not take comfort in outward expressions of religious life, but
rather in a living, risk-oriented creative faith (Arbuckle, 1993). They must
duplicate Jesus’ ministry. This type of thinking requires good preparation,
which is rooted in good education. The African society is changing, forcing
the Sisters to rethink the quality of their ministries as well as their survival.
Sisters, who are carriers of the Gospel, have to be familiar with the new
language of evangelisation while responding to the changing apostolic
needs. As Eliot (1959) rightly said,

...last season’s fruit is eaten
And the fultfed beast shall kick the empty pail
For last year’s words belong to the last year’s language
And next year’s words await another voice. (Eliot, 1959)

This new language and voice envisioned by Eliot in 1959 is still
relevant today. It requires superior educational preparation. Sisters must
radically look for new ways to preach the Good News, as the old pastoral
methods are simply no longer effective (Arbuckle, 1993). African women
religious need to seize available opportunities and be willing to take
calculated risks, to be innovators and “pathfinding dissenters”, as Arbuckle
(1993) labels them. They have to be on the lookout, to devise alternative
ways for bridging the gap between religious role and professional role, so
as to be relevant in the services they provide. Quality education will create
dreamers who do things and refuse to settle with what has been the norm.

Sisters need education to be able to think beyond their enclosures.
They need to understand the society they serve in order to evangelise
those who have not yet heard the Good News or to re-evangelise those
who have lapsed in their faith. Thus, good preparation is necessary. Sisters
have to give God’s people what is right and not what is left (Ruwa, 2002).
Education and religious formation ought to go hand in hand.

Background Information About the Congregations

St Therese Sisters, Bukoba – Tanzania. The journey of the Theresian
Sisters (Bathereza) began when the Missionaries of Africa (popularly
known as “the White Fathers”) came to evangelise in Tanzania. The White
Fathers came first, followed by the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa
(“the White Sisters”), who became the right hand of the Missionaries of
Africa. The White Sisters took the apostolate of women but for obvious
cultural reasons, they needed assistance from local people, and founding

indigenous religious congregations was an answer. The Lake Region was
one of the White Fathers’ settlements in Africa and the Theresian Sisters’
congregation became one of their evangelisation fruits.

The Congregation of the Sisters of St Therese is located in Bukoba Diocese in Tanzania. It was founded on December 8, 1932 by Bishop
Burchard Huwiler (Missionary of Africa) who by then was the Bishop of
the Diocese of Bukoba. His intention was to start a congregation for
indigenous Sisters who could assist in teaching catechism particularly
to children, girls, and women, and so prepare them to receive different
sacraments in the church of Bukoba and Tanzania at large. Since then, the
congregation has continued to grow, and at present it has 440 temporary
and perpetual professed Sisters originating from different parts of the
country and from Kenya, Rwanda, and Burundi. While the mission of the
founders is still alive, the ministries served by the Sisters have changed
dramatically to match with the needs of people in today’s environment.
They are involved in health care, social work, education, administration,
parish work, and other ministries. In the beginning, people being served by
the Sisters, particularly women, were mostly uneducated, but today people
are more educated and so should the Sisters be.

The Congregation of the Sisters of St Therese (Iringa). The
Congregation of the Sisters of St Therese (Iringa) is located in Tosamaganga.
They are a diocesan congregation under the Bishop of Iringa Diocese.
The congregation was founded in 1935 by the Consolata Missionaries
as a diocesan congregation. Their founder was Msgr Francisco Cagliero,
an Italian Consolata Priest. In the beginning, the Sisters were formed by
the Consolata Sisters until they became independent in 1964. As of June
2016, the congregation had 446 temporary and final professed members
with 69 communities. Its mission is to strive for the glory of God through
teaching, health care, catechesis and social work (Mpwepwa, 1985). Over
the years, the congregation has expanded her services to Italy, Haiti, and
Liberia, and will soon open another mission in Papua New Guinea and the
Philippines. Teresina Sisters are currently working towards becoming a
pontifical congregation.
Rationale for Congregation Choice

When the aim of studying two congregations founded by the same founder did not work out as originally proposed, the researcher contacted the Teresina Sisters, whose founding year was close to the founding of the Bathereza Sisters. The two congregations have a number of common characteristics, as illustrated in Table 1, and were willing to participate in the study.

Research Problem and Objectives of the Study

Data is required for making informed decisions, but most congregations of African women religious have no data bank on their members’ educational levels. Organisations without data on their employees are unable to utilise past experience to predict the future. Transformational leadership, sustainable change, and a better life for African Sisters and the people they serve all require good education. Education empowers women religious to serve with confidence. It is important, therefore, to have Sisters’ educational data for decision-making purposes.

The researcher studied two congregations of women religious founded by different founders but at almost the same time in order to identify levels of education attained by both congregations’ members and to determine the successes achieved and challenges encountered in educating their members. Results from this comparison will provide reliable educational data to both congregations and may be a base for studying other congregations as well.

Methodology

The study used both qualitative and quantitative approaches. As of April 2016, the Teresina Sisters had 446 members while the Bathereza Sisters had 440 members. Therefore, the study population was 886 Sisters, and the researchers were able to obtain information on all members of the two congregations for this study. The data collected about each participant included age, education attained, profession, and current ministry. This census study examined every unit in order to provide a true measure of the population: a complete measure without a sampling error. This approach was appropriate for this study because it provides benchmark data; that
is, it results in a database that may be used subsequently to study other phenomena related to the education of Sisters in the two congregations (Farooq, 2013). A combination of different attributes was possible through SPSS crosstabs. This method is costly and time-consuming, but because the population had heterogeneous members in terms of their educational backgrounds, an analysis of the entire population was inevitable for this study.

Data was obtained from congregational archives and from individual Sisters. We requested permission from the Superiors of the two congregations to incorporate their Sisters’ personal information into this study. We assured them, however, that members’ names would not appear in the report but would appear in the finished file for congregational use. After permission was obtained, the study found that limited data was available from congregational archives. Visiting the headquarters of the two congregations left the researcher with many gaps, prompting a need to contact individual Sisters. In this way, it was possible to fill the gaps identified in the database. Excel was used for data entry, after which data was exported to SPSS for the analysis. Basic statistics and crosstabs enabled the researcher to fulfill requirements of this study.

In addition, qualitative information to establish successes and challenges was obtained through interviews of Sisters who have been in leadership positions over the years. Six Sisters from each congregation were purposefully selected from among current and past Superiors. Through interviews on the challenges faced in educating Sisters, the researcher was able to gather the required information. Their responses were recorded and summarised as part of data for this study.

### Analysis and Discussion

#### Age of Sisters

According to the Population Reference Bureau (2016), the mean age is the mathematical average of all the members of a population. Median age, meanwhile, is an index that provides information regarding the age distribution of the population. Thus, in the case of age, median divides the population into two numerically equal groups. The mean and median ages of the Sisters in each congregation are shown in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teresina Sisters</th>
<th>Bathereza Sisters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of professed members</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age of Sisters</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean age of Sisters</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Research Data (2016)

### Ages of members of the Bathereza Sisters

For the case of Bathereza Sisters, the mean age is 53 years. However, since the mean could be misleading in the case of age, the researcher opted for the median, which provides a better statistic for decision-making. Results were similar, in that half of the Sisters are younger than 53 years while the other half are older than 53 years. Sisters’ age in this congregation range from 25 years to 106. These statistics indicate that more than half of the Sisters are close to an official retirement age, which is 60 years in Tanzania. Sisters may not retire at this age, but Superiors ought to be mindful of this indicator.

Figure 1 is a histogram which provides a pictorial distribution of the Sisters’ age. Most members are in their fifties and sixties. What are the implications of this type of a population? It means the congregation has fewer young Sisters. Having an older population of Sisters implies that:

1. The congregation has to be fully prepared for the Sisters’ retirement plans.
2. The workforce is diminishing.
3. This group may not be tired now, but will retire soon from their ministries. The congregation has to prepare for replacements.
Early Education Initiatives

The study observed that most members of the two congregations (95%) entered with a primary school education. A few had either no formal education or had certificates and degrees. In 1969, four years after the Teresina Sisters had their first indigenous leaders, they founded a primary school for girls (Nazareti) where young women who were aspiring to religious life would get their basic education, as would Sisters who joined without a primary school education (Mpwepwa, 1985). On the other side of the country, Bathereza founded a primary school in 1963 to educate young girls who wanted to join their congregation. It seems, therefore, that the two congregations recognised the need for education early on. Thereafter and in the midst of many challenges, education became one of the priorities of the two congregations.
**Sisters’ Educational Levels**

Educational levels of the Sisters in the two congregations is at the heart of this study. The study analysed the education levels of the members of the two congregations as indicated in Table 3. While there has been progress in advancing the Sisters’ education levels, the congregations still have a very long way to go.

**Table 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational levels</th>
<th>Teresina Sisters</th>
<th>Bathereza Sisters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters with PhD degrees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters with MA degrees</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters with undergraduate degrees</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters with Diplomas</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters with Certificates and one-year course</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters with secondary education only</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters with primary education only</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters with no formal education</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Some Sisters who entered the congregation with a primary school education plus some courses that are not formally recognised were categorised as primary school certificate holders. In such cases, congregations have to provide secondary school education to them. Source: Research Data (2016)

**Educational Achievements**

**Bathereza educational achievements.** Study findings indicate that about 95% of Sisters in this congregation entered religious life with a primary school education. Therefore, the education qualifications they have, if any, were obtained while in the religious life. Data also indicates that at the moment, about 18% of the congregation’s Sisters hold at least a college degree, while 82% hold diploma levels and below. This implies that the congregation may face challenges going forward, because most future ministries will require an education above the certificate and diploma levels. More resources need to be invested in the education of the younger Sisters.

In addition, the study observed that out of the Bathereza Sisters who have been professed for more than 50 years, 25 (56%) had certificates in either education or nursing, which enabled them to teach in schools or work as nurses in various hospitals. Furthermore, 5 (11%) had degrees in various professions and 33% had a primary school education. Considering the times when these Sisters entered religious life, this achievement signals how important education was regarded right from the founding of the congregation.

It was observed also that there is a mixture of professions in this congregation. Among the most prominent Bathereza professions is education, ranging from early childhood placements to positions as university lecturers. About 90 of the congregation’s Sisters are involved in education. Health care is another area where many Sisters minister. There are 80 Bathereza Sisters working in hospitals in different capacities such as medical doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and laboratory technicians, among others. The congregation has more than 50 Sisters with certificates in religious studies, catechism, and theology. This congregation has also invested in business studies, and has 40 Sisters who serve in business-related professions such as accounting, procurement, and finance-related careers. The congregation has 12 secretaries who work in the
congregation and in various dioceses, as well as in public institutions. There are also some emerging professions within this congregation such as law, information technology, library sciences, and counselling. While there are only a few Sisters in these less common professions, it is an indication that the congregation is expanding the mission of the founder to go beyond traditional professions and responding to today’s competitive environmental needs. As one Sister observed,

To be employable today, it is not the mere fact of being a religious sister but qualifications and skills [that also] matter. Sisters have to compete for jobs like any other person. When applying for a job at Bugando Medical Centre, sisters who were applying for nursing jobs had to go through special examinations and interviews like other applicants.

If this is occurring in an institution affiliated with the Church, gaining employment in public institutions can only be even more challenging. Therefore, investing in the education of Sisters is becoming more and more important today than ever before.

**Teresina educational achievements.** The study found that about 7% of the Teresina Sisters entered the congregation without any formal education, 92% had a primary school education, and only 1% had secondary school education. Therefore, most girls entering this congregation have only a grade school education.

In the beginning, members of this congregation ministered mostly in education, health care and teaching catechism. They have now ventured into other ministries as well. There are accountants, librarians, ICT-related careers, a lawyer, musicians, a tourism expert, veterinarians, careers in business, and other professions. The diversification of ministries indicates that the Sisters are addressing the needs of society in more concrete ways. There are more than 90 catechists, as well as 90 Sisters working in the education field ranging from kindergarten to higher education. Another 80 Sisters minister as health care professionals in their capacities as medical doctors, lab technicians, nurses, and pharmacists.

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### Table 4

**Sisters’ Education Levels (45 Years of Age and Below)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Teresina</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Batheraza</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Degree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>79.6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>235</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>140</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Research Data (2016)

**General Observations**

Analysis confirms the median age that was highlighted earlier in this chapter. The Teresina congregation has younger Sisters than the Batheraza congregation. When comparing the two congregations, it was also noted that although the Batheraza Sisters seem to have more members whose education level is an undergraduate degree or higher, most of these Sisters are above 45 years of age.

**Education levels of Batheraza Sisters.** There are 140 Batheraza Sisters 45 years of age or younger. Only 17.2% of Sisters in that category hold university/college degrees. The rest of the Sisters hold diplomas or certificates, or have not been educated beyond the secondary or primary level. Educating this category of Sisters is not an option but a necessity.
**Education levels of Teresina Sisters.** The Teresina congregation has 235 Sisters age 45 or younger, and this number represents about 53% of the entire congregation. Of these Sisters, 187 (79.6%) have a certificate level of education in various fields, 25 (10.6%) hold diplomas, 3 (1.3%) hold master’s degrees, and 20 (8.5%) have undergraduate degrees. Thus, 90% of the Sisters who are 45 or younger hold certificates in various fields. This indicates that they could be educated further. They have the potential to earn degrees in disciplines relevant to the diverse fields in which they are currently working.

**Retirement Age**

For government workers in Tanzania, 60 is the mandatory retirement age, while the employable age in the government sector is 45 years of age and below. A candidate above age 45 should hold a set of high-demand credentials and skills in order to be employed permanently; otherwise, he/she could be employed on a contract basis only. The study was interested in determining the number of Sisters who are “retired” and the number of those who are 45 years of age or younger.

**Table 5**

*Sisters in Different Age Groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teresina</th>
<th>Bathereza</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent (%)</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters 60 years of age and above</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters above 45 years of age</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters 45 years of age and below</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The study defined 45 years old and below as young. Source: Research Data (2016)

The statistics indicate that 35% of Bathereza Sisters are 60 years old and above, while only 32% are 45 years old and below. This is a call for retirement preparation as well as replacement. On the other hand, 53% of the Teresina Sisters are 45 years of age or younger, 47% are over 45 years of age, and only 25% are 60 years and above. These statistics show that Bathereza Sisters are older than the Teresina Sisters. For the Bathereza Sisters, therefore, retirement preparation for the Sisters should already be underway.

**Similarities and Differences Between the Two Congregations**

Similarities and differences identified in this study are related to Sisters’ education levels and do not contradict their unique missions and visions. Regardless of the mission of each congregation, education is key. The study found that there are more similarities than differences between the two congregations as far as Sisters’ education is concerned. Most members of the two congregations enter with a primary school education. They may have a local certificate, but it does not help them much. A formal secondary school education provides a foundation for education. Sisters must earn a secondary school diploma in order to be developed further.

Teresina Sisters have more members who are younger and fewer who are 60 years and above compared to the Bathereza Sisters. This statistic informs both congregations on their members’ age and its implications for education, retirement, and future service in fulfilling their mission.

While both congregations’ members have attained some educational credentials, there are very few members in both congregations with at least one degree. Only 11.2% of the Teresina Sisters hold one or more degrees, and of the Bathereza Sisters, 18.2% hold one or more degrees. Both congregations have a long way to go as far as higher education is concerned.

Parents’ education was also one of the research variables. It is believed that coming from a family that values education and where the academic expectations of the parents are high has a positive influence on the children (Coleman, 2002). This study found that more than 94% of the Sisters’ parents were ordinary farmers. Thus, the likelihood of parents having influenced their daughters academically is minimal.
The study sought to determine whether the founders of these congregations continue to assist the Sisters financially in their education endeavours. Both congregations reported that founders assisted in the beginning but that the support had declined somewhat in the years since they became independent. However, general assistance is sometimes received in other areas.

**Accomplishments**

1. The two congregations appreciate the importance of education of their Sisters. This indicates that the era when the emphasis was only on spiritual matters seems to be gone. Congregational leaders feel that education is no longer a luxury but a necessity for their Sisters, the well-being of individual members, and congregations in general. This mindset change is a major success.

2. Although statistics show a limited number of Sisters with degrees in both congregations, interviews with superiors clearly show that they are more than willing to send their Sisters for further education. Also, Sisters themselves have reached a point of requesting academic development when challenged by their ministries. In the past, Sisters waited for superiors to identify individual educational needs, which sometimes resulted in their placement in ministries which were contrary to their interests.

3. While the need for Sisters’ education is still overwhelmingly high, baby steps have been taken. As recently as the 1990s, PhDs and master’s degrees were reserved for the clergy and international Sisters’ congregations, but today there are Tanzanian Sisters with qualifications to teach in various colleges and universities, and others hold important positions in other institutions.

4. There is diversification of professional qualifications and ministries. This means congregations are going beyond traditional ministries and venturing into new ones too. This is a positive change.

**Challenges**

1. There is still a great need to educate Sisters. Data analysis indicates that Sisters holding academic degrees are still very few in number. Although not all members of the congregation will hold higher degrees, the number of Sisters with advanced degrees must nevertheless be increased if congregations want to survive and grow in today’s competitive world.

2. In Tanzania, qualified Sisters may be employed by the government if they are 45 years of age or younger. For those Sisters who are educated but above 45 years of age, opportunities for employment in government institutions are very few. The same concern is echoed in the case of Kenya (Kinyanjui, 2015). Therefore, since not all educated Sisters can be absorbed in Church-based institutions, congregations should plan for educating their Sisters with their age in mind.

3. Related to the previous point, the Church does not have sufficient institutions to absorb all educated Sisters in their respective fields. Once rejected by the government because of their age, they are likely to hold positions in church-related ministries, which may involve meager pay. This is another call for congregations to establish more institutions that will provide jobs for the Sisters.

4. Some Superiors claim that they are challenged to choose between admitting candidates who are already professionals, or who at least have a secondary school education, and candidates who did not complete primary school. Superior Generals report that each group has its advantages. Those who already have at least a secondary school education may be broad-minded and mature, but they sometimes bring life experiences to the formation life that may not fit religious lifestyle. However, congregations may spend less on their education once they are professed. On the other hand, they say, it is easier to form and teach a primary school dropout than it is to teach what they call a “dot-com” young woman. The problem is not what you do and where you serve but how you serve. The added value of service with a difference, which is expected from the Sisters, may be lost. A choice is upon each congregation to choose a lesser evil.
Some candidates join religious congregations with weak secondary school grades. This requires them to repeat some courses, which lengthens their education journey and advances them in age. As observed from the analysis, the parents of almost all Sisters under this study are peasants who could not afford to send their children to good schools; as a result, they attended community schools where facilities and resources are scarce. At the end of the day, many complete their secondary education with poor results and congregations have to pick up the pieces.

Most Sisters who have mastered their professions and have good careers are advanced in age. Once they retire from their various careers, it will create a gap in congregational services as well as expected income if measures are not taken in advance.

Congregational Superiors report that secondary school performance of the Sisters leaves much to be desired (see 5 above). With weak grades at that level, it becomes a challenge to be admitted for university education. It is important, therefore, to balance spiritual and educational needs when admitting candidates in the formation stage. It may also be necessary to introduce some basic secular subjects during formation so that the Sisters can maintain a balance between spiritual and general education.

Congregations under this study reported that they are challenged by the high cost of education which limits the number of Sisters to be sent to higher education. They claim that because resources are scarce, leaders have to balance between education and other needs of the congregation, such as health. They are most grateful to ASEC for their contribution to the education of Sisters.

More Sisters could benefit through online education. This online method of learning may provide quality education at an affordable cost. Currently, however, many Sisters who could use such means of education to enhance their skills are located in areas where connectivity is a challenge. To support them, superiors have to remove them from their current ministry, which is not always possible.

Some Sisters are provided with an opportunity for education but they are not motivated to learn. They are satisfied with the status quo. Also, others get education but their output is questionable.

1. It is important to educate younger Sisters to ensure better results in the Sisters’ ministries considering the changing times anticipated in the future. At the same time, as noted by Mary Mukaka and Margaret Chitseko (2015), women religious should identify their strengths and help superiors to place them accordingly.

2. It was expressed by the Sisters who responded to the study questions that congregations should venture into uncommon ministries in order to reach more people. Traditionally, Sisters worked as teachers and health care providers. They should now go beyond the tradition.

3. Education is becoming more expensive but more needed. Sisters cannot evangelise people who are much more educated than they are. Consequently, they need to be as educated as the society they serve. Otherwise they will be easily defeated and cheated as religious and as professionals. Congregations need to seek educational loans provided by governments and attach them to individual Sisters in case they leave the community before completion of loan recovery. That being the case, younger Sisters who are employable by the government in terms of age and profession should be a priority.

4. More research needs to be conducted to compare candidates who join community life after attaining a certain level of education with those with basic education to determine their survival in the congregations, because there is a sense among Sisters that when older girls join religious life, forming them into religious lifestyle is a challenge. On the other hand, when educated young women enter religious life, congregations will spend less on their future education. Studies on these issues may provide facts to rely on when making these decisions.

Conclusion and Way Forward

This study intended to identify the levels of education of two African congregations’ members and to determine successes attained and challenges encountered in educating their Sisters. The study was an eye-opener to the researcher as well as the congregations under study. While a few Sisters in
the two congregations have higher education, most of them have had only basic education at the secondary and certificate levels. As indicated earlier in this chapter, evangelisation today requires Sisters who are well prepared both spiritually and academically. Sisters are limping when it comes to the academic qualifications required for today’s ministries. Indeed, the educational journey for the African Sisters should be a continuous operation – a race without a finish line.

The study also revealed that educational data is not available in the congregational archives. With data, these congregations are capable of knowing the retired and working statuses of their members, Sisters’ current education levels, as well as future educational needs. Education planning becomes easier when backed up by data. Congregational leaders can use this data during expansion of congregational services and when addressing special needs. This data could also be made available to stakeholders as needed.

The two congregations each have a basic database which they can expand to include more variables of their interest and needs. The work was initially tedious but very much rewarding once completed. We encourage all congregations to make the availability of educational data of their members a priority.

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References


**PART III**

SPIRITUALITY, RELIGIOUS LIFE AND CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES
Introduction to Small Christian Communities

Evangelisation is one of the fundamental functions of the church (Mt 28:19-20). For the Church, evanglising means bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new; as expressed by Pope Paul VI in Evangelii Nuntiandi 18, “Now I am making the whole of creation new” (Rv 21:5; cf. 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). But there is no new humanity if there are not first of all new persons renewed by Baptism (Rom 6:4) and by lives lived according to the Gospel (Eph 4:24-25; Col 3:9-10). The Church’s duty of evangelisation in Africa is carried out by various pastoral agents, namely the laity, catechists, the family, the youth, religious men and women, and priests. The Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) is an ecclesiastical authority comprising nine-member countries, namely Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Sudan, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. The founding fathers of AMECEA developed Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as a concrete expression of, and realisation of, the Church as Family of God (https://www.amecea.org). The AMECEA Study Conference on “Deeper Evangelisation in the Third Millennium” was held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 2002. Section 7 of the Pastoral Resolutions is on “Building the Church as a Family of God by Continuing to Foster and/or Revitalise the Small Christian Communities”; No. 43 states: “We recommend that a program on the theological and pastoral value of Small Christian Communities be included in the normal curriculum of the Major Seminaries and houses of formation of both men and women.” Pope John Paul II, in Mission of the Redeemer, 51, asserted that SCCs “are a sign of vitality within the Church, an instrument of formation and evangelisation, and a solid starting point for a new society based on a 'civilisation of love'”. Thus, the SCC is a pastoral model of the church integrally connected to the structures, ministries and activities of the parish.

SCCs developed as a result of putting the communion, ecclesiology, and teachings of Vatican II into practice. They make real the vision of Vatican II, which calls on the Church to shine forth as “a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” (No. 4 of Lumen Gentium, Dogmatic Constitution of the Church). Pope John Paul II, emphasising the importance of SCCs as the foundational structures of a vibrant parish, noted...
that one way of renewing parishes would be to consider the parish as a community of many SCCs.

The very first SCCs in Africa started in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1961 (Healey, 2012). However, greater emphasis and spread of SCCs was witnessed with the coming of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). SCCs developed as a result of putting the communion ecclesiology and teachings of Vatican II into practice.

Women Religious and Development of Small Christian Communities

Women religious perform a host of duties within their communities, working in areas like education, medicine, and social work. All jobs that women religious do, in some way, are meant to fulfill their overarching roles in the church. They live an ‘apostolic’ life because of their engagement in the works of mercy and other ministries that take the Gospel to others where they are. In addition to caring for the poor, providing education, and helping the sick, women religious also engage in missionary work and religious ministry, for example in evangelical ministry through community outreach programs, chaplaincy, etc. The document Lumen Gentium, No. 4 speaks of “Christ the light of nations” and ascribes aspects of holiness to all. SCCs are the places where we gather to find holiness through prayers or reading of the Word; thus, women religious are like a leavening agent when they join the SCCs. Their roles as facilitators and as members of SCCs stimulate and promote that togetherness of the family of God. The affectionate aspect of the church as the mother can be concretised when women religious take part in SCC activities. Christians view the Church as the mother who takes care, who listens, who encourages and even heals. So, the participation of women religious in SCCs is an apostolate that invigorates the vitality of SCCs.

The AMECEA Pastoral Program

The AMECEA pastoral program is offered at AMECEA Pastoral Institute (API), the evangelisation arm of AMECEA. Established in 1967, the API is one of the earliest AMECEA institutions. Among other courses, the API offers a nine-month diploma program in Evangelisation and Catechesis to pastoral agents, namely the laity, catechists, religious men and women, and priests. There are four primary objectives that guide programming of the Evangelisation and Catechesis curriculum. These are: 1) to promote in the AMECEA region deeper evangelisation and human development through integrated scientific academic excellence; 2) to promote spiritual and human formation; 3) to prepare mature and balanced pastoral agents capable of resolving and coping with contemporary challenges; and 4) to inculcate human and Christian values in social, cultural, and religious contexts. Within this course there are seventeen core units, including units on the history of evangelisation, fundamentals of catechesis, ecclesiology, history of consecrated life, Small Christian Communities in AMECEA, ecumenism, liturgy, and inculturation, among others. In addition to the trainees benefiting in their apostolate, the program also considers as direct anticipated beneficiaries the Christians in the communities and regions where the API graduates serve or will serve in their apostolate.

Rationale

Currently there is scant relevant evaluation literature to show the impact of women religious, both API graduates and current students, on growth of SCCs in the AMECEA region specifically. There has been no follow-up on the immense pastoral ministry that women religious engage in through SCCs in different parishes and dioceses. Hence, their experiences in the growth and development of SCCs are not well documented.

In order to respond appropriately to the overarching research question of the impact of women religious in SCCs and the extent to which the API program has remained relevant to the evangelisation mission in light of emerging socio-cultural, political, and economic realities, the study confined itself to a set of research questions as follows. 1) How relevant is the evangelisation and catechesis course to the mission of women religious in SCCs? 2) What are the experiences of women religious in their pastoral ministry at SCCs? 3) In what ways can the evangelisation and catechesis course be modified to suit women religious and SCCs? 4) What challenges do women religious apostolates face in SCCs?
Methodology

The study adopted a participatory evaluation approach involving past and current women religious who had completed or were currently enrolled in the evangelisation and catechesis course at API, as well as women religious in selected congregational orders and selected API staff. The study is grounded in family systems theory. The family systems theory is a theory introduced by Dr Murray Bowen that posits that individuals cannot be understood in isolation from one another, but rather as a part of their family, as the family is an emotional unit. It is the nature of a family that its members are intensely connected emotionally. The emotional interdependence presumably evolved to promote the cohesiveness and cooperation that families require to protect, shelter, and feed their members (Kerr, 2000). Traditionally, the Catholic Church has regarded the family as the most influential factor in shaping and nurturing the faith of each generation (Suart, 2007). Families are the foundational units of SCCs; thus, emotionally interdependent family units are fundamental to the growth and development of SCCs. Indeed, SCCs are a Family Model of Church (https://www.amecea.org). As such, vigilant nurturing of SCCs is a requisite condition for the growth and development of a vibrant church. Focused group discussion guides that covered issues pertinent to the research questions were used to collect data in a largely unstructured, free-flowing format. Participants were purposively selected from participating institutions. The sample totaled 45 participants, including 35 present and past API women religious graduates, 8 managers of congregational orders, and 2 API staff. The following AMECEA countries were represented: Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, and Malawi. The results of the current study were organised under the following themes:

- Relevance of the evangelisation and catechesis course to the mission of women religious in SCCs
- Appraisal of evangelisation and catechesis course
- Challenges faced by women religious in SCC pastoral missions

Relevance of the Evangelisation and Catechesis Course to the Mission of Women Religious in SCCs

The current world is undergoing a rapid transition and is being subjected to modernising influences of which pastoral agents themselves form a part (Nyenyembe, 2015). Thus, effective evangelisation and catechesis is dependent on continuous advancement of knowledge and skills among pastoral agents in line with the current world trends. Thus, an assessment of the relevance of the current API evangelisation and catechesis course was a major concern of the current study. With its description of “Christ the light of nations,” Lumen Gentium puts the aspects of holiness into focus. SCCs are the places where Christians gather to find holiness through prayers or reading of the Word of God. Thus, the role of women religious as members of SCCs is to stimulate that togetherness of the Family of God. A church that is ‘Family of God’ can only be fully realised when the religious men and women are members of jumuiya (the Swahili word for “community”).

This essentially means that religious men and women ought to have specific competences to enable them to stimulate that togetherness of the Family of God in SCCs. It is in this light that the pastoral worthiness of learning experiences at API by women religious was assessed. In this aspect, the women religious were asked the question: “Given the experiences you have had with SCCs in your parish and in the light of what you have learned, how will you apply the knowledge and skills that you have acquired?”. The women religious were able to describe typical processes and activities pertinent to a variety of SCCs and how they are likely to apply knowledge that they have acquired. A woman religious from Tanzania was quoted saying:

“...in some SCCs, you will find some Christians have the idea that the Word of God in SCCs is for them (the Catholics) and not the Pentecostals. Based on what I have learned, my first responsibility is to remove that mindset by emphasising that the Word of God is not for ‘who and who’ but it is for each one of us as individuals. In this way, I will be able to help them understand that the Word of God helps us to grow spiritually and also is an encounter with God. This way, I believe the Christians in these SCCs will embrace the Bible and be able to understand and see the need to read the Word of God... the course gives me another picture of having another approach to evangelisation... especially today’s changing dynamics in spirituality.”
Ostensibly, Christians in some SCCs have not embraced those who do not profess the entire Catholic faith. However, the Church recognises that in many ways she is linked with those who, being baptised, are honoured with the name of Christian, though they do not profess the faith in its entirety. This concept is not well diffused within the communities; thus, the course in evangelisation and catechesis is helping the women religious to impart the ecumenical concept among SCC members in respective countries and parishes. The Catholic Church implicitly acknowledges such a bond; by recognising the validity of non-Catholic baptism.

Experiences that other women religious have had indicate that many Christians at the SCC level tend to place more emphasis on the economic/business aspect rather than on sharing and understanding the Word of God. While sharing her experiences with SCCs in Kenya, one Sister said:

In some SCCs you find that they dwell so much on money and development and how they can generate more money...you will hear the Christians sharing information on which group to join...mainly ‘the merry go rounds’ where they can make profit. Here you will find the Christians rushing through as they read the Word of God so that they have time to discuss about money and development matters, how they can start small businesses. Now that I have taken the course, the knowledge will enable me to highlight to the Christians the foundation and the purposes of SCCs....It is all not bad, many SCCs do good things like visiting the sick.

Seemingly, Christians in some SCCs haven’t internalised the spirit of SCC as small/local churches in the parish. It should be noted that being economically conscious is not a vice per se; the small business ventures help the parish to grow financially. But too much concentration on money matters becomes a challenge. The concern is the effect these for-profit ventures have on lowly Christians who are not able to meet mandatory contribution demands. More often than not, such Christians opt out of the SCC activities. SCCs are meant to draw Christians to the Word of God and more so to practice Christ’s mission.

Other salient experiences illuminate the role of women religious in canonical marriages contrasted to traditional. One Sister whose pastoral ministry is in Lodwar, Kenya had this to say:

I found the course in canonical marriage to be very helpful. Canonical marriage is an area where I did not know much and the training has given me a lot of content. This will be very helpful for me when I go back to the jumuiyas “communities”, because I work in a pastoralist community. There you will find women especially those in polygamous types of marriage want to participate in church and to receive communion and have their marriages blessed but the church does not recognise this. This affects especially the 2nd and 3rd wives, who are willing to come to the altar so that they can have their marriages blessed, but the men who are usually old don’t want to come to church; the men need to be evangelised. So, with the knowledge that I have acquired, I find that I have now an access and avenue to really dialogue with even the parish priest to see what we can do in such an area.

The views shared by this Sister confirm the assertion by Orobator (1996) that the institution of marriage is one among the many peculiarities of the African cultural life which Christianity seeks to dialogue with in a sustainable process of inculturation. This is an outstanding phenomenon yet a challenging one; women in polygamous marriages wish to participate in the Church, receive Holy Communion, and have their marriages blessed, but the Church does not recognise this type of union. Hence, the evangelisation and catechesis course is playing a pivotal role in equipping women religious with requisite skills necessary for transformation of sociocultural and religious contexts in which efforts of inculturation take place.

Conflict resolution and consensus building among belligerent communities is yet another vital function that women religious encounter with Christians at the SCC level. One Sister whose pastoral ministry is in Turkana, Kenya is quoted saying:

In our society, today there are a lot of conflicts. I think we can be the mediators of reconciliation to different faiths, tribes, and communities....We should be able to promote unity because we are divided in terms of religion, language or social status. So, with what we have learnt in this course, we should be able to bring all people together to be one, to complement one another rather than division. Thus, using the knowledge that we have acquired from the course, I think we should able to promote unity.

This Sister’s contribution suggests that the evangelisation and catechesis course inculcate peacebuilding skills and strategies among the women religious. Cardinal Turkson (2016), the President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, emphasises the Church’s capacity to address the personal dimension of peacebuilding. He notes that “violence manifests itself through people, so peacebuilding starts with changing the heart...as Christians, we have faith and grace to change hearts.” Thus, women
An Appraisal of the Evangelisation and Catechesis Course

One cardinal aspect of any training curriculum is to remain appropriate and applicable to the changing social needs of its beneficiaries. Thus, it was important to evaluate, from religious women’s perspective, elements of the evangelisation and catechesis course that need to be reviewed so as to make the course more responsive to the current world’s rapid transition. The women religious were presented with the question, “Suppose you were given a chance to change or to modify the course that you have undertaken; how would you go about this so that it was more responsive to your mission’s needs?” From the discussion, it is clear the current approach used in teaching the evangelisation and catechesis is more theoretical than learner-centered. In her description of how the API can make the course more responsive to evangelisation needs, one of the women religious had this to say:

We can be attached to a parish where we are able to interact with people rather than to study so much only for the examination.... It’s important to have a bit of practice and at the same time...work for the exam...This can happen...whereby a student can go and meet the Christians within the small Christian communities and have direct experiences especially for what concerns our mission..... In reality the field experience element is not given time.... You know....we can enrich one another with these experiences...but as of now....we have gone as we came, in that we have the knowledge but no field experience. I feel we ought to have been given time to go out and interact with the community.... We could create time for interactivity, even if it is on a Sunday, to pray with the Christians and even attend some *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo* “SCCs”. Christians outside there hear we have students for catechesis at API... the priests are lucky because they have a chance to celebrate masses in the surrounding communities, but for women religious....we do not really interact with the Christians. The syllabus would be more holistic if we had time to interact with the Christians. Now that we do not go to the field, the practical skill is somehow undeveloped. So, that we are not cut from what is happening in the SCCs, that participative part with the *jumuiyas* needs to be given time.

All the women religious who participated in the discussion concurred that the course would have been more applicable in their mission if it were made more practical in its approach; as it stands, the training program is short on real-world experiential learning. It is imperative that programing of the evangelisation and catechesis course takes into consideration a practicum element. In this way, women religious will have sufficient time for practical interaction with Christians in the field (SCCs). Here they will be able to interact with Christians and acquire firsthand experiences that relate to the evangelisation and catechesis course. That the course is heavily teacher-centered is corroborated by two API staff members.

Another aspect of the course that must be addressed is its duration. Describing the length of time allotted to complete the evangelisation and catechesis course, one of the women religious stated:

In my opinion, the time taken to complete the course, in relation to the units we have to take to complete the course, is not sufficient; the workload is too much. I wish the program managers would consider increasing the duration of study to 12 months or something close to that so that we are able to get time to take and study the units at a reasonable pace. This will help us understand and internalise what we are taught. Otherwise there is too much rushing ...., too much content covered over a small period of time.

In agreement with this sentiment, another Sister commented:

The length of time is rather too short; it ought to take a whole year. I have observed those students who join the API in August and complete in May… and with the research component, it is really a marathon and sometimes there is overlap between research and time for examinations. So, the evangelisation and catechesis course would be more meaningful if it is given like one year of study…and then the lecture hours could be reorganised into two- and one-hour sessions rather than a full three-hour lecture.

Face-to-face interviews with two API staff members validated the women religious’ concerns that the duration of time is rather short for a diploma course. Indeed, the short duration within which the course is covered is seen as one of the major weaknesses of the program. From an intellectual viewpoint, says Fr John (not his real name), other similar courses are completed in two years. However, the evangelisation and catechesis course has been compacted into one year at the request of the bishops, who need their pastoral agents to return within one year in order to meet the many ministerial demands of their parishes. Indeed, the time...
allocated for the diploma course is actually half the time that is required. The minimum time required to complete an ordinary diploma course is two years. It is no wonder that the women religious find the time too short to comprehensively engage in their projects for a course meant to impart the principles of scientific research methodology. It is plausible to argue that this weakness may also be contributing to the teacher-centric teaching methodologies already discussed.

The organisation and implementation of the evangelisation and catechesis course, and its research component in particular, was cited as a challenge. During the discussion, it became clear that the research unit “Scientific Research Methodology”, taken towards the end of the course, is carried out within the API environs. This makes it difficult for the pastoral agents to apply the research findings in their respective home parishes. The diversity in culture and settings in home parishes in relation to the API environs make it impractical for the pastoral agents to apply and/or relate the research findings to home challenges. The belief is that the research component would be more relevant if it were carried out within participants’ respective pastoral ministry operational areas. One Sister from Tanzania had this to say:

Another challenge is the application of what we learn in the environment where we work. For instance, now we are being trained on how to carry out research...yet we are carrying out the research from this place, so to apply the findings to the places we are going to work is a challenge. The environment, the culture and the traditions of Christians we encounter at local churches and parishes are different from here.... I wish the program [were] organised in a way that would allow us to [conduct] the research from where we work.

There is a felt need for the API to embrace current advancements in teaching and learning technologies. In addition, novel evangelisation and catechesis curriculum support materials, such as new papal encyclicals and other new documents from the Church, need to be made available during training. Current curriculum support materials will help the women religious to remain up to date and in alignment with current Church teachings and will ensure that their evangelisation is responsive to emerging societal issues and needs. One Sister stated:

For me, the school can improve on new technologies and also update the reference books to include new things that have been written about evangelisation and...what the church is saying today about evangelisation.... Not everybody who comes here is gifted to access the current church documents. So, if such documents are available they can make us to be on the same level with what the church is saying and how it is addressing new issues. We need current books that can address our research needs...but when you go into the library sometimes these books are not there; for example, when you are given an assignment in class that requires you to go and do research, you find the books are not there. So, we just rely on material from the teacher, so it’s better to improve in the library with recent books and other reference materials.

In support of this, another Sister said:

To add on what my Sister has said…we could have some videos or musicology, anything current to do with evangelisation...or of the church at different stages that we can watch and share together at the end of classes or in the evening..... Now after classes all of us disperse, I do not know how we can cooperate; but if we are provided with current issues and happenings from the parishes and/or dioceses or even outside...something new for learning that is part and parcel of training...it would be very beneficial.

There is a clear need for API to revolutionise its teaching methodologies and approaches and leverage the advancements of media technologies.

Another important aspect overlooked in the evangelisation and catechesis curriculum is the aspect of networking; which would allow for follow-up and the sharing of ideas, experiences, and challenges from participants’ actual field practices. One of the women religious had this to say:

My concern is that since we came here...we have lived together for nine months, but I can say pastoral ministry-wise we do not know each other well. We have not had time to interact and share with each other about our own experiences in home parishes. We have had no time to share the challenges we encounter, successes, etc. As of now, it’s like all is done...there is no structure for networking. What people do after this is not considered, so that at the conclusion of the course it is like finished.... So, I think some strategy is needed where there is an easy way of communicating where people can be sharing and build on experiences. I think that is lacking and we really are cut off from each other. The contacts we establish largely depends on our relationships that we have developed. But you know people relate at different levels, so I wish there was a formal way that we can keep connected and sharing after the training is over because it is part of what has brought us here in addition to acquiring knowledge.
Another Sister said:
As for me, I have not had much experience with pastoral work as I am still young, but the challenges I have gone through in Turkana (an arid region in northern Kenya)...it is very hard pastoral work for the pastoralist. There is dismal self-awareness among the Christians in SCCs. Self-awareness is needed if the SCCs are to develop. Pastoralists depend a lot on donations and aid from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) so I need to educate them to depend on themselves and to develop the SCCs. They are still deep rooted in their culture and traditions...and Christianity among them is very low, so they need to develop spiritually.

The same sentiments are shared by Sr Hannah (not her real name), who affirms that Christians in some SCCs do not comprehend the intentions of SCCs. This is more common in parishes located in remote areas of the country. As indicated earlier, due to the vastness of such parishes and with few pastoral agents, Christians in these parishes are poorly enlightened about the spirit of SCCs. In addition to this, it is obvious that the concept of enculturation has not been well understood among pastoralist communities. Therefore, it is a big challenge that deeper evangelisation has not taken place within the SCCs in such communities.

The order of the liturgy as practiced by the SCCs is yet another challenge cited by the women religious. There appears to be some form of disconnection between the order of mass that women religious learn at API and the actual practice in some local parishes. One Sister said:
My contribution concerns liturgy.... For us here we have learnt a lot about liturgy but if you compare what we learn with what is going in our local churches sometimes it is not going in line with what the liturgy requires.... You find it difficult to change the people immediately. So, one still needs to take time to do so...and the fact that we are few in number it will be a great challenge to make the changes.

It is therefore important that programming and training administered through the evangelisation and catechesis course at API is seen to be in synchrony with the way liturgical practices and procedures are conducted, especially at the level of the SCCs. This challenge may be tied to doctrines followed in the formation of new SCCs. Because a majority of Christians have not been formally introduced to liturgical practices and procedures, they will not be able to follow the ecclesiological principles of starting a SCC without guidance. Sr Jane (not her real name) laments the lack of
knowledge among SCC leaders on how to form a SCC. Christians simply come together on the basis of proximity of households, familiarity among members, etc. Indeed, some Christians join the SCCs simply because they are in need of church services (e.g., baptism, marriage, interment rites) that are offered only if one is a member of a SCC.

Participation of men and youth is another challenge confronting women religious in the growth and development of SCCs. This is largely due to cultural beliefs and practices, for instance, gender and generational gaps. All of the participants in this study concurred that engaging men and youth is a real task. This phenomenon is more pronounced in the rural and more traditional societies. Some of these cultural challenges, as one Sister reported, can be overcome if religious women and men are careful about the formation of SCCs from the onset. The orientation to the SCC that members are exposed to at the formative stages is critical. So, the formators need to be careful and well versed with the ecclesiological principles of starting a SCC. It is evident that the theology of the SCC as a local church (i.e., the church is local as much as is universal) has not diffused sufficiently to the Christians at the SCC level. Thus, the idea of the SCC as a church within the neighbourhood where people can identify themselves and express their witness of faith, exchange the word of God, etc., has not resonated well. One Sister noted:

There is something that needs to be done because in many SCCs you will find attendance is mostly by women. Sometimes I asked them “Where are your men and the youths?” Indeed, the women were bold enough to say that when it comes to the youths it is like they get bored…I guess the SCC leadership needs to change the approach of conducting SCCs so that each group may feel they are benefiting. The youths desire something vibrant, something that will make them lively. That is lacking in most of the SCCs that I have visited. When it comes to men, it is like men favour other engagements than participation in SCCs, they see SCCs as belonging to women. My take is that culture has a lot to do with this. For instance, if you go to the place where I came from, you will find that men are not comfortable to assemble or to be in the same place with their women. So, they say SCCs is the work of women… ours is to care of the cows and other things. This does not only happen at the SCC level but also in the church, where you will find that sitting arrangement is by gender. There are seats designated for women, men and the youth. All this is about culture. So, you will find a man cannot sit in proximity to his wife or the young ones. So, I think culture has a lot to do with the SCC attendance gap.

The aspect of poor participation by men and the youth is also linked to a lack of creativity within the SCC leadership regarding ways to attract youth, laments Sr Maria (not her real name). Her concerns about lack of creativity are corroborated by Fr John (not his real name), who feels that youths are more than ready to be engaged and participate in SCCs, if only we were more creative. He had this to say:

When you call the youths for choir, they come, and sometimes they are ready to get into very rigorous rehearsals. So, SCC leaders ought to be more creative in ways that attract the youth. Get the use of current social media technologies, I mean use of modern communication approaches, whenever we are handling the youth. Engage and remind the youths through their favourite social media channels like WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, short text messages, etc…. Get into their language; if we do not get to young people using their own language, we will lose them, so we need to be creative…. Let them feel they are part and parcel, their comments and ideas are appreciated. Let them not see the SCC as an affair of the wazees (older men and women). Let’s help them to see SCC as a community of the church, a cell within the neighbourhood where all are gifted by the Holy Spirit. Some youths view themselves as “we are sinners” or “we are disrespectful”, so most of them will run away; thus we need to embrace them. I believe lack of creativity within SCCs is the culprit responsible for non-participation of the youths. I think the same applies for men because nowadays it is not easy to get a hold of someone if you do not have their emails or phone contacts. Consequently, SCC leaders, facilitators and chairpersons need to be trained on how to utilise current…social media technologies in communication with and engagement of youth and men.”

Discussion with women religious also indicates that the lag in the inculturation process is a key challenge to the growth and development of SCCs; that is, inculturation has not sufficiently diffused in some of the local communities. Pope John Paul II emphasised that “Human beings are both child and parent of the culture,” and are thus responsible for what they receive from culture and how they shape it (John Paul II, 1998). Sr Ann, who hails from a pastoral community in Kenya, says:

Another challenge is inculturation…. Many times you will find that the SCCs do not really bring out what they should be within the traditions of the people. I say this because when you assess what happens in daily life of the people at the grassroots level, you will find all people participate in cultural practices, e.g. initiation and marriage rites…. In any social activity they are all there, but when it comes to SCCs, very few attend; yet the SCC is meant to be the local church. So, I would imagine that this challenge can be surmounted if
Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are made:

1. The evangelisation and catechesis course is relevant to the mission of women religious in SCCs.

2. An appraisal of the evangelisation and catechesis course indicates the need for reprogramming the course so as to address the following issues.
   a. The training approaches are too teacher-centric, thus there is need to adopt more practical, learner-oriented approaches.
   b. There is need to consider reintroduction of the practicum aspect. This will give the learners greater practical interaction with Christians at the SCC level.
   d. The current duration of nine months allotted to complete the course is too short. There is an urgent need to adjust the duration of the course to at least two years.
   e. The research component is highly localised. This makes it impractical for the pastoral agents to generalise the findings in their respective home/country parishes. Localisation of research activities is attributed to the insufficient time allocation.
   f. There is need for API to leverage current advancements in teaching and learning technologies.
   g. There is need to enhance the availability of current curriculum support materials. This will keep pastoral agents in alignment with current church teachings and evangelisation methods pertaining to emerging societal issues and needs.
   h. There is need to develop networking and follow-up strategies for API alumni. This will augment sharing of information and experiences among pastoral agents from different parts of the AMECEA region.

3. Women religious face significant challenges in their SCC pastoral missions.
   a. There is a shortage of trained pastoral agents in the field who are able to evangelise and interpret the Word of God. Given the Christians are made to understand what actually goes on in church should be brought home such that it complements the daily life of Christians… But this is far from being met… Deeper evangelisation has not taken place within the SCC because inculturation is yet to catch up.

It is common for evangelisation to take place in a variety of cultural contexts; thus, if the process is to effectively engage and transform culture, we must be increasingly innovative so as to make the process of evangelisation fit and be more acceptable in a wide range of African cultural settings. When culture, therefore, becomes what God intends, people discover their potential, vocation, and purpose in life. “It is a feature of the human person that it can achieve true and full humanity only by means of culture” (Vatican Council II, 1996; No. 53).

The other challenge cited by the women religious is that of over-expectation coming from local parish leaders and Christians. There is apprehension among the women religious that, following the training they have received, they may become targets of work overload from their religious communities. As a result, they fear that they may not be able to meet the demands of their leaders and other Christians in the SCCs. One Sister is quoted as saying:

You see, API is an authoritative institution. So, once the word gets out there that you trained at API, the parish leaders, our own religious communities and Christians in the jumuiyas, the parishes…where we come from, will expect too much from us, believing that we have every answer for every situation. So, I perceive this as a challenge. However, looking at the competency and skills that I have acquired, I am able to perform in line with the competency and be content with myself that I cannot be able to handle all that there is…. What we cannot answer we go the research way. It is also important the leaders in SCCs are sensitised not to over burden us but allow us to accomplish what we can.

It is imperative that API programming impart women religious with appropriate strategies and skills to cope with overbearing leaders in the local parishes. Occasional seminars tailor-made for local parishes and religious communities’ leaders can sensitisate them on API pastoral programs. This will benefit the leaders in that they will be to assign the women religious focused activities based on competencies acquired at API.
vastness of parishes and with few pastoral agents, Christians are poorly enlightened about the spirit of SCCs.

b. Cultural beliefs and practices among Christians hinder the effectiveness of pastoral agents at the SCCs. This may be tied to a lag in the inculturation process, particularly in pastoralist and rural communities.

c. A majority of Christians have little or no awareness of the philosophies that guide the formation of SCCs, thus they are not able to follow the ecclesiological principles of starting a SCC.

d. Lack of creativity among SCC leadership is cited as a principal factor that hinders participation of men and youth. Thus, there is need for tailor-made short leadership courses for local parishes, religious communities, and SCC leaders.

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ECCLESIAL MOVEMENTS
AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS IN KENYA

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Abstract

The new ecclesial movements can be seen as a gift to the Church, but they have come with their own challenges especially when it comes to women religious joining them. This chapter investigates what these movements are and how they are perceived by the Church. The research looked into reasons why women religious join these movements when their own congregations are supposed to be sufficient. The research findings have established that, in themselves, the ecclesial movements can be enriching to women religious if care is taken to ensure that they do not interfere with their life and work. It is instructive that ecclesial movements are an asset to the Church. We have seen that many women religious have benefited from them. We have also seen that at times they can be a source of conflict in the religious life, especially if they are not well understood within the congregation. Our recommendation is that there should be a continuous dialogue looking for the best ways women religious can participate in these movements without jeopardising their own religious life or that of the congregation.

Keywords: ecclesial movements, women religious, conflict, dialogue.

Introduction

Catholic nuns and Sisters have been a great gift to the Church. They are dedicated and committed to different apostolates like schools, health centers, and pastoral work. Outside of their apostolates, it was rare to see them joining the lay people as members of a movement. It is no longer disputed that women religious have been seen participating in ecclesial movements. This research intends to investigate the extent of participation of women religious in these movements and how the Church can tap their knowledge and skills in making these movements dynamic and effective tools for evangelisation. Few questions linger about whether joining these movements will interfere with the religious life of the Sisters, given the fact that most congregations and orders of women religious were founded in the same way these movements have been established, mainly to give a charism and a spirituality to the individual. It has been argued that participation in an ecclesial movement is one way of complementing a Sister’s apostolate and meeting the lay faithful in different ways (Leonard, 2017). The Sisters are working in contexts that are different from those that existed when their congregations and orders were founded. There is clamour for new religious experiences other than those offered by one’s religious congregation or order. There is more interaction with the laity, and this seems to attract many women religious into these movements. There is something new to be learned from these new ecclesial movements. There is need for religious congregations and orders to rethink their call.

There is also an awareness that there has been some disharmony in some congregations and orders on the issue of its members joining these movements. It must be stated that some of the movements have been criticised for having supposed cult-like characteristics. Fear has been expressed that they are sects or churches within the Roman Catholic Church (Leonard, 2017). They have sparked divisions within parishes and between the clergy. In some instances, there are reported cases of division within communities, some accusing others of going outside of their founder’s intentions. This difference of opinion has led us do some investigations to determine the merits and faults of these ecclesial movements for women religious. Our research finding established this as an area of concern.

What is an Ecclesial Movement?

The term “ecclesial movement” is a generic concept that has many other names. Technically, they are movements and associations in the Church. While the terms “movement” or “association” will be used to refer to this new reality in the Church, it is important to note that some groups may not subscribe to these terms. Some prefer to be called a “community”,
and others do not want to be called by any of these names because it might restrict the new experience they are living (Brendan, 2011). At the same time, they cannot be called “lay movements” because they also include clergy and religious. Canon law talks more of movements and associations of Christ’s faithful to capture everybody in the Church.

The Church itself is a movement left by our Lord Jesus Christ. The word “movement” suggests a sort of journeying to an end. That is why one of the images of the Church is of a “pilgrim people of God”. The first Christians were called “the Way”; then they were called “Christians” since they followed Christ. It is a journey to be travelled. One must carry his or her cross and follow Jesus. Via crucis is the way for Christians. On the journey, one finds many obstacles that must be overcome. The prototype of the Christian faith is the Exodus journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. In this journey, one needs to be strengthened. Jesus offers his Word and the Eucharist as two nourishing elements to those who are on this journey.

The Church teaches that every movement or association has a charism which the founder uses to establish the movement. A charism is a gift freely given by the Holy Spirit for the good of the Church. The Holy Spirit is given to each who is baptised (cf. Rom 5:5), and all genuine and authentic Christians respond to the prodding of the Spirit. No one can stop the Holy Spirit in his work. As John Henry Newman would say, “God has created me to do him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another” (Newman, 2007). This means that everybody has a role as a Christian to play in fulfilling God’s Plan.

In the words of John Paul II, the “members of the Church who find themselves in associations and movements seek to live, under the impulse of the Spirit, the Word of God in their concrete historical circumstances. They do so by stimulating, with their witness, constantly renewed spiritual progress, by evangelically vivifying temporal realities and human values, and enriching the Church through an infinite and inexhaustible variety of initiatives in the realm of charity and holiness” (John Paul II 2 March 1987 n.3).

**Institution and Charism**

This study found that there are arguments that aim to portray women religious who join these ecclesial movements as seeking to be charismatic as opposed to being satisfied in their institutes. This has created a false opinion that the institutional is opposed to the charismatic. It is important to state that there should be no opposition between charism and institution. The institution must empower individuals to discern the Spirit working in them. The one with charism must know that charisms always work within the established institutions for order and genuine witness to the Kingdom. A kingdom divided cannot stand (cf. Mark 3:24). On the other hand, a high-handed institution can muzzle individuals. Schisms and defections to sects are a glaring example of the consequences for an institution that goes against charisms. John Paul II taught that “True charisms cannot but aim at the encounter with Christ in the sacraments. The ecclesial realities to which you belong have helped you to rediscover your baptismal vocation, to appreciate the gifts of the Spirit received at Confirmation, to entrust yourselves to God’s forgiveness in the sacrament of Reconciliation and to recognise the Eucharist as the source and summit of all Christian life” (John Paul II, 1998, n.7).

There should be complementarity between the institutional gifts and charismatic gifts. John Paul II observed, “In the Church, both the institutional and charismatic aspects, both the hierarchy and associations and movements of the faithful, are co-essential and share in fostering life, renewal and sanctification, though in different ways” (John Paul II, 1987, n.2).

When individuals discover their charisms, they also seek people who have the same charisms. This is not hard, since there are always those people with charisms of leadership. The leader calls upon like-minded individuals for a cause in the Church. They form groups which later turn into movements or associations. The power of chrism tends to reach out to other people and lead them to unite themselves into groups. John Paul II notes that “in the Church’s history we have continually witnessed the phenomenon of more or less vast groups of the faithful, which under a mysterious impulse of the Spirit, have been spontaneously moved to join together in pursuit of certain charitable or sanctifying ends. This has come about in relation to the particular needs of the Church in their day, or even involved collaboration in the Church’s essential and permanent mission. This right to gather in groups is openly recognised in the new Code of Canon Law, which speaks of ‘associations which serve charitable or pious purposes or which foster the Christian vocation in the world’ (Can, 215):
words which can certainly apply to ecclesial movements as well” (John Paul II, 1987, n.2).

Ecclesial movements and associations need to be in the communion of the Church. This means that they must identify themselves to be Catholic and profess the Catholic faith. It is known very well that not all movements have shown docility towards Church authority. As it has been seen elsewhere, there is always the danger of separating the movement from the Church for various reasons. John Paul II emphasised this point when he said, “Today a new stage is unfolding before you: that of ecclesial maturity. This does not mean that all problems have been solved. Rather it is a challenge. A road to take. The Church expects from you the ‘mature’ fruits of communion and commitment” (John Paul II, 1998, n.6). The pontiff later stressed that “no charism dispenses a person from reference and submission to the Pastor of the Church” (John Paul II, 1998, n. 24).

John Paul II was a great supporter of the movements within the Church. For him, “The term [movement] is often used to refer to realities that differ among themselves, sometimes even because of their canonical structure. Though the term certainly cannot exhaust or capture the wealth of forms aroused by the life-giving creativity of the Spirit of Christ, it does indicate a concrete ecclesial reality with predominantly lay membership, a journey of faith and a Christian witness which bases its own pedagogical method on a precise charism given to the person of the founder in specific circumstances and ways” (John Paul II, 1998, n. 4).

Luis Navarro summarizes the concept of the movement thusly:
1. A movement is a concrete ecclesial reality. Therefore, its reason for existing is in the communion of the Church. If it loses this ecclesiality, it will die.
2. The ecclesial movements are composed mainly by lay people, even though other faithful can also be members. This aspect will be reflected in the spirituality: it will be usually a secular one.
3. Every movement constitutes a way of faith as well as a Christian witness in the Church and in society.
4. In every movement we can find a charism given to the founder at its base. (Navarro, 2002, p.7)

Legitimacy of Ecclesial Movements

In Christifideles laici, John Paul II described how these ecclesial movements give their institutionalization, the criteria for discerning their ecclesiality, with their fruits. The Pope was aware that these movements are new in the Church (most of them were established after the Second Vatican Council) and do not necessarily follow traditional models, and for this matter, they are to seek institutionalisation. He writes, “It is exceedingly opportune that some new associations and movements receive official recognition and explicit approval from competent Church authority to facilitate their growth on both the national and international level” (John Paul II, 1988, n.31).

Movements should lead to appreciation of prayer; contemplation; liturgical and sacramental life; the reawakening of vocations to Christian marriage, the ministerial priesthood and consecrated life; readiness to participate in programs and Church activities; a commitment to catechesis and a capacity for teaching and forming Christians; a desire to be present as Christians in various settings of social life and the creation and awakening of charitable, cultural, and spiritual works; the spirit of detachment; and evangelical poverty leading to Church communion of those baptised members who have fallen away (Navarro, 2002).

It must be appreciated that these movements are still evolving (Navarro, 2002), and we do not have a full understanding of them. We should not assign to them a very strict interpretation or require of them stringent adherence to the above principles. We must recognise that we have neglected to educate our lay faithful, so they join these movements as they are. We must speak of them both in a strict sense and in a wider sense.

Can the Religious Join an Ecclesial Movement?

Many of these movements have provisions allowing membership by the religious and the clergy. Some consider it as a blessing, because they are knowledgeable and their participation would enhance the work of the movements. There is a good number of religious and clergy who have joined these ecclesial movements in the Church, as demonstrated by the findings of this research. The study looks specifically at the women religious in Kenya to see how this has impacted them. The Code of Canon Law states,
“In the Church there are associations which are distinct from institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life. In these associations, Christ’s faithful, whether clerics, laity, or clerics and laity together, strive with a common effort to foster a more perfect life, or to promote public worship or Christian teaching. They may devote themselves to other works of the apostolate, such as initiatives for evangelisation, works of piety or charity, and those which animate the temporal order with the Christian spirit” (Can. 298, 1).

Analysis of the Effects of Ecclesial Movements on Women Religious in Kenya

This analysis sought to find out the effects of ecclesial movements among the women religious who attend the movements for various reasons.

As shown in Figure 1, the congregations and orders with the most participants in the study included the Sisters of St Joseph of Mombasa (18%), the Ursuline Sisters (14%), the Sisters of Mercy (13%), the Missionary Sisters of Precious Blood (13%), the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul (12%), and the Sisters of Saint Louis (10%).

A majority of the Sisters (80%) had been in their congregation for between 11 and 40 years, as shown in Figure 2. Only 12% had been in their community for 10 years or less. This shows that most of the Sisters would be able to provide the correct information needed in the study, since they have had many experiences during the time they have been in the community.
As shown in Figure 4, the Charismatic movement in Kenya was most supported by respondents (27%), followed by Society of Vincent de Paul (25%) and Living Rosary (20%). Sacred Heart and Legion of Mary had the smallest representation, at 16% and 12% respectively.

Most of the sampled religious Sisters claimed that they have been in the movement for a period of 10 years or less (29%). But it was discovered that a majority of the Sisters have been in the movement for a period of between 11 years and 30 years (49%). This shows that most of the participants in the study had a good knowledge of the subject matter. It was clear also that 22% of the Sisters have been in the movement for a period of more than 31 years or more, as indicated in Figure 5.
The analysis in Figure 7 indicates that most movements (31%) have a range of 51 to 100 members. It is also clear that 26% of movements have 50 or fewer members. Figure 7 also reflects that 34% of the movements in Kenya have more than 100 members, and 9% of movements do not know how many they have.

Figure 8. The number of religious men and women in the movements.

The study also revealed that it was not only women religious who attend these movements but also the men religious and clergy. It is very interesting to find out that 65% of the movements followed by the Sisters had between 10 to 40 members who are religious men and clergy. But 20% of the Sisters were not able to demonstrate how many religious men and clergy they have in their movements, as is shown in Figure 8.
In trying to understand how long the movement has been in place in Kenya, 28% of the Sisters indicated that the movement they followed was created by Fr Billy Camel, although they did not indicate how long it has been in place. Meanwhile, 23% of respondents reported that the movement they followed, which was started by a religious missionary priest, was said to have been in existence for only one year in Kenya. It was clear that other movements were in place for more than a century, as is the case with the movement started by Pauline Mary Jericot from Italy, according to 21% of respondents and as indicated in Figure 10.

Very interesting findings shown in Figure 9 indicate that 21% of the women religious were initiated to the movement not by their mothers but by their fathers. Others indicated that they were initiated by other religious (22%). Friends and mothers had the smallest percentages (11% and 13% respectively).

Most women religious revealed that they felt compelled to join the movement out of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary (26%), while 22% said that they were motivated by the Holy Spirit and enticed by powerful zeal in evangelisation and healings experienced in people during deliverance. It is also clear that the testimonies of many fellow Sisters motivated some to join the movements (15%), as indicated in Figure 11.
Figure 12. Service to the movement as a religious.

Figure 12 demonstrates that most religious participate in movement activities, because 18% of the participants indicated that they help in enlightening the Christians on their faith, and another 18% reported joining meetings and ministries of the movement. Participants also said that they help in evangelising and preaching (17%) or assist with the work of coordinating activities of the movements where they belong (17%). Some (16%) indicated that they help in spiritual guidance, while 14% participate in seminars and prayers.

Figure 13. Does the charism of your religious group suit the spirit of the movement?

Analysis of the data revealed that 56% of respondents reported that their religious charism does not suit the ecclesial movements that they attend. But 44% agreed that the charisma of the movements aligns well with their religious congregation’s spirit, as shown in Figure 13.

Figure 14. Perception of superiors and other colleagues towards ecclesial movement.
The study discovered that most superiors and other colleagues who do not attend these ecclesial movements do not regard them as spiritual but as movements of “spiritual evil”, because 32% confirmed that their superiors and other colleagues see them as witchcraft, while 18% of those who attend are confronted by their superiors as great sinners who go there for the sake of their sins to seek solace. Some (14%) were discouraged because they are regarded as people with a lot of problems, who go to movement gatherings not for prayers but as sympathy-seekers. It was clear that some of the superiors feel that their Sisters attend as way of wasting time, as reported by 13% of respondents and shown in Figure 14.

The question of whether the ecclesial movements provide any spiritual benefits is addressed in Figure 15; 14% of the members said that they go to these movements to seek the Grace of healing and have a deeper intimacy with God through Mary, while spiritual growth was indicated by 13%. Other reported benefits of joining these movement included having time for more spiritual prayers (12%), obtaining graces from God (11%), and deepening one’s faith (11%).

It was found that some congregations and orders value these ecclesial movements, since 18% of participants reported that all their congregation’s members belong to these movements. There were also those who reported that more than 50 members from their congregations and orders belonged to ecclesial movements (23%). It is evident that the ecclesial movements provide a space for solace for many, since across the congregations and orders there are members who belong to these movements, as indicated in Figure 16.
Figure 17. Essentials of ecclesial movement to the religious groups.

Most of the participants agreed that these ecclesial movements have value not only to the individual but also to the congregation they belong to, since 27% confirmed that the movement assisted in promoting vocations in the group, and 21% reported that the movement set a base for devotion to our Mother Mary, which is a good a thing that can be realized from the movements. Promoting the spirit of prayers was reported at 18%, since some women religious feel that these movements allow them to strengthen their prayer life on a daily basis in a way that is not possible in the convents, as shown in Figure 17.

Figure 18. Challenges facing movement attendees within their congregations.

Various religious community issues came to light as reported by those who attend these ecclesial movements. Thirteen percent of the participants claimed that due to the movements they experience disunity in the community, since some members feel holier than others, while others reported that a majority of their fellow Sisters do not seem not to understand the movement (14%). Some attend secretly for fear of detection by their leaders (8%). Others reported facing hatred from bishops and clergy due to attending these ecclesial movements (13%). Still others complained that the movements demand contributions (12%), which they find hard to fulfill since they do not have resources, or the meetings take long time, which eats into the community time, hence bringing conflicts (12%). These and other challenges are shown in Figure 18.
It is instructive that ecclesial movements in the Church are an asset to the Church. We have seen that many women religious have benefitted from them. We have also seen that at times they can be a source of conflict in the religious life, especially if they are not well understood within the congregation. Our recommendation is that there should be a continuous dialogue looking for the best ways women religious can participate in these movements without jeopardising their own religious life or that of the congregation.

To that end, it is important to know that this can be a big opportunity where women religious can have a very active part in evangelisation through ecclesial movements, given the fact that many clergy are not available to these movements. This prompts us to call for a collaborative ministry in which the Church will have two advantages, namely, its members will be enriched spiritually, and the presence of women religious will help to moderate the negative outcomes of these movements. This is called collaborative ministry.

Collaborative Ministry and Movements

Ecclesial movements offer a rare opportunity for women religious. On the one hand, they are able to develop their own spirituality, and on the other hand, they participate in ministry. The movements become channels for collaborative ministry.

It is an opportunity for women religious who feel that they can participate in the movements to be allowed to utilise their talents. It is also an opportunity for women religious to have an opportunity to do extra apostolate as part of their personal initiative.

Ministry can at times be difficult, especially where one meets opposition. It requires a commitment and sacrifice. Movements and associations can afford this opportunity to commit oneself to a cause. One’s belief is put into action through the dedication to a movement.
“Ministry, then, is not a choice for the Christian, but a privilege and an obligation. Beyond the individual call for ministry, there is a call as a people. The corporate call implies the necessity for individuals to discover ways to join their gifts with the gifts of others for the building of the kingdom” (Sofield & Juliano, 1987, p. 20-21).

With the help of women religious, this can be achieved. This can also remove fear from the clergy that the movements are too independent. “Anyone in ministry will at times experience frustrations, blows to self-esteem and injustices. Feelings of anger are inevitable. The challenge is to discover avenues for expressing the anger constructively rather than converting it into hostility which ultimately destroys any collaborative effort” (Sofield & Juliano, 1987, p. 37). In collaborative ministry, we must learn how to deal with conflict. It is important that members of movements know that conflicts are neither good nor bad. They need to be resolved or transformed into positive energies of growth. Dissentions and disagreements are bound to be experienced. Members are very human and conflict is inevitable.

“Collaboration is based on the ability to relate to others, and all relationships presuppose the capacity to trust” (Sofield & Juliano, 1987, p. 59-60).

Conclusion

This chapter intended to investigate how women religious relate to the new phenomenon of ecclesial movements within the Church. We have been able to establish that several women religious have participated in these movements. We have also discovered that this has not been welcomed by the superiors, who have the impression that the movements are taking the Sisters from their primary obligations. The research has also established that these movements contribute immensely to the spiritual life of the Sisters. Some see complementarity with their own vocation within a religious order. We have also seen that these movements offer an opportunity to Sisters to do extra apostolate and to be with the laity in answering to their call.

There is a need, therefore, to address the emergence of ecclesial movements in the Church and how this can benefit the religious congregations and orders. This will bring awareness of their importance, and there can be some moderation on how much Sisters can participate in these movements without endangering their own vocation and their communities. It is important also to allow women religious to be able to do ministry within their local churches. In this way, they will contribute to the growth of the Church and help the local pastors in their apostolate.

This kind of arrangement requires that the issue of ecclesial movements is introduced during formation and in theological formation. Women religious should explore how they can enter dialogue with these movements and discover areas where they can contribute. Mixing with the laity is an opportunity to discover the universal holiness of all faithful. The new ecclesial movements will offer women religious the opportunity to open to other apostolates and they can be an opportunity for spiritual growth.

References


Introduction

The right understanding of a vocation in the Church always implies a threefold movement for the individual who feels called: an invitation to self-contribution; which is formed and informed towards self-edification; that ends in self-fulfillment. But self-contribution in the religious growth-experience is impossible without a kenosis, a self-emptying or self-oblation which is a direct contradiction of self-fulfillment as it is understood by the world. Every wholesome formative experience must take on board this lively and dynamic tension.

This chapter, though without the total benefit of empirical and statistical quantification, theorises professional formation as integral to self-edification, which is understood as key to a fulfilling vocation for the 21st-century woman religious in Anglophone Cameroon, which is also known as English-speaking Cameroon or West Cameroon (these terms are used synonymously throughout this chapter). Cameroon is a bilingual country. English is the main language of those who live in the western part of the country as opposed to French, which is mainly spoken in Francophone Cameroon. There are both male and female consecrated persons belonging to congregations in the church. They are generally also referred to as “the religious” (except as otherwise expressly noted, the terms women religious, religious, and Sisters are used synonymously throughout this chapter).

In a semi-mysterious way, the religious way of life must find the perfect balance between self-fulfillment and total self-giving. Every religious must be helped towards achievement of a balanced self within the community.

Selling (2000) argues that the self, adequately considered, is a complex phenomenon to deal with and is best revealed to itself and understood in the community as the self-in-relation to self and to others. In the preface to his monumental work, Kegan (1985, p. vii) agrees with Erikson’s insight that this demands the blending of the individual’s experiences and actions in a never-ending process of adaption to the community and the world. In the prologue to the same work, Kegan (p. 4) also sides with Rogers, who borrows a page from evolutionary biology in theorising the “actualising tendency” as intrinsic to the development of the “self”, which is essentially a movement or development towards autonomy. Kegan explores both the history and the broad spectrum of the psycho-sciences on the topic and powerfully concludes that the self is a “meaning-making organism”, for “the activity of being a person is the activity of meaning-making” (1985, p. 4).

Abstract

This chapter theorises the search for meaning as the key to the fulfilled woman religious who in a semi-mysterious way must find the perfect balance between self-realisation and total self-giving. Focusing on the women religious in Anglophone Cameroon, it first sketches the history of their contribution to evangelisation and the challenges they face in living out their various charisms today. Each call received as God’s grace enables self-giving to and within the Church to be possible. However, it must be lived in a personal way. The search for meaning thus takes on board each person’s talents which are carefully discerned in dialogue, given a proper direction and perfected through professional training, while balancing the need of the person’s self-realisation and the needs of the Congregation. Such professional training will hopefully enable the religious to live the charism of the founder/foundress in and through her particular and professionalised “charism within the charism”, and thus make for happier, holier, contributing Sisters in Congregations which are searching for financial self-reliance.

Keywords: women religious, meaning, charism, professionalism.
11). How does a religious community help the individual in the search for meaning, and in the search of self, identity, and personhood?

The central thrust of this chapter is that the community of the woman religious must be an enabling, empowering, formative, and self-reflection enhancing home. Such a home will be conducive to self-discovery; it will form discovered talent towards human productivity which is meaningful to the individual, beneficial to the community and society at large, and promotive of personal sanctity. In short, this chapter theorises that professionalisation of discovered/needed talent and general capacity building are a huge avenue to meaning-making in the life of the Anglophone woman religious. This is perhaps one of the most effective ways in which the individual can experience, identify with, and live out the charism of the Congregation – the particular gospel value which inspired the founder/foundress and which continues to animate every dimension of the life of the particular congregation and the communities and individuals that make it up. Finding one’s charism and living out that charism within the charism, discovering her vocation and following it within the vocation, is part of the key. Before examining the role of the charism, and how its understanding shapes and defines the life of the religious, it is worthwhile to briefly examine the historical growth of women’s institutes of consecrated life in Cameroon to give this chapter a context.

**From Past Historical Realities to Present Challenges**

The women religious started their work in Anglophone Cameroon within the wider context of the evangelisation of that part of Cameroon. The arrival of missionaries, be they male or female, and the faith they brought was not so smooth. Those arriving were received openly but had the following challenges to face: alien cultures; unfriendly, malaria-infested tropical climates and vegetation; discord with local traditional authorities; changes in colonial influences between the Germans, French, and English that happened during and after the two world wars; and the need for healthcare, education and, most of all, a change in the traditional mindset that would enable it to fit into the mindset of the Gospel. The histories of O’Neil (1991) and Ndi (2005) do not pay particular attention to women religious, concentrating understandably on the Mill Hill Missionaries, who took over from the Pallotine and Sacred Heart Missionaries after the First World War.

The Mill Hill Missionaries were the primary evangelisers of Anglophone Cameroon until indigenous diocesan priests gradually took over.

Religious life in Cameroon (as in all over the world) has always been associated with the dominant images of charitable services and lives of holiness (O’Murchu, 1998). St Thomas Aquinas (ST II-II, Q. 184, a. 3) had taught that the religious life, founded on the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience, was essential for the catholicity of the Church, declaring it the “state of perfection” insofar as those called to this way of life lived out the life of charity to the full. The Vatican II document on the Adaptation and Renewal of the Religious Life, Perfectae Caritatis, reinforces this idea, declaring in its opening sentence, “The teaching and example of the divine Master laid the foundation for a pursuit of perfect charity, perfectae caritatis through the exercise of the evangelical counsels.”

Commenting on both Aquinas and Vatican II, O’Brien and Schaumber note that “Traditionally, religious life is called the ‘state of perfection,’ which, of course, does not indicate that all religious are or were perfect. Rather, the ‘state’ of religious life is endowed with all the elements that can lead members to the perfection of charity” (2015).

The consecrated person, through the charism of the founder or foundress, takes up a dimension of the human life of Christ, a life lived for and in service of others, especially the poor, the hungry, and those in prison (Matthew 25: 31-46). An active and apostolic charity are integral to the character of the religious congregation. Each reaches out to the world in active charity; but it is also apostolic charity, for it is done in the name of the Church, which gives each the mandate and sanctions communal living after the image of Christ and the Trinity (Vita Consecrata, 14, 42). Thus in 2016, on the World Day of Consecrated Life, Pope Francis reminded religious men and women that the charisms of the founders are not to be sealed in bottles, and neither are they “museum pieces”; the pontiff reminded all Religious of his theology of “dirty hands”, of encounter and involvement with the life of the sheep, and that to “smell like the sheep”, as he says elsewhere, was the mark of true, authentic, existential and apostolic charity (Vatican Radio, 2016).

The perception of the early missionaries as coming to Cameroon to “save souls” was also animated by a keen awareness of the needs of its materially poor, sick, needy, and uneducated people (whose needs are still as urgent today). And so, it was necessary for the early missionaries, who were priests, to complete their mission with the presence of women...
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...or escape the responsibility to provide more farm hands to their families and womanhood by willfully denying themselves the joy of motherhood. It was difficult for some to understand how a woman could stay single; it was even more difficult to understand how they could waste their fertility. Forced marriages to tribal chiefs, and persecution for becoming Christians, became a refuge for young girls escaping from arranged child marriages. Their care made it possible for girls to receive education and health care for miles. Their presence was recorded as far back as 1930 (O’Neil, 1991).

Ndi (personal communication, February 17, 2005) traces this early history. The first women religious in Anglophone Cameroon were five Sisters of Divine Providence of Munster (Sacred Heart Sisters) sent to Shisong in June 1914, just before WWI erupted. These Sisters were engaged in education and health care, but their stay was far too brief to register any achievements; they had to withdraw on account of the war. The Mill Hill Sisters (Patricroft Sisters) came in 1924 and opened quality primary schools for girls in Bonjongo and Sasse. They later founded St Francis’ Girls Technical College in Fiango, Kumba, which they abandoned in 1961 for fear of civil war. The Tertiary Sisters of St Francis from Brixen, Italy, also responded to the call for evangelisation. They arrived in Shisong in 1935, where they opened a maternity house and taught poor girls how to knit. With time the maternity would grow into a dispensary, and then a hospital. The Franciscan Sisters were joined by the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary in 1956 and the Sisters of Saint Therese, a diocesan Congregation founded by Bishop Jules Peeters, in 1963, just to name a few. Many other congregations have since joined in the very laudable work of these pioneers.

Often these Sisters ran facilities that were the only ones offering education and health care for miles. Their care made it possible for girls to become literate and later serve as the lead teachers, nurses, and midwives that were needed for a post-independence Cameroon. Others learned trades, mother care, and how to run a home in a Christian spirit. These centers also became a refuge for young girls escaping from arranged child marriages, forced marriages to tribal chiefs, and persecution for becoming Christians or for entertaining thoughts of becoming Sisters themselves (Ndi, 2005). It was difficult for some to understand how a woman could stay single; it was even more difficult to understand how they could waste their fertility and womanhood by willfully denying themselves the joy of motherhood or escape the responsibility to provide more farm hands to their families and society at large. Without the benefit of figures, one can safely say that the Anglophone Cameroonian Sisters who joined these Congregations and later took over their administration were, in large part, alumni of these institutions.

These Sisters, who were the pioneers of the consecrated life, became a point of reference within their communities on account of their expertise. Such expertise, coupled with their dedication to their pastoral duties, meant that they were the sole actors in the all-important health and educational sectors. They were sought after for their professionalism and dedication, which gave their services a uniqueness that no doubt came from their doing it for Jesus, in the Spirit of Jesus, and for the Church.

The landscape has now changed. There are many more Congregations carrying out nearly the same services. In the health care sector, for example, there are three health facilities run by different religious congregations within the City of Bamenda: the Tertiary Sisters of St Francis operate one in Ntasen Quarters, the Sisters of St Therese operate another in St Paul Quarters, and the Maria Soledad Sisters operate a third in Sacred Heart Quarters. There is every indication that this number may increase in the near future. This is also true of the establishment of primary and secondary schools. And new Congregations are still coming in! Competition within the same “clientele” base, that is, for patients and pupils/students, has become acute. When the fact of increased numbers within these Congregations facing dwindling work opportunities is coupled with withering funds for sustenance from foreign sources, the situation becomes very complicated indeed. Furthermore, and to make matters worse, there are currently also many more professional, government, and private enterprises rendering the same and sometimes better services locally, because of more financing and greater professionalism. The empty beds and desks at institutions owned and operated by congregations is due in part to this trend.

Part of the challenge for the women religious institutes of consecrated life in Cameroon today, therefore, is: How can Sisters conveniently survive in their provision of these services amid new socio-cultural realities and contexts while still maintaining their original identity as those animated by charity, the evangelical counsel of poverty, and the living of a holy life? Arnaiz (2013) identifies these same challenges within the Society of Mary (Marianists). The need to be professionals in the services they provide and the need to earn their keep for the Congregation must be reconciled with a life of holiness.
Firstly, a professional life sometimes leaves little room for a communal life – for a life of prayer and holiness. Most communities have done a great job of ensuring communal prayers, a time for private prayers, and the organisation of spiritual exercises for their members. This often requires beginning the day very early. Such is the life of sacrifice.

Secondly, lay enterprises develop through self-promotion, with monetary gain and growth in their structures as their main motivation. Unfortunately, in the search for the means whereby their charitable works are carried out, it is possible for the religious institutes to be seen as “only there to make money”, after the ideals of their secular peers. And indeed, there have increasingly been voices of concern for the “love of money”, which can seem to be the overriding concern for both some religious congregations and indeed the church as a whole. This leads to a very dangerous divide between the means of sustenance and charity on the one hand and the life of holiness on the other. Under the circumstances, it can become difficult for any institute involved in services that require monetary payment to convince both the faithful and others that they are actually rendering a service – that they are doing charity. Even if charity can be advertised, any such advertisement would simply not hold water if the overwhelming perception of the public is that the institute is there to make money and for pure gain.

Some religious institutes, finding themselves in this paradoxical position of having to function competitively and grow like other enterprises, have tried to accomplish their mission by increasing intake, even though to sustain their numbers they have to attain financial survival and ultimately self-reliance in their apostolates (health, education, pastoral work, etc.). Others have resorted to other side activities, like manufacturing religious articles or tailoring liturgical vestments for income. Even here, the market is still very limited. The huge worry, therefore, still exists: the struggle for survival in this way means sacrificing something of the communal/prayer life upon which rests the search for holiness of most Religious as expressed in their charism. How then can their various charisms make them retain the Religious identity of being charitable and holy, while at the same time, they may be perceived as being in pursuit of rank gain? We will examine the meaning of the charism to better understand how this situation may be reconciled.

Charism

The discussion above on how charity motivated the women religious to venture into often hostile cultural and climatic territory outlined what a charism is in the Church. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches: “Whether ordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men and to the needs of the world” (CCC, 1992:799). This broad-based definition of a charism describes in simple words the sustaining presence of the Holy Spirit that clarifies the calling of an individual as a contribution of self to the edification of the Body of Christ. At the same time, other persons find in this one, simple, and humble gift, understood and expressed in the life and calling of a single individual, a means through which they also, through a single calling, give a definition to themselves by offering their lives to others in charity, just as Christ did.

Each call received as God’s grace enables self-giving to be possible. Each person called lives this call through a particular gift of the Spirit to the Church, and this gift is referred to as the Charism of the Founder/Foundress, and it becomes the foundation on which all other inspirations lie and grow. It is an illumination to living out fully a particular aspect of the human character of Christ, which then directs an individual’s life, and eventually the lives of others, to be lived in and for Christ.

The Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia describe charism thusly:

The charism of a religious congregation refers to the distinct spirit that animates a religious community and gives it a particular character. A charism is part of the permanent heritage of a community, which includes the rule, mission, history, and traditions kept by the religious institute. The charism of a community is such that if all written records were destroyed, it could be re-created through the living testimony of its members. (Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia, n.d.)

The charism defines and identifies a congregation, giving it purpose, life, and motivation expressed especially in and through its spirituality and apostolate.
Charism of the Founder

The Church has always recognised this original inspiration as the life-giving force of each Congregation. In the Vatican II document *Perfectae Caritatis*, it is emphasised clearly that although renewal is important, each institute of consecrated life must retain its particular identity, which is the charism of the founder/foundress (Flannery, 2004). This charism of the founder/foundress is a mystical experience of this one person or persons that is translated later into an institutional framework. In *Vita Consecrata*, John Paul II builds on this to exhort that in living out the charism of the founder/foundress personally, each member of the institute comes in contact with the Trinity in a special way and bears witness to this original charism in a way that is personal but expressed in an institution (John Paul II, 1996). To situate the charism of the founder in the context of this study, we must examine what is generally believed to be the steps that follow the development of the charism into an institution. These steps proceed from the moment a person in a mysterious link to God lives radically one aspect of Christ’s humanity, to the period where this inspiration attracts others and they form an organised group that grows into a defined institution.

Charism and Institution

Cencini (1982) traces four strategic stages, with each expressing the charism of the founder in a very specific way in the lives of the followers of that charism. The first stage is the *beginnings*. A highly charismatic phase, fresh with inspiration and discovery, this first stage is characterised by full-powered zeal pushed by nothing but pure enthusiasm in the person of the living founder. The second stage is the stage he refers to as characterised by *rapid growth* and the codification of the charism. The founder and the initial group are no longer there as a point of reference and the blessings of growth in numbers comes with the need to guide the institute by rules. The third stage is when stability is enjoyed based on *numerical strengths* and the charism is a full institution that needs a pattern to live. Routines seem, at this point, to replace the dynamics of the charism, and the institute is ruled through a fixed system of norms and sets of behavioural patterns. Cencini (1982) observes that the charism is more or less interpreted as conformity to external parties, and this leads to the last stage, which is a decline because individuals at the third stage lost touch with the original call of the founder. The last stage is the *death* of the charism, which phases out because it has lost touch with its mother charism: the charism of the founder. The connection between the institution as the guardian of the charism and the charismatic founder in the personal vocations of its members in the charism has been lost.

In our context, it is seemingly evident that most institutes in Cameroon are in the third stage. It is sometimes disturbing to see that some institutes come into Cameroon because their numbers are on the decline in other parts of the world. Since there is need for consolidation and growth, they come mainly for recruitment. By and large, however, the well-established institutes like the Tertiary Sisters of St Francis are experiencing growth in numbers and also experiencing a growth that can be identified with the third stage above – which may be seen from the outside as conformism to rules. Cencini (1982) points out that after this third stage, the institute will invariably face the next stage, which is decline, especially if the whole process of transmitting the charism does not integrate the human person who is espoused to Christ in the institution in a personal way. If some institutes in Cameroon are identified with the third stage, then they need no prophetic powers to warn them of a decline over time, because this is the experience of the Church in other continents. Paul VI (1971) offers a clear warning in *Evangelica Testificatio*, when he writes:

Let us not forget that every human institution is prone to become set in its ways and threatened to formalism. It is continually necessary to revitalise external forms with this interior driving force, without which these external forms would very quickly become an excessive burden. (Paul VI, *Evangelica Testificatio*, 1971)

Charisms in the Charism

The charism of the founder is a strong call from God to a person or persons. The founder is not creating something completely new. Rather, it is the Holy Spirit that inspires that individual with insights that are new. The charism of the founder then acts like a mother call to which other individuals, still also inspired by the Spirit, come to learn how to deepen their own personal identification to Christ, to lean and depend on this charism for growth. In sum, each vocation is a charism within the charism,
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Professionalism Within the Charism and the Search for Identity...

...individual who is called is called with gifts of grace and gifts of nature. The institute as the seat and nurturer, as the promoter and conserver of the charism, must provide a fertile and enabling environment that will help the individual’s charism and person to mature and bear fruit—self-evidently so, for the good of that individual and the Institute. The absence of such institutional support towards growth and maturation, of both the candidate and the institute, leads to the lethargy of the potentials of the individual and ultimately to lack of self-fulfillment, the loss of the charism, decline in numbers, and a decline in the quality of service rendered by the institute.

Each individual can give to any community only what she has. She should also receive only such support towards self-fulfillment and edification as befits her unique God-given personality and giftedness. How then can the Cameroonian woman religious be helped to find her true vocation/charism and self within her institute? How can a return to an authentic self-image be encouraged?

Challenges Towards the Renewal

Before perpetual vows, the loss of membership in most institutions is generally the result of discernment by the Formation Team. After perpetual vows, the decision to leave is more often that of the individual. Lack of fulfillment and/or not doing what they feel called to do and to be are oft-cited reasons for abandoning the cause by the latter group. The effects of such departures on the morale of fellow Sisters at the levels of community and professional life can be significant. This is part of the premise on which we built the argument that some institutes are or will soon be degenerating into the third level of existence, where formalism and institutionalism are favoured, in the name of obedience, over continuous nurturing and renewal of the charism of the founder through integrating the personal charisms of the members of the institute to serve the institute and so be productive of more holiness by helping them live the original charism in their personal charisms. The resources, talents, and energies of each individual, when so discerned, fostered, and channeled, will lend greater dynamism to the life of the institute and the reason this institute mediates God’s revelation, loving service and hope to His people.
Self-Transcendence

Like the apostles, everyone who is called leaves everything behind and follows the call of the Master (John Paul II, 1996). They go above themselves and answer that which defines their persons, not as they want, but as God wants for the salvation and the service of the world. But self-transcendence is itself a journey done in stages. There is also always the danger of falling into mistaken ideas about it. The challenge is for Anglophone Cameroonian Sisters to be able to give themselves completely as Jesus did and as he demands of each of his followers. Chinyeaka (2007) outlines three types of self-transcendence: egocentric self-transcendence, social-philanthropic self-transcendence, and theocentric self-transcendence.

Egocentric self-transcendence is characterised by a person in an institute who acts as if motivated by sacrifice of self, whereas the real motivation is self-gain masked as self-giving. The self becomes the point of reference rather than the community and God. Egocentric self-transcendence is destructive of self and community.

Social-philanthropic self-giving, meanwhile, concentrates on social approval as the ultimate objective of self-giving. Therefore, the person does not transcend the self (Chinyeaka, 2007).

In theocentric self-giving, the motivation starts and ends in doing what Jesus did for the world and its salvation. This is the unique and authentic reason for all genuine self-transcendence. The challenge to the Religious comes from the fact that self-realisation and public approbation are enormous temptations nowadays. The reason for this is easy: integral formation towards charism and the acquisition of professionalism in disciplines that make effective service possible can make the Religious stop at the first or second levels rather than strive for the third. Complete self-giving is never complete self-transcendence until a person lives for Christ and his service. This is what every Religious must aim for through a continuous purification of motivation (Chinyeaka, 2007).

Need for Better Formation

As was noted earlier, the areas in which most women religious exercise their charisms, such as the fields of health care and education, are increasingly attracting better-funded lay denominational competitors. And the competition is also managed and served by dedicated and highly performant professionals.

Within the limits imposed by this research project there was neither the time nor the means to explore the relationship between professionalism and performance within the life of the woman religious in Anglophone Cameroon or Africa. The scarcity of literature on the topic and its absence in discussions and contemporary monumental documents such as Ecclesia in Africa (John Paul II, 1995) and Africæ Munus (Benedict XVI, 2011) are indications that it is perhaps overlooked because it is underestimated.

One can only theorise here that such a relationship is complex because of the large number of variables that could constitute and affect the one, the other, or both terms of the relationship. However, one does not have to think too hard to figure out that asking a Religious to be engaged in an apostolate in which she is not trained, and in which she is not interested, will probably lead to an unenthusiastic, inefficient, and unfulfilled individual. Neither can one underestimate the effects of this on self-worth, the quality of relationships in the community, and the spiritual life.

And so, institutes must raise the level of their game: first, by discerning what the potential and professional interests of their members are; and second, by building their capacity to compete and serve with the best. In so doing, they would be shooting many birds with one shot, facing the challenges we have outlined above. They would help their members self-realise within their charism. And happier, holier, more professionally productive and motivated members would run and serve more competitive institutions and would stand a better chance of survival, self-reliance and prosperity, especially against the backdrop of falling professional standards in the health and educational sectors.

Conclusion

There are real voices that cry out for the chance to give, and be given, added meaning and value, to lives already sacrificed for community in Anglophone Cameroon. To listen to these will involve discernment, dialogue, and professional formation. Listening to these voices of our times then, in my opinion, is perhaps the greatest challenge facing the Anglophone Cameroonian woman religious and her community today. Sadly, not even the scholarship opportunities from prophetic and visionary
groups such as the African Sisters Education Collaborative, Sisters Leadership Development Initiative program are making any significant dent in the anachronistic psyches of some congregational leadership. Reasons for not allowing Sisters to access higher education/professional platforms have ranged from “We do not have our community in such-and-such a town/country where this particular scholarship opportunity exists” to “When the Sisters get too educated they leave the Congregation.” Sometimes professional training is dangled as a rewarding carrot for often non-productive conformists to the powers that be. Some, when they come from expatriate leadership, stink of racism: “Cameroon does not need such professionals or academics.” All three quotes are real voices. While the first two reasons are well-founded fears, one wonders how far one can protect Sisters from the world, especially if the charism involves day-to-day interaction and work in an open workplace. Why finally profess them if one does not trust them enough to take care of themselves as students, and ultimately to live and work in a secularised workplace? Secondly, if a Sister benefits from professional training and decides to abandon ship, surely the congregation can pride itself that it built the capacity of a human being towards a better life and perhaps toward greater contribution and service to humanity?

Yet, we can go by historical precedents, as in the life of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who trained for proficiency in basic healthcare that enabled her to live out a personal charism in a charism, her “Call Within a Call” (Mother Theresa, 2017), as a contribution to the growth of the Church. Her example can, we are sure, transform a rising cacophony of sad discouragement to a happy symphony of Voices of Courage (Wakahiu, et al., 2015). Beyond the purely psychological, professional, and spiritual benefits, this could be a cornerstone to financial self-reliance, against the backdrop of competition from lay and denominationally-similar service providers, and the progressively dwindling financial support from the West.

References


REACH OUT AND TOUCH: LIFE CHOICE FOR OUTSTANDING CONSECRATED WOMEN

Helen Kasaka
Little Servants of Mary Immaculate Sisters

Abstract

Religious sisters are important in society in that they play great roles in social, economic, cultural and religious aspects of life. The main objective of this research is to show life choices for outstanding consecrated women in Zambia. Specifically, this research focused on examining activities undertaken by women religious in their life choices, and how these activities have made women religious exceptional and distinctive; establishing challenges faced by women religious in the life choices undertaken; and determining lessons learned from the life choices of women religious. In terms of methodology, the study was qualitative in nature. There were three categories of participants, namely women religious, humanitarian girls, and ex-sex workers. Interviews, observations, and document analysis were used as means for data collection. Content analysis was used to analyse the data. The study gave consideration to ethical requirements in the conduct of research. Findings reveal that participating in night watch programs and raising awareness of child abuse are examples of the activities in which women religious are engaged. Love for vocation and passion for work and humanity were some of the motivations for Sisters in the said activities. Approach, motivation, risk of own life, living the social gospel, and appropriateness of intervention all made the Sisters in the current study exceptional and distinctive. There were both lessons and challenges in the discharge of responsibilities by the women religious. The study concludes that women religious engaged in rehabilitating sex workers and raising awareness of child abuse and human trafficking are exceptional and distinctive.

Keywords: women religious, sex workers, drug abuse, child abuse

Introduction

Religious sisters around the world serve in a range of ministries, often working with the most deprived in society. One of the common services that the Sisters provide is education. A good number of congregations in Zambia have historically focused on providing education to both rural and urban areas. Catholic Sisters have also taken keen interest in health care by providing a variety of services including hospitals, long-term care facilities, rehabilitation centers and family care and outreach centers. In addition, religious sisters also engage in religious ministry. Consecrated women have a long history of reaching out to people in distress, especially women and children. They are engaged in evangelical ministry through outreach to curb vices like prostitution, human trafficking, drug abuse, and child abuse, and at times are engaged in prison outreach, chaplaincy, campus ministry and spiritual ministry. Women religious sometimes reach out through the modern forms of media such as radio, television, books, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and other forms of media.

The main objective of this research is to elucidate the life choices of outstanding consecrated women in Zambia. Specifically, this research focused on activities undertaken by women religious in the course of their life choice, and how these activities have made women religious exceptional and distinctive. It also sought to establish challenges faced by women religious in their undertaken life choices, and to determine lessons learned from the life choices of these women religious.

Contextual Shaping

Women religious in Zambia have been involved in various works that are focused on spiritual, moral, and social development. Like any other country in the world, Zambia has its share of young women from all walks of life. It is sad that the nation seems to have accepted prostitution as a norm. It is sad to see women – and men in some cases – selling their bodies in the streets. One can almost be fooled into believing that prostitution is legal in Zambia.

It is necessary to note that a good number of those joining the profession are young women, some of them teenagers, who have their whole future ahead of them but end up staking their lives in the streets.
There has been some contentment in this regard with a level of engagement that is confined to what have been traditional ministries such as education, health care, and pastoral activities; these are not necessary individual life choices of the religious sisters but rather advance the mission of a Sister’s institute or congregation or the mission of the Church. Since the Church is present among people with diverse problems or needs, social teaching allows that women religious, and indeed all Christians, may respond and help rehabilitate individuals facing such problems as drug addiction, prostitution, human trafficking, and child abuse, among other problems. This has been the case in Zambia, where reports have shown that in addition to the problems discussed in the mainstream development agenda, other problems such as prostitution, drug abuse, and human trafficking are occurring at an alarming rate, thereby presenting the need for intervention from different stakeholders including the church and women religious.

A 2014 research report on sex work in Zambia revealed that the majority of sex workers engaged in prostitution out of desperation; the report noted that “Out of 407 sex workers interviewed, 393 indulge in sex work due to economic hardships, poverty, lack of survival support, peer pressure and broken extended families among others” (QFM Zambia, 2014).

It is therefore worth noting that some religious sisters have made vocational life choices that are focused on the problems of drug addiction, prostitution, human trafficking, and child abuse, among others. Given that engagement with individuals facing these problems is a way of sharing the burden of the life experiences of victims of vulnerability and marginalisation, women religious engaged in such work can be said to be exceptional and distinct. This phenomenon is recorded elsewhere; in the Phillipines, for example, “Teams of two to six nuns and volunteer lay people are part of the apostolate to reach out to prostituted women and girls in Philippine cities and towns and to establish contact with them by distributing rosaries, scapulars and missionaries’ phone numbers so those who want help can contact them” (Viehland, 2014). Such work can risk the lives of the Sisters involved. It can also risk the Sisters’ reputations and the reputation of the Church.

Consecrated Sisters Reach Out to Women in Prostitution

During the world conference for women religious who gathered in Rome in mid-October 2016, Sister Eugenia shared her experiences and knowledge of prostitution and human trafficking and invited those present to consider their unique role in confronting sex trafficking. She noted that “women religious have a long history of reaching out to people in distress, especially women and children.” She urged the Sisters not to be silent witnesses of personal suffering but eloquent denouncers of social injustice (Gaetan, 2007).

There are shining examples of Sisters from around the world who are doing exactly that. John Studzinski, a vice chairman of the Blackstone Group, told the Trust Women Conference on women’s rights and trafficking hosted by the Thomson Reuters Foundation that a “group of 1,100 religious sisters, known as Talitha Kum, currently works undercover in brothels in at least 80 countries, helping to free victims of sex trafficking and slavery”; he added that “the secret group of Sisters founded in 2004 goes to great lengths to rescue victims, often dressing up as sex workers and walking the streets” (Yerepouni News, 2015). In Pomona, California, the Felician Sisters are also actively engaged in ministering to society’s most vulnerable. There, the Sisters “spend their days encountering the homeless and the sick….They meet the homeless under bridges, in parks, and on street corners. They go into apartments where the poor live and meet people passing by, bringing the love of God as they listen, pray, and share rosaries and copies of the New Testament” (Eidemiller, 2015).

Methodology

The study was qualitative, thereby commissioning use of a qualitative approach, which presents a vital means in the process of understanding social phenomena based on building a complex, holistic picture that is formed with words, that reports detailed views of informants, and that is conducted in a natural setting (Creswell, 1994). This was necessary to engage participants in terms of getting their life experiences. Therefore, the research was also descriptive by design.

The study was conducted in selected parts of Zambia, namely the Lusaka and Livingstone districts. These districts were chosen because they
housed projects that are implemented with the support of women religious, namely the Center for Rehabilitation (kwenuha) in Livingstone and the Humanitarian Group at Roma Girls Secondary School in Lusaka. The study areas were therefore illuminating (Khilani, 1993).

There were three categories of participants: 1) women religious working with ex-sex workers and child victims of bullying and other forms of abuse; 2) ex-sex workers; and 3) girls working in the humanitarian group. The total number of participants was 15. The distribution was 3 Sisters, 2 ex-sex workers, and 10 school girls. These participants were selected purposively and their selection followed Seidman’s (2013) recommendation that the purpose of having few participants is to “present the experience of the people in compelling enough detail and in satisfactory depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects” (Seidman, 2013; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Data was collected using in-person semi-structured interviews, which are defined as a “situation in which the researcher questions respondents face-to-face and records their answers” (Chambliss & Russell, 2013, p. 141). Interviews had high response rates and enabled the researcher to probe as well as clarify some questions with participants when needed.

Observations were also used as a way of learning about the life choices of outstanding women religious. The nature of the topic presented an opportunity for observation, which is also recommended (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002).

The study also used document review in order to benefit from previous research conducted and reports on a similar subject. As indicated by Sidhu (2006, p. 141), document data is not concerned with the general importance of the document but with certain characteristics which can be identified as relevant to the study. In this study, documents reviewed focused on the subjects of life choices and activities of women religious.

Data was analysed using content analysis. Since a recorder was used in the interview process, interviews were first transcribed. In transcribing the interviews, the researcher followed Seidman’s (2013) guidance to approach transcripts with an open attitude, seeking what was to emerge as important and of interest from the text.

The study had consideration for ethics. These considerations were about obligations to the participants’ integrity, freedom to participate or not participate, informed consent, and confidentiality (Chambliss & Russell 2013). Ethical considerations specific to this study included participants’ integrity, freedom and right to participate or not participate, and informed consent (Shahnazarian, 2013).

Presentation and Discussion of Findings

Activities Undertaken by Religious Women in their Life Choice

**Reaching out to sex workers.** This study established that women religious are not confined to pastoral work. They are responding to demands for intervention in problems that affect society such as providing support to help rehabilitate sex workers. Such support is undertaken in terms of psychosocial counselling and other forms of empowerment that are meant to give beneficiaries both a sense of self-worth and the capacity to meet certain basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing, and education for themselves and their children. During an interview, the researcher also established that there are different motivations for women religious to engage in such life choices, as narrated by Sr Helen Mwalye, former Superior General of the Little Sisters of St Francis:

> What motivates me is the love of my vocation, which shouldn’t be restricted to one thing... I believe we keep our eyes open to read the signs of the times because this is the new venture altogether... As a congregation, we were more focused on just teaching across pre-school up to secondary school; it has been teaching, and also medical, and then we started going into pastoral, but then even [in] pastoral: Where are the vulnerable people? And where are the lepers of today? So leprosy is over; but when I look at what I am doing, it's cleaning the wounds of these addicts, of these alcoholics, and that gives me motivation and it makes me pray.

Sr Gwendolyn Mfune expressed similar experiences and motivations:

> And this time sponsors for survivor skills training (Rotary Livingstone) are saying they are stopping that one for tailoring, catering and sewing, they have opted of taking them back to school so that after completion they get better jobs with security and so far we have four who are at David Livingstone, two are in the second year and one is in the fourth year and is finishing this year and the other one is in the first year. Now, the problem is most of these women don’t want to go back to school, they are saying they are big and yet most of them are below 25 years of age.
There was evidence of the contributions of the women religious in the lives of sex workers towards transformation. Narrating her experience, one ex-sex worker said the following:

I joined prostitution because I did not know what to do with my children after the death of my beloved husband. When my husband died, the family of my husband got everything from me and I remained with nothing. Then I asked myself how will I help my kids? They need education; food, clothes and they need to bathe. I come from a very poor family. My mother is old and my father is dead, my immediate brother is a drunkard and one of my sisters up to now we do not know where she is, she just disappeared like that! So, one day my friends visited me and told me not to worry so much and asked me to join them in prostitution that through that I would be able to raise money for the family and that’s how I became a sex worker.

During this period, I had a lot of challenges because sometimes these men could just use me without giving me money; some could give you a bit of money and if you demanded for [more] money the response was beating. I was sleeping with so many men but still not much was achieved. In 2005, the Sister approached me and asked me to join kwenuha, a center for women, which at first, I was not willing [to do] but later I accepted…I started doing tailoring [and still do tailoring to this day]. I am very grateful to God and especially that I am not sick of HIV/AIDS. I am also grateful to the Sisters for the great work they are doing, because through them I am a transformed person. We make t-shirts for Rotary International at Youth Community Training Centre and sell them in USA. The center pays us, though not so much, but at least I am able to keep my family; and again, through kwenuha, Network Response Organisation is also sponsoring my two children for school. I am now a transformed person and I am able to give testimonies and advise those still in prostitution and those about to get married.

Sisters use an approach called “night watch” to get to the sex workers and provide them with support. This was clear from statements by Sr Gwendolyn:

We follow them in bars, taverns, lodges, and streets. The Sisters remain in the car and the ladies, since they know each other, are the ones who go to talk to them inside. This is not easy, as women are sometimes kicked out and insulted that they are disturbing them. When they come to the center, some – especially those involved because of economic problems and lack of support – join kwenuha with no problem and are very appreciative to what we offer them.

The activities that women religious such as Sr Helene and Sr Gwendolyn are undertaking, and the Sisters’ motivations for undertaking these activities, fall within the Church’s call to respond to the needs of vulnerable members of society. This is also categorical in Pope Francis’ address to the General Audience, in which he focused on Christ’s cleansing of the leper and our need to both let ourselves be healed by Christ and reach out in turn to touch others. As Jesus reached out and touched the unclean man, he said, so we too must never be afraid to reach out and touch the poor and those most in need. At the same time, he said, the Lord invites each of us to feel our own need and to ask for his healing touch (Vatican Radio, June 22, 2016).
How these Activities Have Made Women Religious Exceptional and Distinctive

It is interesting to note that while some of the activities undertaken by women religious might be seen as ordinary under normal circumstances, their approach, motivation, and the nature of the interventions make them exceptional and distinctive. On the aspect of the nature of the interventions, the research focused largely on the appropriateness of the interventions, risks to the lives of Sisters, and living of the social gospel.

Approach. Interviews conducted with women religious, girls, and ex-sex workers revealed that the Sisters used a friendly approach in dealing with matters affecting the target population. For example, in dealing with sex workers, Sisters engaged with empathy, were non-judgmental, and respected each participant’s right for self-direction, approaches which were partly a motivation for sex workers to cooperate with them. The same was the case with engagements in issues of child abuse. Sisters working in this area made efforts to understand the context of children abused while adhering to the need to foster relationships that are positive and supportive to victims.

Motivation. The motivations established in this study included love of vocation and passion for advancing human rights, particularly for marginalised categories of people such as children and the poor. People in general are critical about these groups, and this stands as evidence of how exceptional and distinctive these women religious truly are. Beyond their pastoral work, they find space to work with marginalised groups without regard for ulterior benefits.

Appropriate Intervention. Appropriateness refers to the most suitable method of intervention in a given situation based on an understanding of the context of the needs in the particular situation and understanding of what would be the most effective method or combination of methods to achieve the goals. Given this understanding, the researcher is of the view that the Sisters had devised appropriate interventions in the respective problems facing their service users. In the case of sex workers, it was relevant and appropriate that Sisters had programs and activities focused on the psychosocial, spiritual, and physical (empowerment) dimensions. These are appropriate given the nature of the problem, and they stand to help beneficiaries rehabilitate spiritually, mentally, and socially, and will help them to develop capacity to meet their own needs and those of protect others, because injustices are never good for any human being. I would be happy if all human beings worked towards enabling other human beings to live fulfilled lives.

I manage development...and I have been at the heart of developing the Program so that as Sisters of Charity in the Zambia/Malawi Region, we can effectively respond to issues of social justice to which we are committed at a global level. At the 2007 Congregational Chapter, the Congregation identified two main global issues that the Chapter felt we could commit to among the many pressing global issues. These are human trafficking and care for the earth. Therefore, every Sister of Charity was mandated to do something about human trafficking and the care of the earth, whatever their apostolate. The protection of children and vulnerable adults was also an issue of interest for the Congregation, particularly after the abuse cases that research brought out in different Church institutions. Given the mandate given to each Sister, I personally committed myself to the issue of human trafficking because I knew very little about it, unlike the environment which formed part of my Development Studies. I began reading research papers and documents around human trafficking and I would also approach organisations working on the issue, such as International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA), and International Labor Organisation (ILO). The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR), an organisation I began working for in 2008, also provided the ground for me to pursue the fight against human trafficking, for the then-director, Fr Peter Henriot, S.J., was committed to fighting for the care of the earth and child protection, among other human rights issues. His commitment encouraged me to write articles and booklets on these, talk about them on both radio and TV, and to also interest other groups by training them so that they too can take action, particularly with regard to child protection and human trafficking. Although I was working full-time for JCTR, I was also Coordinating the Zambian Region (before Malawi was added) Anti-Human-Trafficking Programme and child protection in my spare time and during my annual leave from JCTR. For example, in 2012, I sourced money from Misean Cara, an Irish funding organisation, for a workshop on human trafficking which brought together government officers such as the police, NGOs, international organisations such as IOM, and different religious congregations, lay groups and other Church institutions such as the Salvation Army.
their children. As such, these activities are holistic and address essential concerns of the victims in question.

Risk to their Lives. Women religious in the life path of serving individuals with problems such as bullying, sex work, human trafficking and drug abuse face various risks. Some of these risks include verbal assault, being misunderstood, physical assault including rape, or even death. There are both physical and psychological risks. The fact is that engaging to serve others who have such serious problems creates a psychological strain. Such risks are also evident in the stories of how some Sisters, such as Sr Helen, began their work, and the extent to which Sr Helen had to disguise herself in order to reach out to the target population:

*St Francis, who is our main founder whom we follow, was converted through looking after the vulnerable...[He was] cast out of the city and he went and lived among lepers, washing their wounds and staying with them. This was so strong with me, I discovered that my eyes were always out looking for the vulnerable, and that’s why I was inspired when people told me about the prostitutes in Livingstone. I found this place which was near one of our supermarkets called Masaka because they put sack clothes around to hide what is going on there. So, I disguised myself one day out in the darkness and I saw what was going on. So when I saw that, I talked to the people that had reported to me, and then one time they said, “Sister, at night you find them lined up the streets,” so again one night I disguised myself, I removed my veil and just put on a head scarf,...This was around 21 hours, and I drove along the main street of Mosi-O-Tunya and I saw the girls and I still remember vividly skin tight, short trousers and they were each hiking for a lift. So, I stopped and they came in and I asked where they were going and they told me they were going to the airport because their livelihood was prostitution and so they were going to look for tourists that were coming to Livingstone town. So, driving up to the airport, I took an opportunity of talking to them about the dangers of prostitution, emphasising about HIV/AIDS because professionally I am a nurse apart from other things. After seeing that, then I said to myself, something has to be done, and so I discussed the matter with the bishop that maybe we could do something, and that’s how we appointed one of our Sisters to look after women’s affairs.*

Living the Social Gospel. Engagement in serving vulnerable and marginalised groups is in direct alignment with the call of the Gospel of the Church to respond to the downtrodden and people in need, as presented in the gospel of Matthew 25:35-40, which depicts a call to respond to social needs. There is also direct translation in line with the Church’s Social Teaching.

Established Challenges Faced by Women Religious in their Undertaken Life Choices

“In the world you will have trouble, but be brave, I have conquered the world.” (Jn 16:31-33)

Service provision of any kind comes with its challenges that can affect service delivery and to some extent the individuals providing such services. This was the case in the life choices undertaken by women religious in the current study. There were various challenges established. For example, in an interview, Executive Director Sr Gwendolyn Mfune addressed the challenges that the center is going through. She stated that the main challenge is money. “Most of the women want fast money, even when we bring them after night watch they would ask you, how often do you pay them? You see the reason they go on the street is to have money every day, so now you imagine bringing them here where you give them money only once in a while!” She also expressed concern that when given money to start business, some clubs do not use it for its intended purpose. Instead they buy food and other things.

It was also reported that night watch itself is another challenge. As women religious follow sex workers to help them, they are not normally well received and some of them are kicked out and insulted. Still another challenge was in getting committed volunteers. There are many requests for training of different groups, and the hope is that those groups will help their community, particularly to raise awareness on human trafficking. Although people might show interest in helping the community, their expectation is that the program will give them incentives. However, financial resources are not as readily available as people generally think. Therefore, program staff identifies the groups and individuals who are volunteers and are willing to help their communities and train them. Otherwise, people can be trained and then do nothing with their training.
Lessons Learned from the Life Choices of Women Religious

From the life choices of women religious such as providing help to rehabilitate sex workers and protect the girl children facing abuse, there are some lessons to be drawn. There are various reasons that make people engage in sex work; thus, interventions should be holistic and appropriate, as exhibited by those shared by the Sisters in the current study. Appropriate interventions will respond to the social, emotional, and empowerment-related needs of service beneficiaries. Another key takeaway is that some sex workers may not be ready to stop, but that with commitment and the right approach, such as that of the Sisters, there is potential for change and improvement. This is evident in the statement below:

What pains me most when I look back, is when I found myself in a place near the cemetery (dambwa). I was drunk and everyone was gone; I was left alone and did not know what to do next but to sleep in the bar. I was sleeping with so many men and was not scared of any sickness, all I wanted was money. When the Sisters approached me I was not ready to stop, I was reluctant but they persisted until I stopped and joined the center. I came to accept because I was beaten by the owner’s husband in the bar and my face was swollen that I was even failing to look into the face of Sister. (Euphrasia, Ex-Sex Worker)

The study also finds that there is collaboration between the women religious and their institutional partners. This is essential to the effective provision of services, as the problems in question affect society as a whole.

Conclusion

The current study has focused on the life choices of women religious. The study is of the view that women engaged in rehabilitating sex workers and raising awareness in child abuse and human trafficking are exceptional and distinctive. The revelation that activities, approaches, and motivations are in line with the call of the gospels to respond to the needs of the vulnerable is worth appreciating. In undertaking these activities, women religious also show concern not only for pastoral work but also for the social needs of the poor and marginalised.

References


PART IV

INSTITUTIONAL AND MINISTERIAL CASE STUDIES
Introduction

Over the years, Catholic Sisters have made immense contributions, changing the lives of people both locally and internationally through provision of quality and affordable education, primary healthcare, catechetical instruction, care for the sick and the aged, provision of food and shelter to society’s underprivileged, the empowerment of women and girls, and moral and character formation, among other services to humanity. For this reason, Maduekwe (2014) posits that African Catholic Sisters have restored the violated dignity of African women through their services and provision of Western education, and have also ensured social justice for all. Wakahiu (2015) adds that through their presence and services, especially to the poor, Catholic Sisters have become the face of men and women worldwide.

Despite this, the roles of Catholic Sisters in contributing to social development in Africa are unpronounced. Amidst all the social interventions performed by Catholic Sisters – or “Roman Sisters”, as they are often called – some people remain unaware of their good works. One would think that the answer to this question would be superfluous, since Catholic Sisters significantly influence the societies in which they live in many ways. This problem therefore weighs on the social consciousness of the people within the communities in which the Sisters live and work. The contributions of Catholic Sisters as agents of transformation will be felt when people are socially conscious of the work and activities they perform. Conversely, when people cannot readily discern the things which the Sisters do, or see how their lives are being changed as a result of the work and the presence of the Sisters, there is a vacuum. Scholars and stakeholders are now beginning to call attention to the need to close this gap.

Today, there is ample literature describing the engagement of Catholic Sisters in the social development roles they perform; however, it is important to emphasise that a robust investigation has yet to be carried out showing the nexus between Catholic Sisters’ contributions to social development and the social consciousness/awareness people have concerning their works. This chapter, therefore, seeks to articulate that there is a gap between the social consciousness of the general public and the work that Catholic Sisters do. To advance this position, the study uses the Society of Infant Jesus (SIJ)
congregation in the Archdiocese of Cape Coast in Ghana as its focus. It seeks to explain how the SIJ has become an agent of transformation, especially with regards to girl-child education in the rural area of Dunkwa-on-Offin. The study stresses the importance of showcasing the transformative works of indigenous African Catholic Sisters.

In short, Society of the Infant Jesus (SIJ) is an indigenous congregation of Sisters founded by Most Rev. John Kodwo Amissah in 1960 when he was enthroned as the first Ghanaian Archbishop of Cape Coast, to succeed Most Rev. William Thomas Porter, SMA. As an indigenous Archbishop, one of the first things he undertook was to build a convent where young girls could be trained as Religious Sisters. Archbishop Amissah had three aims for establishing the indigenous woman religious congregation known as Society of the Infant Jesus (SIJ):
1. to form native Sisters to carry out Catholic education for both young and old,
2. to have a house of prayer for the evangelical work of the diocese, and
3. to care for the sick and aged.

In addition to this threefold aim of religious life (prayer, teaching, and nursing), other SIJ apostolates, such as catechetical and secretarial work as well as vocational skills, were incorporated over time. The main charism of the SIJ is to live the holiness of Christ. More important is the call to live a community life – a simple prayerful life – and to live the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. The motto for the SIJ is *scio cui credidi* “I know who it is that I have put my trust in.”

As one of the three chief aims, education is central to the SIJ Sisters’ mission. In fact, one of the main objectives of establishing the SIJ was to educate youth in order to enhance their spiritual and social life. The SIJ Sisters are mandated to teach at basic, secondary, vocational and catechetical levels, especially to empower them in diverse ways. This is in response to the call of the founder to teach the youth in the spirit of simplicity of heart and cheerfulness, and like Christ to accept everybody, poor and rich alike, making all feel equally loved and treating all as important in the sight of God. The SIJ schools were established in the rural areas of the Central Region of Ghana.

Like education, healthcare is also one of the apostolates envisioned by the founder of SIJ. Through this apostolate, the SIJ Sisters extend Christian charity to all people without distinction or gain. Owing to the founder’s vision to make their services available to people who are poor, needy, and afflicted and to share themselves for them, many SIJ Sisters have been trained as healthcare professionals.

More fundamentally, the SIJ engages in social work in view of building God’s kingdom, particularly among the poor and the deserted. This they do with persevering zeal. In their social work apostolate, for example, the SIJ Sisters collaborate with the Archdiocese of Cape Coast in her ministry in offering domestic, secretarial, and catering services for special occasions. In addition, the SIJ Sisters have a bakery for baking both Eucharistic Hosts and bread, and they also engage in the sewing of habits, chasubles, and albs, as well as other items.

While the aforementioned apostolates and social services are performed by the Catholic Sisters, it is evident that many people still do not have an awareness of their works.

**Statement of Problem**

Studies have demonstrated that Catholic Sisters have performed many transformative roles at various levels; however, people appear to be unconscious of their contributions. Accordingly, scholars who have engaged in theological study on the work of Catholic Sisters have only emphasised the spirituality and charism behind their life and work. On the other hand, are those who place particular emphasis on the sociological functions of Catholic Sisters. In the African context, for instance, the focus of scholarship tends to be the missionary era and how the Sisters functioned as agents of Christian education and social work. Consequently, less attention is given to Catholic Sisters’ engagements in the realm of social transformation. This lack of attention is particularly true in the case of indigenous African congregations of women religious.

This chapter, therefore, singles out an indigenous congregation of Sisters in Ghana, the Society of Infant Jesus (SIJ), for study, so as to construct a narrative of the social transformative value of their works that will show the gap that exists between the functions of the Sisters towards social change and development and the people’s consciousness of their social contributions to development. It is thought that this focus will reveal the social contributions of Catholic Sisters as well as enlighten...
people on their social transformative works, thereby being a source of awareness creation.

**Objectives**

The objectives of this study are to:
1. examine the contributions of SIJ Sisters towards social transformation;
2. show the relationship between social change and social consciousness; and
3. establish the level of peoples’ awareness in relation to the transformative roles of Catholic Sisters.

**Methodology**

This study employed the qualitative method, which focuses on understanding social phenomenon through descriptive analysis of participants’ responses to interviews (Ary et al., 2008). In light of the study’s qualitative nature, a phenomenological design was adopted whereby data was collected through interviews with members of the beneficiary community, the SIJ Sisters, and a Sister from a different congregation. The study assessed how people have benefited from the vocational school established by the SIJ Sisters. It also appraised how conscious the beneficiaries are about the contributions of the Sisters in their community. The research site was Dunkwa-on-Offin in the Upper Denkyira East Municipal District, 135km to the north of Cape Coast, Ghana. The unstructured interview focused on themes such as how the people perceived the benefits of the presence and efforts of the SIJ Sisters. The study described how the SIJ Sisters’ tasks, such as girl-child education, poverty reduction, and reduction of teenage pregnancy among girls, are perceived and rated as well as how the people and community are themselves involved in the transformative program of the Sisters.

Qualitative research presupposes the active involvement of the researcher in data collection (Kuranchie, 2016). Thus the researcher personally interacted with the participants on a one-on-one basis. The data was generated mainly from thirteen individual interviews conducted over a period of three months. Participants included four former students of the school, five members of the community, three SIJ Sisters, and one Sister from a different congregation. Generally, the interviews were about the Sisters’ contributions, as well as the people’s awareness of the transformative role they have played in the community and how that has benefited the people, either personally or communally.

**Theoretical Framework**

The study adopts social theory, which “encompasses ideas about how societies change and develop, about methods of explaining social behaviour, about power and social structure, gender and ethnicity, modernity and civilisation, revolutions and utopias, and numerous other concepts and problems in social life” (Harrington, 2005, p.2). For Elliot (2008), social theory looks at the relationship between self and society and role and the possibility of social transformation. It could therefore be said that when people are aware of themselves, they are likely to be conscious of the role they have to play in the society. A need for social consciousness is therefore apparent, since social consciousness or awareness of society is inseparable from self-consciousness. In this respect, Cooley (2002) stresses the imperativeness on the link between social consciousness and self-consciousness, by suggesting that we cannot think of ourselves except in reference to a social group, or think of the group except in reference to ourselves. This has also been advanced by Marx (1859), who believes that human beings enter into certain productive or economic relations, and that these relations lead to a form of social consciousness. For Afansanyev (1987), the material and economic relations of people constitute the basis of social development. Afansanyev concludes that all the factors that are responsible for understanding social development are also of social character and belong to the sphere of social consciousness. In any transformation or development, social consciousness is to be emphasised because awareness is the key to success. But, how is social awareness possible?

Social consciousness refers to a community’s ideas and values, which underlie any development and change. However, the extent to which people know and share in the ideas and values underlying development and change differ. Fundamentally, social consciousness is the consciousness shared by individuals within a society. It includes the level of people’s awareness of
how they are influenced by others and how others can influence them as well (Schlitz et al., 2002). This implies that people are social beings and as such are in relation with one another; this relation, in turn, affects every aspect of one’s being (Siegel, 1999; Schore, 2000).

Today, when people become aware of this interconnectedness and interdependence, that is, how their lives are impacted by others and how others influence them, we have what Schlitz et al. (2002) call solidarity cultivation. That is, when people share ideas, it becomes possible for them to realise the need to co-create solutions to their problems (Schlitz et al., 2010). In their analysis of the five levels of social consciousness, Schlitz et al. refer to this as collaborative consciousness, because the more people gain awareness of themselves in relation to social issues and challenges, the more they desire to participate in co-creating solutions with others.

Another social theory is the principles of solidarity and participation (Honny, 2016). The fundamental thrust of these principles is that each person is connected to and dependent on all humanity. Hence, everyone has a role to play in the growth of the society. The principle of solidarity states that “society is strongest when its elements or members pull together as one for common actions towards the good of that society” (Honny, 2016, p.46). This implies that people need to be conscious of societal needs, and as such, must work towards meeting these needs. Thus, it could be claimed that “human development or progress does not happen through isolated effort; it rather thrives on universal solidarity” (Banahene, 2004, p. 34). This entails the community, through active participation of the individuals, profiting from the distinctive gifts with which the individuals are endowed (Banahene, 2004). It follows then that socially conscious individuals ought to make every effort to promote the values and principles that could promote social good, change and transformation. The realisation of social transformation and change therefore would involve people becoming socially conscious.

Findings and Discussion

In the responses of the interviews given by the SIJ Sisters about their motivation for the work they do, one participant explained that she is inspired by their founder’s vision to reach out to the people, especially those in the interiors. Another participant stated that she is assisting in the evangelical work of the diocese. In general, participants agreed that their strongest motivation was mainly drawn from the life and charism of their founder. Hence, it could be said that they closely relate their work to the mission of the Church. These responses are obvious, since religious men and women have long assisted the Church in her mission (Perfectae Caritatis: 1). Through the evangelical counsels, the religious bind themselves in a special way to the Lord that is often characterised by the spirit or principles of a particular founder’s religious practice. Emphasising the importance of religious women and men, Pope Pius XII once remarked that without the religious, the Church may not be able to fulfill its responsibilities in the world in terms of staffing its schools, manning its hospitals, and even conducting spiritual centers. Of this, St John Paul II aptly remarks: “We are all aware of the treasure which the gift of the consecrated life in the variety of its charisms and institutions represent for the ecclesial community” (Vita Consecrata, 1996: 4, no. 2). The emergence of religious institutes, be they religious orders or congregations, is essential “if the catholicity of the Church to be fully realised” (O’Brien & Schaumber, 2015). Being members of religious congregations, Catholic Sisters therefore are extending the ministry and mission of the Church to society through their apostolates. Their functions, as clearly articulated by Wallace (1992), involve not only working in the hospitals and schools and caring for the homeless; they also take up equally other works for the Church, as parish administrators, canon lawyers, marriage counsellors, and spiritual directors, for example.

One may be tempted to argue that all the apostolates performed by women religious, such as the ones mentioned above, could just as easily be performed by anyone else. However, the fact is that the Church strongly needs religious women and men who through their commitment will engage in the work they do as a direct participation in the mission of the Church. This being the case, the services of women religious should not be restricted based on the degree of social and material benefit they produce. It is also important to consider the symbolic and future implications these services manifest in the faith of believers. Vita Consecrata (1996) confirms this view when it emphasises that consecrated women have contributed to the renewal of society through their service to God and their brethren. It acknowledges the place of women and urges them to continue to overcome all discriminations, violence and exploitations against them and the needy. It also commends consecrated women for the great task of educating the women of today.
These achievements cannot be overemphasised, because Catholic Sisters have made efforts to transform society in every corner of the world. Like other Catholic Sisters, the SIJ Sisters engage in many apostolates, but more importantly, they have liberated and empowered a great many women and girls by establishing a vocational school in the rural area of Dunkwa-on-Offin. It was revealed during interviews that the St Theresa’s vocational school established by the SIJ Sisters at Dunkwa-on-Offin has trained many young girls and women since its inception in 1997.

Data from the study shows that the SIJ Sisters have remarkably changed people’s lives in the Archdiocese of Cape Coast and its environs. The congregation has adopted education as its tool for social transformation and more social interventions. This is evidenced in Nwangangi’s (2012) findings that the Catholic Church has made great contributions towards educational development in Africa, and that this development has also facilitated personal development of the people. Importantly, the established vocational school has empowered many girls and women, which has reduced the generational circle of poverty among women in that part of the country. This contributes to attainment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of ending poverty in all its forms everywhere (Goal 1) and achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls for the betterment of the society (Goal 5). Hence, Catholic Sisters are at the forefront of advancing the SDGs by way of their apostolates, especially in the area of women and girls’ social empowerment.

Moreover, there were high teenage pregnancy and school dropout rates in Dunkwa-On-Offin at the time of the vocational school’s creation, and the school assisted these dropouts and prevented them from ending up as teen mothers. To be clear, many of the girls who benefited from the skills training are doing well in their businesses and homes today. Many enrolled in polytechnical schools and universities. In our interaction with some beneficiaries of this skills-based education by the SIJ Sisters, one respondent, now a matron in one of the schools in the community, revealed that some of her colleagues work in businesses, while others are employed at different schools and hospitals. Another respondent confirmed that she was employed by a successful catering service; hence, she is able to cater for her family, and she is full of thanks for what the Sisters did in her life. She adds that the Sisters on several occasions have recommended their students for good jobs.

Another respondent who was trained by the Sisters confirmed having a flourishing business. She avers: “I am what I am today because of the Sisters, I am a happy mother and a fulfilled woman” (Personal Communication, September 22, 2016). This assertion is indicative of how lives have been impacted by the privilege of being educated by Catholic Sisters. It seems crucial to reiterate that those girls who enrolled in the school were protected from teenage pregnancies, which were rampant in the community at the time.

The respondents also added that not only did they acquire a skills-based education, they were also trained to be morally upright, hence they received a holistic enlightenment and formation that involves both skills and character. This is consistent with Maduekwe’s (2014) findings that Catholic Sisters use schools and domestic centers like the vocational school to train young African women both in urban and rural areas in homemaking skills as well as character formation. The SIJ has significantly empowered women and girls with vocational skills, especially in Dunkwa-on-Offin. Interestingly, some of the girls who attended the school were from other parts of the country, and no claim that any of them was abused was obtained in the course of the study. Although the school has since been transformed into a secondary school, it continues to greatly improve the lives of the individuals from the community in many ways.

While as of 2016 the Central Region still had the nation’s highest rate of teenage pregnancy, some residents of Dunkwa-on-Offin admit that there has been a reduction of such pregnancies in their community, given that most girls are either in school or utilising already acquired skills for the good of the community and that of their families. This is all thanks to the SIJ Sisters, who ventured to the interior to bring skills-based education to the doorstep of rural girls in Dunkwa-on-Offin and its environs.

Studies have also demonstrated that Catholic Sisters are working continually to improve the well-being of the individuals they serve. The Catholic Sisters “are found tending those in need, often on the very margins of society” (Nassif, Myers, & Mahoney, 2013, p.7). In trying to portray the role of women in transformation and in particular the role of women religious, Haddad and Banks (1985) also assert that women have done great works, as they provide support, pave the way for new discoveries, and show how women, in many ways, have become instruments of liberation for women and underprivileged individuals in society at large.
Transformative Partnerships

Social Consciousness of Catholic Sisters as Agents of Transformation

Another respondent who really understands what the Sisters do suggests that the Sisters should promote themselves, since people who need their services and help are unaware of what they offer to humanity. More fundamentally, another respondent is of the view that some members of the community erroneously believe that the Sisters are there in pursuit of their own personal interests. Although he lauds the efforts of the Sisters, he thinks that they could, from time to time, publicise their achievements, such as the scholarship assistance given to some students in the community, the character and moral formation aspect of their works, and the need for a collaborative effort between them and the community. Though this respondent confirmed that there have been occasions where some agencies in the community donated educational materials to the school, he noted that the beneficiaries themselves need more education in order to be truly aware of what the Sisters do and how they can benefit from them.

Catholic Sisters, Social Consciousness and Social Transformation

The Catholic Sisters are engaged in social transformation as one of their core values; however, it is crucial to mention that there is a wide gap between this and the people’s consciousness of them. The question arises, could the Sisters advance from being agents of transformation to agents of social consciousness? This question, to be certain, relates to how the activities of the Sisters that involve social change can be deepened in such a way that people within the community where they work can become conscious of what they do. The Sisters live in communities and perform functions relating to motivation, social rehabilitation, education, among many other vital dimensions, and still people ask what exactly do they do? This, of course, indicates a lack of social awareness or a gap between the achievements and the awareness.

From the research conducted, there is evidence supporting the idea that doing what the Sisters do is just one side of the task of creating a social change; the other side of the picture pertains to how people become involved in these tasks so as to benefit from them. This latter concern involves creating awareness. The point is that when their social programs are poorly publicised or not publicised at all, the implication is that those who are not direct beneficiaries of their activities may likely not know...
their contributions toward societal development. For instance, those within the Catholic community and schools where the Sisters teach would know, or those in the hospitals they extend assistance to, but as to a general awareness in the larger community, unpublished information leaves the people uninformed. Therein lies the gap. It is proposed that social change cannot be restricted to secluded actions that bring about happiness for the few, as one now finds the prevailing works of the Sisters; rather, it is crucial to ensure that the majority (if not all) are consciously given the room to benefit from such services, which are aimed at the good of the communities in which the Sisters work.

The recommendation, therefore, is that the Catholic Sisters should solidify their services by making them public. This study also advocates that more research should be conducted so as to close the gap between Sisters’ transformative roles and the generation of social awareness. This is necessary because a lack of awareness is indicative of a lack of social recognition, and the lack of social recognition undermines the works of Catholic women religious towards social change and development in general. It follows, then, that Sisters should move to the stage of awareness creation, given that most of their contributions to society are becoming undervalued in Africa. One would suppose that because the Catholic Sisters are present in a community and running a school, the people as well as the community would be aware of their contributions through education to social development. On the contrary, most people are not. It is essential that one acknowledges the roles of the Catholic Sister, and if an effort is made to espouse, defend, and promote the roles of African Sisters in these transformative activities through social media or research, this will enable them to be socially recognised and appreciated. Articulation of religious women’s works is invaluable.

Furthermore, the effort of the Catholic Sisters will only become relevant when the people understand what they do for them; only then will their presence be felt. Catholic Sisters should raise a deliberate question which pertains to their work and how it is being perceived by the people. It is this that will likely help them to see how they contribute to social change, since social change has positive effects when people themselves become aware of what is done for them and how this affects them directly or indirectly. More will be achieved when the people who are being changed are themselves part of the change process. This will enable the Catholic Sisters to become true agents of social consciousness that encourages positive social change.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This chapter has discussed the contributions of Catholic Sisters to social transformation and the contributions of SIJ Sisters in particular using the Dunkwa-on-Offin community as its reference point. The study showed that Catholic Sisters have contributed immensely to human development through their apostolates and especially through girl-child and women’s education in the rural areas. It was established that there was consensus among most participants interviewed in the study that girl-child education affected the community positively. Although the study showed some lacunas in the social awareness of people regarding the works and social transformative roles of the Catholic Sisters, it revealed that the direct beneficiaries of the Catholic education administered through the SIJ Sisters have experienced positive outcomes as participants in the program.

The study showed, however, that there is a need for an urgent synthesis of the transformative and awareness agendas of Catholic Sisters. It is stressed this would require that the Sisters make themselves more known in public places by documenting their works and advancing them via various media. The onus therefore lies on African Sisters to find ways to make themselves known. The study recommended that more scholars should investigate what the Catholic Sisters do and make their achievements public. It is also imperative that Catholic Sisters use appropriate media to articulate their efforts and works among underprivileged and uneducated groups within the communities they serve.

Furthermore, the effort of the Catholic Sisters will only become relevant when the people understand what they do for them; only then will their presence be felt. Catholic Sisters should raise a deliberate question which pertains to their work and how it is being perceived by the people. It is this that will likely help them to see how they contribute to social change, since social change has positive effects when people themselves become aware of what is done for them and how this affects them directly or indirectly. More will be achieved when the people who are being changed are themselves part of the change process. This will enable the Catholic Sisters to become true agents of social consciousness that encourages positive social change.
References


AN INVESTIGATION OF THE ROLE OF THE SUPERIORS OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS IN EMPOWERING RELIGIOUS SISTERS IN MALAWI

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Abstract

Education remains a key tool for the development and empowerment of women. It is therefore not surprising that the African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC) is doing all it can to ensure that religious sisters are well trained and empowered. In Malawi, however, education of women religious still remains a major challenge. Studies show that few women religious have an opportunity to further their education. Such a challenge has been observed to be a result of inconsistency in the procedures used in selecting women religious to pursue higher education, and misplacement of professionals is perceived to be a common phenomenon among women religious congregations in Malawi. It can be said that it is not clear whether diocesan women religious congregations in Malawi have education guidelines or policies that they can follow when selecting members to pursue studies. This has given room to much speculation within congregations, where some people feel members are chosen out of favouritism and that others are deliberately slighted. In some cases, accusations of tribalism have been levelled against authorities in the way that selections are made of members to go for studies.

It is a fact that the education that women religious receive needs to be consistent with the charism, interests, and needs of the congregation, while also remaining consistent with the needs of the church at large. Canon 670 assets that “the institutes must supply the members with everything that, in accordance with the constitutions, is necessary to fulfill the purpose of their vocation”. The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the availability and use of education guidelines/policies in women religious congregations in Malawi. This is even more urgent now as ASEC continues to invest additional resources in the training of Sisters in Malawi. The study will assist Superiors of various congregations in selecting proper candidates for different disciplines.

Keywords: empowerment, women religious, education, guidelines, policies.

Introduction

Religious congregations in the Catholic Church carry out their mission through the charisms they represent and promote. Members of such a congregation are expected to perfect the charism through their spirituality and ministry. It is therefore essential for a charism to be anchored and perfected. Because education is key to such perfection, it is expected that the education that women religious receive is consistent with the charism, interests, and needs of the congregation. Kaambankadzanja (2005) asserts that relevance is a cardinal principle of any education process. The involvement or consultation of stakeholders ensures that education articulates the aspirations and expectations of the people it intends to serve (Dyer, 1999). Thus, it is paramount that religious congregations ensure that they put in place deliberate procedures whereby members are given an opportunity to access education when the time comes.

Research Problem

Inconsistency in the procedures used in selecting women religious to pursue higher education is perceived to be a common phenomenon among congregations in Malawi and beyond. It is not clear whether women religious congregations in Malawi have clearly defined education guidelines or policies. On the other hand, the roles which various stakeholders play in their formulation have not been studied. This study, therefore, intends to investigate the role of superiors of women religious congregations in empowering religious sisters in Malawi. A key to successful policy implementation is the participation of a wide range of stakeholders in the policy formulation process (Brinkerhoff, 2002; Dyer, 1999; Craig, 1990; Haddad, 1995; MacJessie-Mbewe, 2004; Chimombo, 1999).
Purpose

The purpose of the study is to determine the availability and use of education policies in women religious congregations in Malawi. The study seeks to investigate the roles and perspectives of the stakeholders with the object of determining their level of influence.

Central Questions

1. What education policies exist in the women religious congregations in Malawi?
2. What roles do Sisters play in the formulation of education policies in their congregations?

Sub-questions

1. To what extent are the Sisters in the women religious congregations aware of the education guidelines or policies in their congregations?
2. How do diocesan religious congregations apply the education guidelines or policies?
3. How do they perceive their influence regarding policy change in their congregations?

Significance of the Study

The study will act as an eye-opener as to whether women religious congregations in Malawi have existing education guidelines or policies, and how these guidelines and policies are formulated and used. The study is significant in that it will help to highlight the meaningful involvement of stakeholders in policy development and reform as well as the consequences of lack of involvement as stated in Policy Investment Framework (Ministry of Education, 2001).

In addition, the knowledge obtained through stakeholder analysis can be used to generate knowledge about relevant actors so as to understand their behaviour, intentions, interrelations, agendas, interest, and influence, as well as the resources they have brought, or could bring, to bear on decision making. This information would then be used to develop strategies for managing these stakeholders, to facilitate the implementation of specific decisions, understand the policy content, and assess the feasibility of future policy directions in the congregations.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding the study is drawn from concepts from Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002), who identified three dimensions of participation: the ‘Who’, the ‘What’ and the ‘How’. According to Brinkerhoff, the ‘who’ question looks at the various stakeholder-constituents who are affected by the policy and who have the power to help it or obstruct it. On the other hand, the ‘what’ question addresses the kind of participation being undertaken; finally, the ‘how’ question clarifies the qualitative aspects of participation, which range from passive to increasingly more active modes.

Brinkerhoff (2002) identifies five types of participation. The first of these is information sharing, which serves to keep actors informed, to provide transparency, and to build legitimacy. It is one-way information flow. The second type is consultation; in this type of participation, stakeholders are invited to offer their views on a given policy in a two-way flow of information and exchange of views. The third type of participation is collaboration, which allocates policy designs, implementation, or monitoring responsibilities to external groups. Collaboration works through formation of joint committees with stakeholder representatives, and through joint working groups and task forces. Fourthly, participation may entail joint decision-making; in this version of collaboration, control over decisions is not held unilaterally by public officials but is shared. The final type of participation is empowerment, which is the transfer of control over decision-making, controlling resources and activities from the initiator to the stakeholder.


**Research Design and Methodology**

**Research Design**

The study employed a descriptive case study. Schostak (1993) defines a case study as “a way to study systems or organisations which gives an in-depth view.” Willig (2008) believes that descriptive case studies are concerned with providing a detailed description of the phenomenon within its context. Here, the case is not explored in terms of existing theoretical formulations; instead, it is hoped that the detail provided by the description will generate new insight into, and a better understanding of the nature of the phenomenon under investigation.

In the case study, as suggested by Stark and Torrance (2005), “‘Social reality’ is created through social interaction, albeit situated in particular contexts and histories, and seeks to identify and describe before trying to analyse and theorise” (p. 33). The case study assumes that things may not be as they seem and privileges in-depth inquiry over coverage; as an approach, it is concerned more with understanding the case rather than generalising to a population at large.

The case study is appropriate for understanding a contemporary context, when ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are being posed, and the investigator has little control over events (Yin, 2009). The study in question was interested in investigating, among other things, the roles played by the women religious superiors in empowering Sisters. In other words, it focused on the ‘how’.

A key issue in the case study approach concerns depth versus coverage, and within the logic of a case study approach the recommended choice is always depth (Stark & Torrance, 2005). Hence it fits well into an instrumental case study design, where a particular case is examined to give insight into an issue. In this case, diocesan women religious congregations are studied as a case to give insight into the roles of religious superiors in empowering the religious sisters in Malawi.

Case study can provide profound understanding of phenomena, events, people, or organisations. In essence, it is a methodology capable of opening the door to the ‘sense-making’ process created and used by individuals involved in the phenomena, events, groups, or organisations under study (Weick, 1995, used in Berg, 2007, p. 285). For this project, the phenomenon of empowerment is assumed to consist of social interaction as opposed to isolation, as it occurs within the particular context of educational decentralisation policy.

Case study methodology is often criticised as weak in the area of generalisation, especially as compared to survey research in which samples are specifically intended for generalisation to a larger, more universal population. However, Yin (2009) argues that comparison using samples and universality are inappropriately applied. Rather than relying on statistical generalisation, as survey research does, case studies rely on analytical generalisations. Analytical generalisations allow the researcher to attempt to generalise a particular set of results to some broader theory. One major epistemological issue to be addressed concerning case study methodology is where to draw the boundaries – what to include and what to exclude – and thus how to define the knowledge that is being pursued and what constitutes the case being studied (Stark & Torrance, 2005).

For this particular study, the boundary was defined as follows: the case under study was diocesan women religious congregations only of Malawi. According to Willig (2008), a case can be an organisation, a city, a group of people, a community, a patient, a school, an intervention, or even a nation or an empire. By setting these boundaries, it is expected that this case study would produce a particular descriptive, inductive, and ultimately heuristic set of data that succeeds in illuminating understanding of the specific issues under investigation (Merriam, 1998).

**Target Population, Sample, and Sampling Procedures**

A total of nine Sisters were sampled from three local congregations in Malawi, namely the Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Sisters of the Holy Rosary, and the Teresian Sisters of the Child Jesus. The sample included two Sisters on temporary profession, one who was sent to school by the congregation and is working as a nurse, and the other who has not received any professional training but holds an important position in the Congregation as the bursar. Four of the Sisters are finally professed and of these, two are in the medical field and two are in the teaching field. Of the remaining three, two are the Superior Generals of their congregation and one is a Senior Council member of her congregation.

The researcher employed both convenience random sampling and purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is the deliberate choice of...
informants due to the qualities the informants possess. It focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study illuminates the questions under study. The researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Bernard, 2002; Louis & Shepherd, 2006). The logic and power of purposive sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term *purposive* sampling (Patton, 2002). In this study, purposive sampling was employed when selecting superiors of the congregations, as they were deemed to be key informants.

**Description of Data and Data Analysis Procedures**

The main data collection method that was used in this study was in-depth semi-structured interviews, specifically individual interviews and document analysis. According to Burns (1994), the main techniques used in case study methodology are observation (participant and non-participant, depending on the case), semi-structured interviews, and document analysis.

Semi-structured interviews were selected as they provide the flexible structure of the interview process, and at the same time allow the researcher and the interviewers to explore themes as they come up. Semi-structured interviews gave some space for the researcher to accommodate new issues or concerns regarding the research topic which arose during the field. Flexibility and sensitivity to the existing social context are characteristics of case study methodology, as opposed to rigidly standardised or structured processes (Mason, 2002). The emphasis is on how the interviewee frames and understands issues and events (Bryman, 2008).

**Research Findings and Discussion**

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study under the following thematic areas: existence of policies or guidelines; Sisters’ perceptions of their influence in policy formulation; awareness of existing policies or guidelines; challenges; and benefits from the African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC).

**Existence of Policies or Guidelines**

According to the three congregations that were studied, the study revealed that in all three congregations there are no policies on education. However, one of the congregations indicated that they use a development plan and strategic plan to determine the number of Sisters to be sent to school based on the congregation’s needs as per the plans. The remaining two congregations indicated that they only have strategic plans, which are developed by the council in its term of office. The research established that in each of these cases, the general council decides the number of Sisters to send to school, be it at the secondary or tertiary level, based on each Sister’s capability and the financial situation of the congregation.

**Perceived Influence of Sisters in Decision Making**

The study established that Sisters do not have much say as far as their education is concerned, including the type of courses they will study. In this case, it was clear that opportunity to go for further studies just comes to the Sisters by chance. It is therefore not surprising to hear what one of the superiors had to say when she was asked to explain the general reaction of the Sisters when they are asked to go to school: “Sisters most of the times will say I will not manage.” She was quick to point out, however, that despite this response that comes from the Sisters, 90% of these performed well when they did go to school.

On the matter, Sister Pauline (not her real name) stated that “some Sisters have been sent for a course which they do not like even to the point of diverting from their already existing professions, however at the end of the day some have ended up liking the new course while others have become bitter.”

Sister Emma had this to say on the same theme:

I had been going to my superior so many times to ask her if I can be given an opportunity to go to school but I always got a negative response until recently when I had given up, that is when I was asked to do teaching while I had wanted to study something else. I am a teacher...now I am doing a different course out of my own choice....
Views expressed in the above interviews indicate that Sisters would like to have a role in decision making that pertains to their education, both in terms of timing as well as course of study.

**Knowledge of the Existence of Education Policies/ Guidelines**

There were mixed responses as to whether the Sisters are aware of guidelines or policies. While superiors indicated that Sisters are aware of the strategies that are followed, almost all the Sisters interviewed indicated that they are not very clear on the guidelines. Some of the Sisters simply indicated that they know of a clause in their constitutions which talks of the education of Sisters, but that they are not clear on the strategies followed. For instance, Sister Marieta had this to say: “The superior asked the level of my education, it was a surprise. I was then asked to submit my certificates…. It was the initiative of the superiors…I did it through obedience.”

On the same question, Sister Maria from another congregation gave a similar answer, noting “We do not know what superiors look at; what we only observe is that others are given opportunity to go school and others not, for me it only came as a surprise”.

With responses like the ones sampled above, it can be concluded that most of the Sisters in the congregations have little knowledge of the strategies followed in their congregations to send Sisters to school, which is an indication that power dynamics plays a major role in the operation of religious institutes in Malawi.

**Challenges Facing Diocesan Women Congregations in Empowerment Efforts**

**Lack of reading culture.** Generally, Malawi lacks a reading culture, and this is evident among the religious sisters. During the formation of Sisters, there seems to be very little that is examinable. The postulants and novices receive some instruction, but this goes without any examination to determine their performance. In addition, after professions Sisters do not cultivate a culture of reading as they are immersed in their apostolate; consequently, it is difficult for them to develop an interest in study, or even to catch up when they are sent to school (Focus group discussions).

**Lack of stakeholder involvement in decision making/power dynamics.** As supported by the research findings, policy implementation in Malawi faces many challenges because of lack of stakeholder involvement (MacJessie-Mbewe, 2003; Kadzamira & Rose, 2001). This situation has not spared diocesan women religious congregations. Sisters are a major stakeholder in the congregation. However, it seems their involvement in decision making is very minimal; they are more on the receiving end, and play a passive role (Binkerhoff, 2002).

**Inferiority complex.** There is a general feeling among most of the Sisters that they cannot manage. In a telephone interview with one of the Religious Superiors, she stressed that this is a great challenge on the side of the superiors because it is difficult at times to convince the Sisters until they are proven wrong.

**Lack of academic qualifications.** One of the major challenges facing religious congregations in Malawi is the dwindling of vocations. This has resulted in recruitment of girls based on aspects other than academics. Consequently, most of the girls who join these congregations do not qualify for the university upon their entry into the congregations. As two of the superiors alluded, girls are recruited who have only earned two or four credits. It is important to note that for every tertiary institution in Malawi, the entry point is six credits. This therefore becomes a challenge, as Superiors are unable to find suitable candidates to pursue further education. It must be said that the tertiary level of education has its own demands, and as such only those who qualify can have the opportunity and the right of admission to pursue various courses and professions.

**Financial constraints.** The superiors from the three congregations interviewed cited finances as being one of the constraints and challenges when it comes to releasing Sisters to pursue studies. Unfortunately, tertiary education is not cheap, especially by local standards by which most of the local congregations are not self-reliant. The Superiors thus indicated that it is a great challenge to meet the basic needs of the Sisters, let alone to educate them. However, one of the congregations has resolved to educate the Sisters up to first degree; beyond that, the Sisters should look for scholarships.

**Benefits from ASEC.** When asked whether their congregations are benefiting from ASEC, the Sisters emphasised with relief that they are benefiting greatly from the different programs that are now offered.
One issue they were quick to point out was that in some isolated cases, Sisters who are trained in various programs end up not implementing the knowledge they have acquired during their trainings, going back instead to their old systems after returning to their workplaces. However, the Superiors also pointed out that the way to address this issue is to appoint these Sisters to specific apostolates and ministries that will allow them to exercise the knowledge they have acquired. It was also interesting to learn from two of the superiors that they would like to intensify alumni groups in order to have follow-ups on the ASEC programs.

Implications of the Study

1. Ignorance of the policy relates to its implementation. How can one implement what he or she does not know?
2. Absence of the policy results in inability to apply the same and therefore failure to have any procedures to send Sisters for higher education. Absence of education policies in diocesan women religious congregations has enabled inconsistencies; as one participant lamented, “What we know is that in our congregation Sisters are sent to school three years after first profession but sometimes it takes as long as ten years while for others it is within one year”. The statement implies that there are some injustices or an element of favouritism. During the focus group discussion, Sister Jane shared that because it is not definite when one will be sent to school, Sisters who would like to pursue their studies while they are still young sometimes leave their congregations.
3. If Sisters are not sent for higher education, their effectiveness in apostolate and ministry output is compromised; this is a challenge which should be addressed by those who have had opportunity to pursue further studies.
4. Availability of policies in sending Sisters for higher education allows and provides equal opportunity to Sisters who qualify to take up such ventures.

Conclusion

The study has established that diocesan women religious congregations in Malawi do not have education policies in their congregations. Instead, some congregations use strategic and development plans as guidelines for training Sisters. The study has further revealed that most of the Sisters have limited knowledge of the strategic plans that are used in their congregations, and that the power to influence decisions about education is fully in the hands of those in authority. Finally, the study found that inconsistency in training of the Sisters is one of the reasons why some Sisters have withdrawn from their congregations.

Suggestions for Improvement

As one of the major challenges mentioned was finances, it was suggested that there is a need to concentrate on other professions, such as electronics, mechanics, accounting, and information and computer technology, in order to reduce expenditures. Participants in the focus group discussions noted that money is wasted paying for things like computer maintenance which Sisters could do for themselves.

Formation

At the moment, religious formation has no examinations; this cultivates an element of academic laziness. It could be beneficial to make some of the content at the formation examinable in order to cultivate a reading culture and hard work among the Sisters from the word go.

Policies and Guidelines

There is a great need to devise policies and guidelines on education in relation to the missions, visions, and charisms of the congregations. As one of the participants lamented, “It is good to have clear guidelines on education as we have the constitution.” She added that “Superiors have their favourites on different bases – that is why the same people go to school while others are not considered.”
It was also suggested by the participants during the focus group discussion that committees should be formed comprising different stakeholders, including some Sisters, who are not generally involved in the implementation of such policies. As observed by one of the participants, there are so many things which are only on paper.

In Malawi, several studies have been conducted on education reforms. MacJessie-Mbewe (2003) conducted a study to examine determinants of success in policy reforms. Among other things, the study found that the Ministry of Education does not involve stakeholders like teachers, parents, and students at the grassroots level when formulating educational policies that concern them; as a result, the implementation of these policies faces many challenges. In addition, the study found that the Ministry of Education only consults people in higher positions and the rich when formulating their policies. Generally, the report found that teachers and parents have always been side-lined in the policy making process in education and hence they do not influence change, since they are at the receiving end and have not been empowered.

Kadzamira and Rose (2001), in their study on policy choice and policy practice in Malawi, made similar observations. The study found that the framework for the Free Primary Education policy did not include key stakeholders in formulation and was to a large extent donor-driven. They therefore concluded that education policy formation in Malawi does not have a tradition of consultation with stakeholders.

In agreement with the above findings, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (2013) also carried out an evaluation on Enhanced Citizen Participation for Accountable and Responsive Governance. From their nationwide consultations, the report found consensus that the government of Malawi has a tradition of developing policies without consulting all necessary stakeholders and of imposing outcomes on the people. According to the same report, these stakeholders include but are not limited to teachers, private school owners, parents, learners, and faith-based institutions; as a result, policies that have been designed have not been wholly welcomed, resulting in sloppy implementation. The country’s system of doing things may have an implication on the way diocesan women religious congregations conduct their operations. This calls for further study of the basis for the passive mode of involvement among the studied congregations.

References


Introduction

Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary (SBVM) is a local congregation with diocesan right, situated in Nguludi in the Archdiocese of Blantyre in Malawi. The congregation was founded in 1925 by Bishop Louise Auneau, a Montfort Missionary (Mukaka & Chitseko, 2015). As of December 2016, the congregation had 309 professed Sisters, 7 first-year Novices, 7 second-year Novices and 7 Postulants. The SBVM Sisters are found in the central and southern parts of Malawi. The congregation has 32 communities in five dioceses, namely the dioceses of Blantyre, Dedza, Mangochi, Chikwawa, and Zomba. The Motherhouse is situated at Nguludi, in the southern part of Malawi, in the Archdiocese of Blantyre.

The purpose of the Congregation is to evangelise through apostolic work in the fields of health, education, social ministry, and administration. This fulfills their charism of “Liberation to all people they serve.” The Sisters are working as clinical officers, nurses/midwives, social workers, secretaries, teachers, accountants, administrators, catechists, and pastoral workers (Mukaka & Chitseko, 2015). The mission of the SBVM Sisters is to reach out to the people with their blessedness, proclaiming the Good News of Liberation with compassionate hearts to all humanity and giving them the true freedom of the children of God. The vision of the SBVM Sisters is to be spiritually enriched and economically and academically empowered. Sisters bring quality socio-pastoral development that is rooted in Christ through prayers and community living in order to be liberated and to liberate others.

Statement of the Problem

Although the Sisters are doing great work, little documentation exists of their contributions to society. Therefore this chapter seeks to document the influence, impact, and challenges of the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary in society.
Transformative Partnerships

A Case Study of Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Sisters in Malawi

Data Collection and Management

According to Mack et al. (2005, pg. 64), when collecting data through in-depth interviews, the interviewer’s skills are of paramount importance because they help to direct the interview process to produce authentic data. Data was collected by the researcher who has experience in collecting qualitative data.

To ensure clarity, a pilot test of the interview guide was conducted, and necessary revisions were made before the main survey. The major questions that facilitated the collection of data are as follows:

1. What is your professional work?
2. How many of you are working here?
3. What is your passion towards this work?
4. Have you ever established any organisation of your own?
5. How many organisations do you know of that were started by SBVM Sisters?
6. If you know of any organisations established by SBVM can you mention two of them?
7. How do you perceive the quality of work offered by the organisations established by SBVM?
8. What are the challenges experienced by SBVM Sisters?
9. What are the contributions and success stories of SBVM Sisters in society?

Data Analysis

Data was analysed using SPSS Version 16.0. A list of common themes that helped to give expression to the common voices of participants was used to group responses.

Results and Discussion

SBVM Sisters in Malawi are involved in various activities such as teaching, health care, and pastoral work. This is in line with the idea of...
their founder Bishop Auneau, who encouraged Sisters to work hard and totally surrender themselves, in order to overcome the challenges which they meet when working with people from different walks of life (SBVM Magazine, 2015).

These Sisters are having tremendous impacts in Malawian society. Apart from their usual work, they are also actively involved in other programs, such as charity work and career guidance. About 40% of SBVM Sisters are teachers, 25% are health workers, and 35% are in pastoral work. There exists a greater connection in the works of the SBVM Sisters.

**Education**

The results show that there is a significant influence and impact of Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary in education in Malawi as a nation. The study reveals that a majority of SBVM Sisters work in the field of education, as represented by 40% involvement.

Results show that the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary have great influence and impact on education. The Sisters provide quality education; Mukaka and Chitseko (2015) report that the SBVM Sisters are doing great work in reducing the level of illiteracy in Malawi. The Sisters have promoted education of the girl child in Malawi such that they have produced prominent members of Malawian society, including former Malawian president Joyce Banda and Patricia Kaliati, who has held various ministerial positions in the cabinet of Malawi. The results of this study also agree with the assessment of Kadzingatchire, who says, “Women religious congregations in the Roman Catholic Church have for a long time made significant contributions to girl-child education in Malawi” (2015, p. 254).

**Health**

Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary who are in the health care field have also demonstrated a significant impact and influence on health and reproduction. Twenty-five percent of SBVM Sisters are in the health sector, according to the study’s findings.
Pastoral Work

Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary who are involved in pastoral work represent 35% of the total population of Sisters. The study shows a significant influence of SBVM in this field. Results show that the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary have great influence and impact on spiritual growth. This is evidenced by a reduction in the number of early marriages and the availability of formal marriages that are recognised by the church and the government.

These pastoral advancements have been made possible because SBVM Sisters advise the youth about the Word of God that encourages them to follow God’s commandments. In addition, the spiritual growth masterminded by the SBVM Sisters has encouraged Malawi to pursue a more moral society in which there is a reduction in the number of immoral behaviours such as stealing, prostitution, and drug and alcohol abuse; this striving for a more moral society is in line with the Word of God.

There are fourteen clinics and three hospitals where SBVM nurses, medical assistants, and clinical officers work. These clinics include the Larranaga Clinic, near the Nyungwe convent in Chiradzulu, as well as clinics in Mwanga, Chiringa, Muloza, Namulenga, Mitengo, Molere, Neno, Tsangano, Nsipe, Mpiri, Magomero, Matiya and Pirimiti. Among these clinics, one is established and run by the SBVM Sisters themselves. The hospitals where SBVM Sisters work include Phalombe Mission Hospital in Blantyre Archdiocese, St Joseph Mission Hospital in Chikwawa Diocese, and Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital in Blantyre. More Malawians are employed in these centers, which have allowed many Malawians to receive high quality medical attention, and to travel less distance to receive it.

The health care activities conducted by the SBVM Sisters are in alignment with the sustainable development goals that Malawi as a nation has set for the health sector. Results from this study are in agreement with Bbalo (2015), who concluded that the presence and availability of Sisters for service is a source of encouragement and hope for many families and individuals.
As is evident in Figure 4, SBVM Sisters collect those who are forgotten as human beings by society because they are physically challenged. This tells us that the SBVM Sisters give light and hope to the marginalised, thus helping to create a better society. In other ways, SBVM Sisters teach all members of society to see God in each and every human being, and to care and provide for each individual despite their challenges.

The results agree with Kadzingatchire’s assertion that “It is impossible for a country like Malawi to develop without the participation of women, and that their involvement largely depends on their education” (2015, p. 254).

**SBVM Teachers Involved in Other Programs**

Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary, despite being busy with their education work, are nevertheless also involved in other activities. Study results show that 90% of SBVM teachers are involved in other activities apart from teaching. This shows that in addition to teaching at their respective workplaces, these Sisters also provide people with spiritual benefits by teaching catechism and teaching those involved in the Catholic Family Movements and youth ministries.

The results indicate that the majority (50%) of SBVM teachers are involved in pastoral work, while 25% are involved in career guidance and 25% in charity work. This shows that in addition to the benefits received through these Sisters’ usual work of teaching, people also benefit greatly from the SBVM Sisters as far as pastoral work, career guidance, and charity work is concerned.

**SBVM Clinical Officers/Nurses Involved in Other Programs**

Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary who are involved in health care also do additional activities. Results have shown that 25% are involved in other activities apart from their usual work of health. This shows that in addition to their work as clinical officers, medical assistants, or nurses at their respective workplaces, these Sisters also provide benefits to people in the areas of career guidance, charity work, and pastoral work, as indicated by involvement rates of 20%, 40%, and 40% respectively.

The results indicate that the majority (40%) of SBVM health care workers are in pastoral work, while 20% are involved in career guidance and 40% in charity work. This shows that in addition to their usual work of treating sick people, there are other activities the Sisters are doing.
SBVM Pastoral Workers Who Are Involved in Other Programs

Of the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary who do pastoral work, 90% are also involved in other career guidance or charity programs to the benefit of the people. Study results indicate that of SBVM Sisters who do other work in addition to pastoral work, 20% are also involved in career guidance and 40% in charity work. This shows that people benefit from the work of SBVM Sisters in career guidance and charity work in addition to these Sisters’ usual work of assisting in parishes.

“Developing the created world in a prudent way is the best way of caring for it, as this means that we ourselves become the instrument used by God to bring out the potential which he himself inscribed in things.” (Laudato Si, 2015, p. 55)
Influence of Sisters of Blessed Virgin Mary in Health, Education, and Pastoral Work

The study results indicate that women religious have a great influence in Malawi as a nation. This is shown by the large number of girls who are interested in the works of the congregation. Many people responded that SBVM Sisters have their own schools and health centers. The research participants view the fact that the SBVM have their own schools as one way that they are helping the nation in training good citizens. Respondents noted that the Sisters are also working in the schools for the deaf and helping other less privileged people who are forgotten. All this is done despite the financial challenges the Sisters are experiencing.

The SBVM Sisters are not only teaching the youth to behave and live as children of God, but also helping them to take care of the things created by God; this shows that they are helping the youth to see God in all things. This is in line with the words of Pope Francis, who said that “protection of the environment is in fact an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it” (2015, p. 63).

Other respondents shed more light on pastoral work; SBVM has a passion for creating a God-fearing nation by assisting in people’s spirituality in the parishes. In addition, the results show that SBVM Sisters are working tirelessly in treating people; this has been shown by the large percentage of Sisters who are working as clinical officers, medical assistants, and nurses. And despite working already in these roles, the Sisters continue to construct their own clinics at locations which will reduce the distance people need to walk in order to receive medical attention.

Challenges Faced by the SBVM Sisters

Despite all of these success stories and contributions to the nation of Malawi, SBVM Sisters nevertheless experience many challenges while executing their duties in education, health care and pastoral work. Many of these challenges involve finances or transportation.

Finances. Finances pose a very big challenge for the Sisters, because they do not have a stable source of funding for their projects since their income is mainly from their work. Everything that they do for the people requires money, including running their institutions, schools for the deaf, secondary schools, and clinics. The Sisters do receive assistance from the government for teachers’ salaries, and some well-wishers also provide occasional funding. In an attempt to address their financial challenges, SBVM Sisters are venturing into small-scale businesses to help sustain the institutions they have established.

Transportation. Even though the Sisters do not have a mode of transport that will allow them to reach out to many people, still they try their best, renting bicycles, for example, to visit the Positive Parenting program or lactating mothers in their respective centers.

Other challenges. Other challenges include conflicts with other religions, begging within communities, and theft from the Sisters by members of the community, sometimes of money or items meant to assist the less privileged.

Conclusion

The study reveals that SBVM Sisters are at the forefront of education, health and pastoral work. They have greatly influenced and impacted society by ensuring higher education, improved health care and sustainable spiritual well-being. The results also show that despite the Sisters being busy in their respective workplaces, they still find time to help in career guidance and charity work.

References


Abstract

Change in any organisation is inevitable. A mission has to grow while maintaining its originality. This study intended to assess the mission expansion strategies of the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of St Therese of the Child Jesus, Diocese of Iringa, Tanzania. The specific objectives of the study were: 1) to determine the preparedness of the congregation to serve beyond Tanzania, and 2) to investigate the congregation’s economic challenges as it opens her mission beyond Tanzania. The study adopted qualitative and quantitative approaches to assess the mission expansion strategies of the Congregation. The instruments used for data collection were questionnaires, interviews, and document review. The findings show that, as the congregation embarks on her intentions to expand, it is challenged by lack of members equipped with the appropriate knowledge to carry out her mission within Africa and abroad. Lack of linguistics preparedness and weak sources of income are two specific and profound drawbacks. The study recommends that the congregation prepare her members in higher levels of education and language competences – especially English – before they can be sent to foreign countries. Furthermore, the congregation should strengthen her sources of income. The congregation also needs to understand the significance of obtaining work contracts wherever her members are
who dedicates his or her life to the pursuit of contemplative ideals and practices, extreme self-denial, or self-mortification for religious reasons. The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines religious life as one way of experiencing a “more intimate” consecration, rooted in Baptism and totally dedicated to God (Mushi, 2000). The Vatican II Council defines religious life as a service, a witness, and an apostolate (Wills, 2008). Looking back, men and women have set about following Christ with greater freedom and imitating him more closely through the practice of evangelical counsels, each in their own ways leading a life dedicated to God (Pope Paul VI, 1965). There are many religious congregations in the Catholic Church. The Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of St Therese of the Child Jesus Diocese of Iringa, Tanzania is one among them. Her Sisters are known as “Missionary Sisters of St Therese of the Child Jesus” or “Teresina sisters”. The congregation’s name in Latin is Congregatio Sororum Missionalium a S. Teresiae a Jesu Infante (CST).

Introduction

Tanzania is one of the countries in East Africa. Her people practice different religions, mainly Christianity, Islam, and indigenous religions. Current statistics on religion in Tanzania are unavailable, since religious surveys were eliminated from government census reports in 1967. However, religious leaders and sociologists estimate that Christian and Muslim communities are approximately equal in number, each counting between 30% and 40%. The remaining is thought to be indigenous religions and other small communities such as Hinduism and Buddhism. The existence of Christianity in Tanzania is the work of European missionaries, who arrived in Tanzania in 1868.

The Missionary congregation of St Therese of the Child Jesus, Diocese of Iringa is one of the indigenous women congregations in Tanzania. Tanzania has 19 indigenous women religious congregations. The majority of these congregations were started by European missionaries who came to Tanzania. This initiative of starting local congregations was assigned to women religious congregations because they had exhibited strong convincing power in other parts of the world, and so it was believed they could support the activities of evangelisation. It is in this regard that in April 2015, Pope Francis expressed the vitality of consecrated life in the church; as the pontiff remarked, “Where the church would be without you….To you, religious women, sisters, and mothers of this people, I wish to say thank you, a big thank you, and to tell you that I love you very much” (Zimmermann, 2015).

Consecrated life in its diverse expressions around the globe is a gift to the church and the world (The Vision, 2015). The origins of consecrated life date back to the time when Christians were recognised in the Church as followers after perfection in the practice of religious life (Vermeersch, 1911). Vermeersch states that in the third century, St Clement of Alexandria named the consecrated people “ascetics”, in reference to a person who dedicates his or her life to the pursuit of contemplative ideals and practices, extreme self-denial, or self-mortification for religious reasons. The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines religious life as one way of experiencing a “more intimate” consecration, rooted in Baptism and totally dedicated to God (Mushi, 2000). The Vatican II Council defines religious life as a service, a witness, and an apostolate (Wills, 2008). Looking back, men and women have set about following Christ with greater freedom and imitating him more closely through the practice of evangelical counsels, each in their own ways leading a life dedicated to God (Pope Paul VI, 1965). There are many religious congregations in the Catholic Church. The Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of St Therese of the Child Jesus Diocese of Iringa, Tanzania is one among them. Her Sisters are known as “Missionary Sisters of St Therese of the Child Jesus” or “Teresina sisters”. The congregation’s name in Latin is Congregatio Sororum Missionalium a S. Teresiae a Jesu Infante (CST).

History of the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of St Therese of the Child Jesus, Diocese of Iringa

The Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of St Therese of the Child Jesus, Diocese of Iringa was founded in 1935 by Monsignor Francesco Cagliero, a member of the Consolata Missionary Institute and Apostolic Prefect of Iringa (Mahembe, 2010). The Consolata Missionaries arrived in Iringa-Tanzania from the Diocese of Nyeri in Kenya. Iringa became an independent prefecture from the vicariate of Dar es Salaam on March 3, 1922 and on May 11, 1922, the Propaganda Fide appointed Fr Francesco Cagliero to be the first leader of prefect apostolic (Mpoma, 2015). Fr Francesco was a diocesan priest who after reading reports of the mission countries decided to become a missionary priest. Therefore, on July 5, 1903, he pronounced his first vows in the Congregation of Consolata Missionaries, and in December of the same year he was sent to Kenya. He became the religious superior of Kenya until he was appointed to be prefect apostolic (Monsignor) of Iringa in 1922. Monsignor Francesco Cagliero arrived in Iringa on April 9, 1923; upon arrival, he found already established the community of Consolata missionaries, who were formerly sent from Italy and from Nyeri-Kenya (Mahembe, 2010). The vastness of the apostolic area of Iringa, a small number of missionaries, and cultural
differences acted as barriers to the missionaries’ shared goal of spreading the Gospel.

Led by the Holy Spirit, Monsignor Francesco Cagliero identified the presence of girls as an opportunity to evangelisation. In 1924, he started recruiting girls for the service of God. Those who responded positively were located in two places, Madibira-Iringa and Tosamaganga-Iringa, under the direction and formation of Consolata Missionary Sisters (MC). Sr Delfina Vaisitti, MC was the superior of this new congregation. On October 23, 1931, Monsignor Francesco Cagliero received six postulants at Tosamaganga; their number later increased to twelve (Mpwepwa et al., 1985). On July 20, 1932, Msgr Cagliero wrote a letter to Propaganda Fide requesting permission to officially start the congregation. On December 8, 1934, the twelve postulants were received in the novitiate, and on April 9, 1935, a decree was issued by the Sacred Congregation allowing Msgr. Cagliero to start the religious congregation which came to be known as the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of St Therese of the Child Jesus.

**Formation and Purpose of the Congregation**

The work of the formation was entrusted to the Consolata Missionary Sisters. Sr Delphina Vaisitti was the sister in-charge, and was assisted by other Consolata Sisters for different periods. Other Sisters involved in formation were Sr Ancilla Paganel (1931-1932), Sr Gaudenzia Bavelli (1932-1933), Sr Stanislaa Bignoli (1933-1934), Sr Ernesta Lazzaroni was a nurse (1935-1938), Sr Argentina Passoni incharge of Candidates and Postulants (1934-1965), and Sr Pierluigia Bacchion incharge of Novices (1938-1966). Sr Delphina Vaisitti remained in charge of this new congregation for a period of 33 years, from 1931 to 1964.

The purpose of the congregation, as stated in the Decree of Prefect Apostolic of Iringa dated November 21, 1938, was “to strive for the glory of God through teaching, health care, catechesis and social work” (Kindole, Mahembe, & Mdalingwa, 2000). On defending his vision to start the congregation, the founder expressed the advantage of the prefecture as “to have progress of the indigenous religious congregation who might evangelise their own nation” (Kindole, Mahembe, & Mdalingwa, 2000). Therefore, the nature of the congregation is a missionary congregation, in the sense that her members are to be sent to serve people. St Therese of the Child Jesus is the patron saint of the congregation given her desire to spread the gospel of Jesus to the whole world. The desire to spread the Gospel of Jesus was described by St Therese of the Child Jesus herself thus:

> Like the Prophets and Doctors, I would be a light unto souls. I would travel to every land to preach Thy name, O my Beloved, and raise on heathen soil the glorious standard of Thy Cross. One mission alone would not satisfy my longings. I would spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth, even to the most distant isles. I would be a Missionary, not for a few years only, but, were it possible, from the beginning of the world till the consummation of time (Hutting, 1942, p. 79).

Monsignor Francesco Cagliero died by car accident on October 22, 1935, only seven months after his congregation was approved by the Propaganda Fide. He could therefore not see even the first fruit of his endeavours, but the seeds he planted, the Teresina Sisters, continued to live on, being nurtured by Consolata Missionaries. After Msgr Cagliero’s death, Fr Goacom Cavalo was in charge of the congregation, responsible for strengthening the members spiritually and economically until 1939 (Mpwepwa et al., 1985). From 1939 to 1965, the congregation was under the supervision of Monsignor Attilio Beltramino, who later became the first bishop of Iringa in 1948.

**Figure 1.** Left: The first members of the Congregation, December 1936. Right: Surviving members of the congregation’s first group of postulants, August 2016.
On December 8, 1936, the congregation’s 12 novices (Sr Consolata Kitinye, Sr Yosefin Nzelu, Sr Franciska Nyalusi, Sr Giacomina Mnyawami, Sr Kiara Kalinga, Sr Dominika Kihanga, Sr Gemma Ngwaulanga, Sr Maria Teresa Kapwani, Sr Teresina Ndavi, Sr Getrude Kagali, Sr Agnes Nyavili, and Sr Cesilia Ng’oko) made their first vows. It is important to note that, of the twelve sisters who made their first vows in 1936, two of them, Sr Getrude Kagali and Sr Agnes Nyavili, are still alive at the time of this writing (2018), and are pictured in Figure 1. Praise the Lord!

### Leadership of the Congregation

The Consolata Missionaries, after being convinced that the congregation was growing and showing maturity, decided that it was time to involve some of the Teresina Sisters in leadership. Therefore, on November 17, 1959, there was a meeting to elect four of the Teresina Sisters to help Sr Delfina Vaisitti in leadership. The elected group included Sr Margherita Mpwepwa (Assistant Superior), Sr Gaudenzia Lwagi (First Councillor), Sr Tarcisia Silye (Second Councillor), and Sr Giacomina Mnyawami (Third Councillor). The congregation continued to grow in number and maturity, and on December 19, 1964, the first general chapter was summoned. In this chapter, Mother Margherita Mpwepwa was elected to be the first Superior General. Mother Margherita’s leadership ended on February 24, 1971. She was succeeded by Mother Rozimilia Mhesa (1971-1983), Mother Judith Mahembe (1983-1994), Mother Teresina Gervasia Kindole (1994-2008), Mother Bernadeta Kitindi (2008-2014), and Mother Teresina Gervasia Kindole (from 2014).

### Apostolic Work of the Missionary Sisters of St Therese of the Child Jesus

The formation house for the Missionary Sisters of St Therese of the Child Jesus was at Tosamaganga, Iringa–Tanzania. The first group to profess comprised 12 Sisters, the second group had 5 Sisters, and the third group had 6 Sisters; by 1941, the congregation had a total of 28 Sisters, as shown in Table 1.

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### Table 1

**Professed Members of the Congregation, 1936-1941**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1936</th>
<th>1937</th>
<th>1938</th>
<th>1939</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of sisters professed</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1941, the Consolata Missionaries decided that the Teresina Sisters could be sent to start apostolic work beyond Tosamaganga, as was intended by the founder, Monsignor Francesco Caglierio. The congregation had reached a membership of 28 Sisters, a number that was thought to be significant to begin with. And so, the process began of sending the Sisters to different places in the Apostolic Prefect of Iringa.

Over the course of twenty-five years, Sisters were sent out in groups of six to the following parishes: Madibira (in 1941), Wasa (1945), Malangali (1946), Ujewa (1950), Irole (1950), Ikwega (1954), Ulete (1954), Kihesa (1962), and Chosi (1965). In these parishes, which were all in the Diocese of Iringa, the Sisters’ ministries were those intended by the founder: teaching, health care, catechism, and social work.

The Teresina Sisters remained under the supervision of the Consolata Sisters, in the sense that they were sent to the parishes where the Consolata Sisters were working, though they lived in separate convents. In 1964, when the congregation elected its first superior general, the Sisters in different parishes were also given the full authority to manage themselves, each community having a local superior. In all parishes, the Teresina Sisters inherited the system of the Consolata Missionaries. They were to work under the order of parish priests, and the parish priests in turn had to provide all the needs to the Sisters working at that particular parish. Therefore, the Teresina Sisters were not allowed to possess their own properties. This was also in keeping with the intentions of their founder, who stated that “The Sisters would not possess any property but they would depend on the properties of the Apostolic Prefect of Iringa” (Mahembe, 2010). The Sisters followed this system for more than 60 years throughout their congregation before some of the members started questioning it. In the process of investigation, they found the statement of the founder as actually expressed was “The sisters will not possess any property, but in the years
to come, if it will be required they may have their own properties”. This was the starting point for the congregation to acquire its own properties, such as land, buildings, and cars, as well as the ability to educate its Sisters. Until 1990, the congregation had a total of 33 communities in the Diocese of Iringa. Currently, the congregation has 70 communities working in 13 dioceses, including five dioceses abroad. The countries beyond Tanzania are Italy, Haiti, and Liberia, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Missions of the Teresina Sisters around the world.

The first community beyond Tanzania was established in Italy in 1997. Currently there are three communities in Italy. The congregation opened her first community in Haiti in 2009. Today there are two communities in Haiti including the formation house. The formation house in Haiti currently has three Tanzanian Sisters as well as its first three Haitian postulants and fifteen candidates. The community in Liberia was opened in 2016 and it has six Sisters working at the Ganta Leprosy/TB Rehabilitation Center in the Diocese of Gbarnga (the Sisters are employed by the government of Liberia). Figure 3 shows the mission activities of the Teresina Sisters in four countries, namely Tanzania, Italy, Haiti, and Liberia.

Figure 3. Missions of Teresina Sisters in the World.

The Sisters are working in the fields of education, health care, catechesis and social work. Every Sister is engaged in a specific area as per the intention of the founder. Sisters opting for the field of education teach at all levels, from kindergarten to university, according to the capability of the respective Sister. Currently the congregation has Sisters who are teaching at two universities in Tanzania: St Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT)-Mwanza, and Ruaha Catholic University (RUCU)-Iringa. Sisters opting for the field of medicine work at all levels, from dispensaries to hospitals. Currently the congregation has Sisters who are specialised in surgery and gynecology at Master’s levels. Sisters opting for catechesis are working and teaching at all levels, from homes to colleges, and those in social work engage in all activities such as cooking, gardening, and farming, while some are lawyers and journalists at Master’s levels.
**Problem Statement**

The members of the congregation are working in different parts of Tanzania and beyond. The congregation is currently working towards becoming a pontifical congregation. In the midst of service expansion, it is important to focus on the key issues that will strengthen growth and expansion while retaining the intentions of the founder. It is expected therefore to show preparedness in terms of education, experience, and skills, as well as how their ministries impact the financial situation of the mother congregation. Thus the study intends to answer the following specific questions:

1. What is the level of preparedness of the congregation to serve beyond Tanzania?
2. What are the congregation’s economic challenges as she opens her mission beyond Tanzania?

**Methodology**

The study adopted a mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Primary data (raw data collected for the first time from the original area of study) for the study was collected from the field where questionnaires were used and interviews conducted. Secondary data (data that exists or has already been collected and passed through certain statistical processes) was obtained by reviewing documents provided by the Office of the Superior General. The questionnaires were distributed to all the Sisters who had gathered at Iringa for retreat. The questionnaires allowed participants to list their qualifications and professions. Interviews were conducted through phone calls or face-to-face interviews where it was difficult to use questionnaires.

**Data Analysis**

Qualitative and quantitative techniques were used to analyse the data from the respondents. Narratives and content analysis were used for describing qualitative data, while tables and figures generated through Microsoft Office Excel 2007 and SPSS Version 17 were used to present quantitative analysis. Quantitative data was first screened for any discrepancies before analysis.

**Findings**

**Preparedness of the Congregation to Serve Beyond Tanzania**

**Distribution of Sisters as per founder’s intentions.** The first study question was related to the preparedness of the Sisters to serve according to the intention of the congregation. In order to answer this question, the data relating to the preparedness of Sisters in different professions was collected and analysed. This was done using a questionnaire that asked each Sister to indicate her level of education and profession. The details were presented by grouping the Sisters by year of their first vows. Their professions – how many Sisters are teachers, how many are in health field, how many are catechists and how many are social workers – was also investigated, as shown in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Interval (First Vows)</th>
<th>Sisters Prof. (Alive)</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Medical field</th>
<th>Catechesis</th>
<th>Social worker</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936-1955</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-1975</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12.33</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26.02</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-1995</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22.34</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26.59</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-2016</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>20.31</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>18.01</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>19.95</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>20.63</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 shows the increasing pattern in terms of number of the Sisters professed in each 20-year interval, as can be seen clearly in Figure 4.

![Figure 4. Total number of Sisters professed (alive).](image)

Figure 4 shows that the congregation is growing in terms of the number of its members, which is a very important asset for the congregation. Thus it can be interpreted that the expansion of the congregation beyond Tanzania has come at the right time. It is important to notice that a greater number of Sisters are young (professed between the years of 1996 and 2016); a total of 261 Sisters (58.58%) belong to this group. At the time of data collection (2016), the congregation had 29 novices, 36 postulants, and 68 candidates in Tanzania, as well as 3 postulants and 15 candidates in Haiti.

**Sisters’ preparation as linked to the founder’s intentions.** Table 2 revealed that all categories of activities for the Sisters as per the intention of the founder are taken into consideration. Information from Table 2 related to the intention of the congregation can also be seen clearly in Figure 5.

![Figure 5. Distribution of Sisters across vocations as per the founder’s intentions.](image)

Sisters are trained in a particular field (education, medical, catechesis or social work) based on the interest of each Sister. According to Mother Teresina Kindole (interview, June 10, 2016), the identification of special vocation in the congregation as per the founders’ intention is done in the novitiate. Beyond this identification, all Sisters are catechists. The congregation has a college (St Jerome) for Theology, Catechism and Formation at Tosamaganga-Iringa, Tanzania that allows every candidate to be trained for three years and obtain a certificate as a catechist before joining the novitiate. The college started in 1976 as a strategy of the congregation to strengthen the Sisters towards acquiring more religious knowledge in a broad perspective. Therefore, all the Sisters who professed their vows since 1979, besides having other qualifications in different disciplines, have certificates in catechism.

**Qualifications of Sisters working beyond Tanzania.** The researcher investigated the activities and qualifications of Sisters who were working beyond Tanzania and those who are in the process of going beyond Tanzania as well. The information from the records of the congregation
and the report presented by Mother Teresina Kindole during mid-chapter meeting in October 2016 indicated that a total of 12 Sisters are currently working in Italy. They work in senior centers and in dispensaries. Therefore, Sisters who work in Italy are in the fields of health care, catechism, and social work, with their qualifications being diplomas and certificates. In Haiti, Sisters work as nurses, social workers, and catechists, with their qualifications being diplomas and certificates. In Liberia, Sisters work at Ganta Leprosy/TB Rehabilitation Center in the diocese of Gbarnga, with their qualifications as shown in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Field</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sr Daniela Mgunda</td>
<td>Degree level</td>
<td>Medical doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr Irene Mavika</td>
<td>Master Level</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr Tumaini Kisogole</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sr Petronila Mukohi</td>
<td>Diploma Level</td>
<td>Pharmacist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr Sperancia Kikoti</td>
<td>Diploma Level</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr Theopista Kibiki</td>
<td>Certificate Level</td>
<td>Catechesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Mother Teresina Kindole’s 2016 report, two Sisters were sent to the Philippines for studies as a preparation for opening their mission in that country. According to Mother Teresina Kindole, the two Sisters (one at a teacher-trained degree level and the other at a nurse-trained diploma level) are training at the master’s and degree level respectively in the Philippines before they can start their mission. By the same report, two other Sisters (Sr Fadhili, teacher-trained with a certificate, and Sr Honorata, nurse-trained with a certificate) are in preparations to leave for Papua New Guinea.

Sisters’ perceived challenges beyond Tanzania as linked to preparation. During the data collection process, the researcher investigated the challenges encountered by the Sisters working beyond Tanzania. This was done through interviews with four Sisters who worked in Italy and one Sister who worked in Haiti. The main concern raised by these Sisters was the language barrier. All of the interviewed Sisters reported having a problem related to language, and for some of them the problem was so serious that it led to the devaluation of their qualifications. For example, in Italy and Haiti, the languages used are Italian and French respectively. Travelling Sisters are supposed to be taught these languages using the English language, even though English is not clear to a number of them. Another challenge was low pay in some areas, which made it difficult for Sisters to meet even their basic needs. The reason for low pay was mainly due to a lack of work contracts; in some areas, because the Sisters worked without contracts, it was not clear whether the dioceses or the congregation were in charge of the Sisters, and to what extent.

The Congregation’s Economic Challenges as it Opens her Mission beyond Tanzania

Flow of income of the congregation. In order to answer the second question related to the economic challenges of the congregation, the researcher investigated the flow of income through different sources, such as employed Sisters and the congregation’s various centers. It was therefore important to investigate the qualifications of Sisters.
Figure 6. Distribution of educational levels in the Congregation.

Figure 6 shows the qualifications of the Sisters in the congregation who are working in different classifications as per the founder’s intentions. Under these levels of classification, some are employed and others are not. In this study, employment refers to Sisters who are employed by either the government or the private sector and earn salaries according to the level of their qualifications as per the criteria of their respective countries’ governing policies. The employed Sisters earn salaries to support the congregation economically. The researcher sought to determine the balance between the two groups (employed and unemployed) in the congregation. The results are as shown in Figure 7.

From Figure 7, it is clear that the number of unemployed Sisters, 288 (65%), is large compared to the number of employed Sisters, which is 158 (35%). The study delved further to determine the qualifications of those employed; these results are shown in Figure 8.

Figure 7. Teresina Sisters (employed and unemployed).

Figure 8. Qualifications of Sisters who are employed.
As shown in Figure 8, of those employed 123 (78%) have low qualifications at the level of diplomas and certificates. The study found that the unemployed Sisters work in the different centers of the congregation, in parishes, and teaching catechism for different categories of people (in kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools, and to those in need of services). Besides the fact that the congregation is supported economically in terms of salaries, the congregation has institutions, some of which are also sources of income for the congregation. According to Mother Teresina Kindole (interview, June 10, 2016), the congregation has 37 centers where the Sisters can exercise their mission. These centers are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 shows the centers of the congregation, which can be classified into two categories. The first category is those centers which generate money to support the mission of the congregation; these include schools, hostels, and colleges (in the case of St Monica), as reported by bursar of the congregation (interview, June 23, 2016). On the other hand, the second category includes centers that deliver services to the people (e.g., orphanages), or for the survival of the members of the congregation (e.g., farms).

The study examined the preparedness of the Sisters serving beyond Tanzania and the economic challenges as the congregation extended its mission. This enabled the congregation to evaluate whether expansion into other countries enhanced the congregation’s mission or weakened economic growth at home, and to look for remedies to move in a healthy manner. From the findings, it was found that the Sisters are prepared to work outside of Tanzania according to the founder’s intentions for the congregation. It was also found that Sisters worked independently without depending much on their home country, knowing already that the home country did not have much to spare for the support other countries. The congregation’s support is based on the qualifications of the Sisters who worked beyond Tanzania, as some of them could earn salaries in their respective countries to pay for their basic living expenses. In cases where it was difficult to earn a salary, the congregation asked for aid – from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, for example – to support the Sisters beyond Tanzania. According to Mother Teresina Kindole (interview, October 20, 2016), the Sisters who work in Haiti received aid several times from the Hilton Fund for Sisters.

### Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Type</th>
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<th>Institution Names</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleges</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>St Monica Teachers’ College for Diploma Courses and St Jerome for Theology, Catechesis and Formation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>St Therese Secondary School-Mibiki-Mitali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergartens</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mwanza, Yatima, and Kipera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostels</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>MibikiMitali Hostel and St Monica Hostel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health centers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mtandika, Wenda and Mauninga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispensaries</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Kiper, Ibwanzi, Mawambala, Usolanga, Mshindo, Madege, Uliwa and Sikonge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Keeping cows, maize, trees, and fruits at: Ibwanzi, Kiduvandembwe, Kihesa Mgagao, Mawambala, Lusinga, Ulete, Mkengelechuma, Wasa, and Mtandika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational training centers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>For small industries as follows: soap making, shoe making, church vestments, and candle making, Tailoring workshops for girls and carpentry for boys at: Delphina House, Mtandika, Mshindo, Tosamangango, and Ilembula</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Congregation outcomes as members work beyond Tanzania.** The researcher sought to discern what members thought about the congregation’s expansion beyond Tanzania. Questionnaires soliciting...
impressions about this process were administered to 82 Sisters in attendance at an annual retreat in June 2016. Completed questionnaires were returned by 64 respondents. Respondents were asked to identify any benefits and challenges that working outside of Tanzania created for the congregation. A benefit mentioned by 41 respondents (64%) was that mission expansion afforded the congregation a chance to share the love of Jesus as their founder Monsignor Francesco Cagliero and the Consolata Missionaries had done with them. Another benefit, mentioned by 45 respondents (70%), was that working outside of the country would hasten the process of becoming a pontifical congregation. A challenge identified by 53 respondents (84%) was that most Sisters who go to work abroad are the ones who are well qualified and are expected to work so as to strengthen the congregation economically; as there was no returning from abroad, Sisters felt that working abroad was weakening the congregation. Another challenge mentioned by 28 respondents (44%) was the hard life experienced by some of the Sisters who worked beyond Tanzania. Therefore, they requested that the congregation strengthen their own sources of income so as to be able to support their Sisters when they were in need of support.

**Discussion**

The Congregation of St Therese of the Child Jesus, Diocese of Iringa, currently has 446 members. Seventy communities of Sisters are working in four countries in the world, namely Tanzania, Italy, Haiti, and Liberia. The congregation will soon open other missions in Papua New Guinea and the Philippines. The congregation does not have centers that generate strong income for the congregation, as seen in Table 4. Indicators of the low income of the congregation can be seen in Table 4 and Figure 5. Table 4 shows a total of 37 centers held by the congregation, as was reported by Mother Teresina Kindole (interview, June 10, 2016), only three of which (the secondary school and the two hostels) generate income for the congregation. The congregation also generates income from her 158 employed Sisters. A majority of these employed Sisters (77.85%) have certificates and diploma levels of education where the compensation is low, as per the criteria of the Tanzanian government. However, in keeping with the intention of the founder that the Sisters be always “Striving for Glory of God”, the congregation is growing steadily and penetrating places whose people are in great need for the love of Christ. Sisters are working in difficult environments (e.g. Haiti) for the purpose of striving for the Glory of God. The congregation’s courage is also a response to Pope’s call for consecrated people “to make courageous and prophetic choices, not be afraid of getting their hands dirty and of walking the geographical and existential peripheries of mankind today” (Francis, 2016).

The congregation is not rich in a material sense, but the courage of intending to share the burden of society’s pain is their treasure, which they share with the Church and the world. The Sisters are to be congratulated for their courageous spirits. However, the congregation can continue to improve her services in order to remain strong and sustainable.

**Recommendations**

As reported by those who have worked beyond Tanzania, a number of Sisters encounter language problems. Therefore, the congregation should consider language preparation as an important part of preparation for the Sisters who are going to work outside of Tanzania.

From the findings, it was revealed that some of the Sisters who worked beyond Tanzania experienced hardship without work contracts with their respective dioceses. The researcher recommends that the leaders of the congregation should make certain that they secure contracts before sending the Sisters to a particular place to ensure that the Sisters are able to meet their basic needs. The contracts must make clear the responsibilities of the congregation and those of the diocese.

The congregation does not have strong sources of income (see Figure 8 and Table 4); this is due in part to the fact that a large number of Sisters are not employed, and even among those who are employed, most have only certificates or diplomas and are thus paid low wages. Another reason for the congregation’s limited income, as shown in Table 4, is that very few of its centers generate revenue to support other Sisters beyond Tanzania. Therefore, the congregation should find ways to support Sisters to attain higher levels of education (at the bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral levels), and also to start centers such as schools and hospitals that can serve people while at the same time being a means of supporting the congregation.
Conclusion

The congregation prepares her members to accomplish her mission, which is, as per the intention of the founder, “To Strive for the Glory of God”, through teaching, health care, catechisis, and social work. Few Sisters are well qualified in these fields, while a large number have low-level qualifications. Working beyond Tanzania requires Sisters to be well prepared to meet the qualifications needed in the respective countries. It is therefore necessary for the congregation to have a sufficient number of members who are well qualified, so that when some of them are needed for work outside of Tanzania, the congregation remains economically stable in their absence.

References


Introduction

The goodness of health and God’s desire for man to be healthy are without question. Women religious institutes have long been symbols of hope to millions of people in providing health care services. For example, some Catholic Sister institutions see care for the sick as a sacred ministry pursued in fidelity to the example and teachings of Jesus Christ. To them, it is dedicated to the relief of suffering within the constraints of the divine law. They also see it as a way to give primacy to man’s spiritual destiny as well as his temporal well-being. In fact, the Catholic Bishops of Uganda state that “Service to man’s spirit cannot be fully effective unless there is service to his psycho-physical unit as well” (UEC, 2002; UEC, 2003a). This is also expressed in the religious institutes’ charisms, as is the case with the motherhood for the Missionary Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church (MSMMC), which has its Motherhouse in Lira Diocese, in Uganda (Constitution of MSMMC, 2009). Religious members of this Congregation draw their motivation from their charism of Motherhood, imitating the Blessed Virgin Mary to take care of the sick just as any mother would do for her child.

Congregations of women religious play a significant role in healthcare in Uganda. They work in many health units of varying levels throughout the country and in various positions of service and responsibility. According to the 2003 report of the Health Commission of the Uganda Episcopal Conference (UEC), 107 (45.7%) of the 234 health units run by the Catholic church in Uganda have religious Sisters on the staff. Of these, 28 health units are even declared “owned” by religious congregations. Twenty-one congregations of women religious in Uganda have 340 members working in health units founded by the church. They work as nurses, doctors, administrators, community health nurses, and tutors in training schools. Others assume ancillary responsibilities, such as estate management, catering services, and all social service-related aspects of health institutions.

In large part, this presence of religious personnel in health units started with expatriate missionaries. In many places, the trend was that the Catholic priests would establish a parish and then invite religious Sisters, who would establish health services and schools. In Ghana, the Catholic Church started the provision of health care as far back as 1828. In Uganda, the first religious missionary health units were founded by Protestant missionaries in the late 1800s. Mengo Hospital, the first hospital
Transformative Partnerships

Transformative Partnership

with promotion of community participation, having close links with the poor, being flexible, and having committed staff (Banda et al., 2006). The comparative advantage of women religious institutes might be assessed in terms of efficiency, innovation, quality of services, ability to mobilise resources, contribution to the sustainability of the local health system, and coverage of grassroots communities (Bhushan, Keller, & Schwartz, 2002).

Religious Sisters are known to have ministered to their own congregants in their own homes upon their arrival in the New World. But the most visible and long-lasting contribution of Catholicism towards care for the sick was the development – primarily by religious orders, most often women religious – of institutions open to the public to care for the ill. The health service contributions of communities such as the Sisters of Providence, Sisters of the Holy Cross, Sisters of Mercy, and the various branches of the Vincentian charisma are well documented and represent at least one instance of this. Well before the popular notion of religious tolerance, women religious hospitals not only accepted patients of all religious backgrounds but also fostered a respect for the religious diversity of growing nations. An example is where the presence of religious pluralism, or even a Protestant-dominated attitude, did not undermine the Catholic motivation behind the ministry, nor stifle an evangelical spirit. Yet, the atmosphere was nearly always one of accommodation to the needs of the patient.

According to the Guttmacher Policy Review (2013), women religious institutions’ long involvement and experience in global health and development actually predates the presence of multilateral development institutions and foreign aid agencies in many developing countries. This history, their commitment to health care as part of their development work, and their broad reach within many low-income countries make women religious institutions well-positioned and, in some places, uniquely positioned to make significant contributions toward improving family planning access. Faith-affiliated organisations of women religious in the health sectors of different countries reach a significant portion of the population, especially in Africa. Women religious institutes provide an essential safety net for health services in certain rural, remote, crisis-ridden, or underserved areas where the government health system is weak or absent altogether, thereby at times representing the only source of care in that community.

Background to the Study

In Africa and especially Sub-Saharan Africa, there are many diseases, and this has affected the continent in terms of its economy. Poor health is one of Africa’s worst problems because it causes pain and suffering, reduces human energy, and makes millions of Africans fall behind in life. The consequence of all of these problems amongst others is the destruction of human capital. One of the biggest challenges today facing many developing countries is how to provide health services. In many low-income countries, women religious institutes deliver basic health services in particular areas or among certain populations. Their effectiveness in establishing sustainable primary health care systems has been linked

in Uganda, was founded in 1897 by CMS missionaries, soon followed by Nsambya Hospital in 1903, which was founded by the Irish missionary Sisters (Louis, 1964).

However, even after the departure of the missionaries, dioceses have continued to undertake the establishment of new health units, and bishops have often called upon a local religious congregation to work in the units, probably to establish or to maintain an obvious Catholic identity. After all, although not all congregations oblige them, congregations of Catholic women religious are the only denominational group in Uganda that wears an external identity of their religion on a permanent basis. Currently, the Sisters run quite a number of diocesan health units on behalf of the dioceses under loose agreement, which is the modus operandi of the Health Commission of the Uganda Episcopal Conference (UEC, 2003). The collaboration between the local church (dioceses) and religious congregations in the healing ministry in Uganda is deeply rooted in the tradition of the Universal Church and of the Catholic Church in Uganda.

In church tradition, missionary Sisters usually founded hospitals and other health facilities. Thus, the religious charism and the missions of the hospitals found common ground in the same fundamental mission: that the sick “may have life and have it to the full” (Jn 10:10). This is emphasised in the mission statement of all Catholic-founded health institutions in Uganda (UEC, 1999). The Sisters play a part, as well as other stakeholders. This study was therefore conducted on the transformative partnership contributions of women religious institutes in ensuring healthy communities in Uganda.
**Problem Statement**

On the global level, many women religious organisations have had a long tradition of involvement in international development, and in global health in particular. Women religious organisations consider health care to be central to their missions to support women, children and families, and integral to their efforts to promote global health. As trusted messengers with deep roots in communities, they can and do play important, sometimes essential roles in providing health services, raising awareness, and advocating for proper health care.

Overall access to sustained quality health care in Uganda is poor, with very few communities living within the reach of the most basic health services in the country at large. The financial and material resources for administering the health sector are insufficient and largely dependent on external financial assistance in the form of donations. Existing health infrastructure and equipment are poor, with many hospitals and health centers either dilapidated or only having the capacity and characteristics of lower-level facilities.

Catholic Sisters in Uganda often care directly for the sick not only in pastoral care but also as nurses and other caregivers. They frequently serve as institutional leaders and administrators. However, little is known about factors influencing women religious institutes in achieving success, the constraints they encounter, or their overall contributions to the health sector in Uganda. Thus, there is need for research investigating the transformative partnership contribution of women religious institutes in ensuring healthy communities in Uganda.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to examine what helps the women religious institutes to achieve the success registered in providing health care services, challenges they meet in running their hospitals in Uganda, and possible ways of improving on their effectiveness.

**Specific Objectives**

1. To examine factors influencing women religious institutes in achieving success in their health service provision in Uganda.

2. To find out what constraints are encountered by women religious institutes in health service provision in Uganda.

3. To find out possible ways of improving on the effectiveness of women religious institutes in health service provision in Uganda.

**Research Questions**

1. What factors influence women religious institutes in achieving success during their health service provision in Uganda?

2. What are the constraints encountered by women religious institutes during health service provision in Uganda?

3. What are the possible ways of improving on the effectiveness of women religious institutes during health service provision in Uganda?

**Justification of the Study**

Women religious organisations have demonstrated their long-standing commitment to local community needs; over time, they have developed vital relationships with residents that are built on trust, compassion, and dedication. As stewards of that trust, women religious organisations lower barriers to health services, communicate community priorities to national bodies, and serve as messengers to make health information relevant to the public by putting it into language that people understand and value.

Women religious organisations have a unique and broad reach in societies. These include primary, secondary, and tertiary hospitals; comprehensive health centers; schools for the education of health professionals; community health programs; outreach initiatives to vulnerable communities; and national networks that support health, development, and social services. From the largest cities to the smallest villages, women religious organisations maintain an established, long-term presence that is interconnected and comprehensive. Members of religious organisations contribute tens of thousands of volunteer hours in their local communities through efforts that address both local contexts as well as the varied needs of far-flung communities. By connecting national networks with grassroots programs, women religious organisations can respond quickly to pressing needs.
Transformative Partnerships

Significance of the Study

The study will provide information related to health service improvement in the health sector which will bring accessibility to health care in the entire community. Little or no research has been done on the transformative partnership contributions of women religious organisations in delivery of basic health services in Uganda. The study will create an opportunity to supplement the scant existing knowledge in the field of women religious organisations and health service delivery as a basis for further research which will lead to effective health service delivery in the entire health sector and the country at large. The study will provide the health sector in Uganda with some information that can be shared with donors and the government for better collaboration in the health sector, and will contribute to advancing effective service to the beneficiaries in Uganda and Africa at large.

Scope of the Study

The study concentrated on examining what helps the women religious to achieve the success registered in providing health care services and the challenges they meet in running their hospitals in Uganda. The study involved five institutes of women religious who are running hospitals in south and central Uganda. The study was conducted for a period of three months.

Literature Review

In this section, the researcher reviews literature regarding the transformative partnership contributions of women religious institutes in ensuring healthy communities. This review helped the researcher to answer the research questions.

Role of Women Religious Organisations in Ensuring Health Service Delivery

Recognising the special influence, experience, and grassroots and national networks that organisations of women religious have in Africa, U.S. foreign aid agencies have actively sought partnerships with them. For example, women religious institutes play a prominent role in the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), both as advocates in shaping and supporting the policy and as grantees in providing services. Even before the advent of PEPFAR, though, faith-based organisations had been partnering with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to implement its family planning and reproductive health program overseas. In these programs, faith-based, government and secular partners have found common ground on family planning that is often not acknowledged in the public debate (Guttmacher Policy Review, 2013). The policy further asserts that sometimes, women religious organisations are directly leading advocacy, communication and education efforts, as well as direct services and provision of supplies, to ensure better access to family planning in communities that are of different faiths or backgrounds than themselves. Although women religious organisations are key messengers in reaching out to conservative religious and cultural communities, secular

![Conceptual framework.](image-url)
non-governmental organisations (NGOs) also frequently and successfully partner with women Religious Institutes. For instance, Marie Stopes International (MSI), a London-based NGO, collaborates with women faith-based communities in Mali, Sierra Leone, Yemen, Uganda and other countries to extend family planning services to previously unreached audiences.

Stephen, Aaron and Ghazal (2009) assert that throughout the developing world, religious communities are in the vanguard of promoting actions to ensure that children survive and thrive to adulthood. In clinics and schools, meeting places, youth groups, clubs, and of course temples, churches, mosques, and synagogues, religious communities provide health care for poor families, schooling for vulnerable children, love and support to children and young people affected by AIDS, and skills programs for adolescents. Many of these interventions take place in close collaboration with civil society, governments, and UN agencies such as UNICEF. Here are a few examples reflecting the diversity of interventions and religious actors: during the civil war in El Salvador, the Catholic Church negotiated a cease fire to allow children on both sides of the conflict to be immunised. Similar efforts have been replicated in other conflict-affected countries, such as Sri Lanka and Sudan. In Afghanistan, development and humanitarian agencies work closely with religious leaders to promote key programs, including girls’ education and child health. Imams regularly promote girls’ school enrollment, national immunization days, and other health campaigns through Friday worship across Afghanistan. In areas with limited school and medical facilities, mosques are used as classrooms and immunisation centers.

In the Ugandan context, the Uganda Catholic Medical Bureau (UCMB), the technical arm of the Health Commission, defines stakeholders of diocesan hospitals as the owners, boards of governors, the management teams which may contain managing organisations, the founders, the government, the staff (including the Sisters) and patients (UEC, 2003a; UEC, 2003b).

According to the *Health Policy and Development Journal* (2005), the religious congregations and individual Sisters have largely been involved in provision of health care services often in accordance with the qualifications they hold. Once appointed, they work side by side with the lay personnel they find in the health units. The provision of qualified Sisters to hospitals by the religious congregations is therefore similar to government appointment of qualified personnel. If the Sisters are in hospitals just for the mere provision of medical services, then their roles are the same as everybody else. Some Sisters work in the health units as individuals and others as representatives of their congregations. However, the full range of roles played by the Sisters in the hospitals is not known, or it is not always clear to every stakeholder. Therefore, we conducted this study to find out what they actually do and what the stakeholders think they do.

In the past, religious Sisters were mainly nurses, and maybe it is from this that the nursing profession got the title ‘nursing sister’. With the emerging challenges to health care service and a more liberal approach to the religious vocation, the Sisters have progressively expanded their competencies into other fields within healthcare, and currently occupy different positions in health establishments (Sr Dr Justina N. L. L.G.).

With progressively better qualifications, the Sisters are involved and work in different departments within the hospitals, as medical superintendents, financial controllers, administrators, doctors, matrons, nurses, tutors, cateresses, providers of pastoral care, chairpersons of boards of directors and many others as the need arises (Providence Health Care Society, 2003). Due to this, and due to their practices, various perceptions have been conceived about their role in health units, especially in the hospitals.

It has been noted in several forums that the health sector of the Catholic Church faces many major challenges. These include inadequate attraction, recruitment and retention of professional and skilled staff and the lack of a functional organogram in the health units that considers congregational/religious structures (GIMPA, 2003). Lack of a functional organogram leads to lack of clear communication lines, defined roles and responsibility of staff. Since the Sisters work in Catholic hospitals just like other staff, this situation may affect them too. Other challenges that have been identified include the lack of Catholic values such as compassion, discipline, commitment and devotion, presence of unskilled personnel in managerial positions leading to increased workload on other staff, and unusually high expectations by the clients (GIMPA, 2003).

The work that the Sisters do is often the same as what other staff members do. One may wonder therefore whether there is anything exceptional about the Sisters or whether they are just like any other employees of the hospitals,
and whether their presence is a liability or an asset to the hospitals. It is necessary to find out if the Sisters have any roles in the hospitals at all, and what the stakeholders think about them. If the Sisters have any special role in the hospitals, this role had not been documented though the Sisters were serving and some were even in positions of responsibility. With undefined roles, there may be a tendency of assuming the roles of other staff members.

Catholic Church Involvement in Health

The Catholic Church considers service to the sick as an integral part of its mission and assumes it as an expression of its ministry. The church has always seen medicine as an important support of its own mission. In fact, the Catholic bishops of Uganda state that “Service to man’s spirit cannot be fully effective unless there is service to his psycho-physical unit as well” (UEC, 2002; UEC, 2003a). Efforts of the church since Vatican II have evolved around promoting the integral welfare of a human being: body and soul, heart and mind, conscience and will (AMECEA, 1989). However, these have only been to reaffirm what was taking place long before the Council. For a long time, the missionary health workers had already put a lot of emphasis on curative services, maternal and child health care, and much effort on building hospitals, maternities, dispensaries and aid posts (AMECEA, 1989).

Involvement of Sisters in Health Care

Anthony Joseph Cardinal Bevilacqua, the former Archbishop of Philadelphia, reaffirmed the role played by religious Sisters in health care, saying, “The Catholic health care apostolate throughout the world has been shaped and advanced largely by Religious congregations and Sisters. These dedicated Religious, inspired by the charism of their founders, developed ministries of healing and service for the vulnerable, sick, orphaned, widowed and poor in society. Their legacy continues to be a living expression of God’s love and mercy in our world carried on from generation to generation in the Religious vocation” (Bevilacqua, 2000).

Constraints Encountered by Women Religious Organisations in Ensuring Health Service Delivery

A religious establishment running modern health care services is faced with a number of challenges. These are ethical, economic, and social. Ethical challenges include end-of-life decisions like euthanasia and termination of pregnancy, family planning, equitable provision of care and others. Economic challenges include the introduction of user fees and sustainability of the services, while social challenges include gender balance at work. Modern health care also presents the challenge of integrating the principles of business management with the work of the gospel. “Recent trends in health care have given rise to particular concerns for the future of faith-based care givers. This great work of the church is at risk in the face of the current ethical, economic and social challenges facing Catholic health care” (Bevilacqua, 2000). Thus, the Sisters have a duty to their religious profession and beliefs as well as to their ordinary hospital work.

Hospital stakeholders and determinants of success. In general, hospital stakeholders include patients, staff, donors or shareholders, volunteers, the board of directors and the outside stakeholders, i.e., politicians and the media (Kay, 2003). For Ugandan Catholic-founded hospitals, the UCMB defines their stakeholders as the owners, the governance (BOG), and the management team, which may contain a managing organisation (UCMB, 2003a; UCMB, 2003b). The other stakeholders include the founders, donors, government, the managing organisation, staff and patients (for Ugandan Catholic-founded hospitals, to qualify as a managing organisation, the occupants of these four key positions in the hospital must be members of the congregation: the Medical Director, the Administrative Director, the Financial Director and the Principal Nursing Officer). The success of the hospital depends on the roles played by each of its stakeholders.

Apart from the involvement of the stakeholders, the success of a hospital typically requires a number of other factors. Its mission needs to be well communicated, believed in, and consistent through all its communication vehicles, including general and targeted advertisements, public relations, all printed and electronic information, the signs over the entrance, the look of the lobby and even the way receptionists answer the hospital telephone.
and staff receive patients (Kay, 2003). All these should reflect the hospitals’ mission built on solid foundation and promoted by all its stakeholders.

Funna (2013) further suggests that the major challenges facing women religious organisations at the moment include creating an environment for cooperation. Governments have not moved fully to create a positive environment for cooperation with such nonprofit making agencies. Women religious organisations ought to contribute to creating a new environment. Those agencies which have long believed that the problem is the problem need to understand that sustainable development to reduce health problems will require cooperation. These women religious agencies should avoid being perceived as adversaries and competitors of the government.

Women religious health organisations have encountered a number of common problems with government support. These include delays or even non-payment of grants and reimbursements, which is increasingly a problem as economic conditions decline in a number of countries; low and inflexible reimbursement rates; the lack of flexibility in the use of earmarked funds; and unacceptable conditions tied to the granting of funds. For instance, in Zimbabwe, the government prescribes fees in church-run hospitals that the missions consider too high (Olivier & Wodon, 2013).

Strategies to Enhance Effectiveness of Women Religious Organisations in Ensuring Health

A number of recommendations to maximise the particular capacities of women religious organisations are drawn in a coordinated, sustained approach to enhance their effectiveness in health service care.

Developing the capacity for women religious organisations to advocate for improved healthcare for all citizens and hold governments accountable. Women religious organisations should draw on the moral power of their religious traditions to ensure that governments build and sustain adequate health facilities, distribute resources equitably for all citizens, and develop sound, long-term strategies for improving health systems both in the faith-based and government sectors. Developing the capacity to communicate in ways that are relevant and meaningful to religious communities, donors, and governments would help. With these women religious organisations should be equipped to understand the language, perspectives, and priorities of funders and other partners so that they can make a stronger case for funding. This should include building a stronger evidence base on the contributions of women religious organisations to service delivery. Additionally, women faith-based organisations should work to ensure that health awareness messages are integrated into religious life and practice by, for example, referencing HIV in corporate liturgies, prayers, and sermons. This will encourage local religious communities to see health care provision and care not as the specialised work of health or social service professionals, but as the shared responsibility of people of faith gathered together (U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, 2012).

Strengthening communities’ input and investment into women faith-based organisations’ administration and programming. The work of women religious organisations can be sustained and strengthened when it aligns with community priorities. Such alignment can be encouraged by soliciting community involvement in program administration through community advisory boards. Additionally, faith-based health systems should build or foster strong community ties in order to put referral mechanisms into place. These mechanisms should lower barriers to accessing service for people coming from the community into the health system and for people going back into the community from the health system.

Developing and disseminating mechanisms to support the organisational development of women religious organisations. Women religious organisations would benefit strongly from greater participation in organisational and technical support services provided by funders and other partners. This is particularly true in the areas of human resources, supply chain management, financial accountability and development, and training.

Increasing women religious organisations’ capacities to develop and implement effective programs or to strengthen existing programs. Capacity-building should not focus only on organisational capacity. Rather, women religious organisations should be part of mechanisms to improve the quality and scope of their programs. These mechanisms should include: providing skills-building and training; disseminating best practices with support to replicate them; prioritising evidence-based, sustainable initiatives; and developing and supporting more robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that tie indicators to service improvement.
Expanding women religious networks by bringing in new or previously unaffiliated faith-based organisations (FBOs) and engaging other religious traditions. Grassroots women religious organisations are sites for innovation. However, opportunities for replicating this innovation are often limited because these women FBOs remain isolated and unconnected. In addition, a number of interfaith health initiatives across East Africa are limited to Muslims and Christians. By expanding interfaith initiatives to include other traditions, women religious organisations can work together to reach a greater number of people in their respective countries. By mapping local communities, unknown women religious organisations doing good work can be identified and connected into networks to allow for mutual support and learning among member faith-based organisations.

Offering leadership development initiatives to better equip the next generation of leaders. Leadership development is as important as organisational development. Therefore, it is critical to provide platforms for current women religious organisation leaders to share their knowledge, expertise, and wisdom and to create mechanisms at both individual and organisational levels for mentoring. At the individual level, mentoring would allow emerging leaders to work with well-respected and highly effective senior leaders for an extended period of time. At the organisational level, mentoring would pair established, successful women religious organisations with new and/or promising women FBOs in order for staff to share best practices (Wallerstein, 2006).

Conclusion

Women religious-based health systems provide a significant proportion of the health services in East Africa. Those systems have a capacity to reach both urban and rural communities that can surpass that of other health systems. The importance of women religious organisations in the delivery of services is gaining increasing recognition not only to complement government programs, but also to provide people with a choice of service outlets and to create an effective voice in respect to service needs and expectations. Researchers further noted that the Religious Charism and the missions of the hospitals found common ground in the same fundamental mission: that the sick “may have life and have it to the full” (Jn 10:10).

This is emphasised in the mission statement of all Catholic-founded health institutions in Uganda (UEC, 1999). The Sisters play a part as well as other stakeholders. What’s more, religious women, dedicated and inspired by the charisms of their founders, have developed ministries of healing and service for the vulnerable, sick, orphaned, widowed, and poor in society. Their legacy continues to be a living expression of God’s love and mercy in our world carried on from generation to generation in the religious vocation (Bevilacqua, 2000). Although many researchers have emphasised the faith-based organisation’s contribution to service delivery, little consideration is given to health service by women religious organisations. This study therefore looks at the transformative partnership contribution of women religious institutes in ensuring healthy communities in Uganda.

Study Methodology

Research Design

The researcher adopted a descriptive survey design. Cross-sectional design has been used to collect opinion from different respondents at once. The study was descriptive to allow the researcher to discover patterns in the respondents’ thinking and also to describe issues from their own point of view. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were adopted. A quantitative approach has been used to analyse primary data from the field using descriptive statistics, while a qualitative approach has been used to describe occurrences and discussion in relationship to interview results and observations.

Sample Population and Size

The study involved five religious institutes of women religious who are running hospitals in South and Central Uganda. The researcher conducted interviews and surveys and met focus groups to collect data. Five Superiors General of the selected congregations, chief executive officers of these hospitals, medical workers from each hospital, and members of the community served by these hospitals were interviewed. Given the study population outlined above, a study sample size of 36 respondents was used for this study. This has been established using the Krejcie Morgan (1970) formula for sample size determination.
This is illustrated thus:

\[ P = \frac{F}{N} \times n. \]

Where;

\( F \) = Number in the category

\( N \) = Total population.

\( P \) = Number of respondents in the category obtained

\( n \) = Total number of the respondents

**Sampling Techniques**

The researcher used purposive sampling to select the samples from the population. The purposive sampling technique offered logic and power in selecting information-rich cases for an in-depth study. The above group was expected to have reliable knowledge that should influence a rational study based on results and valid content. Simple random sampling was also used to limit the level of bias of the purposive sampling, especially for the user.

**Sources of Data**

Both primary and secondary data was used in collecting study data. Primary data was gathered from the selected study respondents (superior generals of the selected congregations, chief executive officers of the hospitals, medical workers and community members) who are assumed to give firsthand information on the subject under study. Secondary data was obtained from sources like journals and articles related to the subject of the study, and these were consulted at length to extract the information required to support the findings from the study respondents.

**Data Collection Methods and Instruments**

**The Questionnaire.** The questionnaire served as a major data collection instrument for this study. In this study, self-administered questionnaires (open- and closed-ended) were formed and distributed to all selected study respondents. The study was divided into four sections: the general respondents’ characteristics category, and the other three categories which were guided by the set study objectives. Questions were guided by a Likert scale, and respondents were required to give their own rating on described statements depicting their level of either agreement or disagreement on stated aspects. The Likert scale ranged from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’ (SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, UD = Undecided, DA = Disagree, SA = Strongly Disagree).

**The Interview.** Interview is the direct method of obtaining information in a face-to-face situation. The flexibility of the approach which is inherent in the interview technique is particularly valuable when information is sought from both the literate and non-literate. Interviews, specifically semi-structured interviews, have been chosen because of their flexibility to explore themes that dig deeper to answer the research question. This method allowed new ideas to be brought up and explored during the interviews. The choice to conduct interviews has been based on practical reasons such as respondents’ availability.

The respondents were interviewed on what helps the women religious institutes to achieve the success registered in providing health care services and challenges they meet in running their hospitals in Uganda. The interviews were structured, meaning that there was a list of pre-determined questions to be asked to the respondents. In both face to face and oral interviews, the questions were the same and were asked in a manner that ensured the least bias in the response.

The researcher conducted individual interviews of approximately 60 minutes with each of the targeted respondents. In total, 20 interviews were conducted. Each interview was semi-structured, starting with an initial question. The following steps were used in all the interviews:

- An appointment was made in advance with the targeted respondents. The broad purpose of the interview was explained at the time of the appointment.
- At the start of the interview, aspects of confidentiality, ethical principles of research, and the role of both parties was explained. Permission to electronically record the interview was obtained.
- The background and purpose of the research study was explained.
Valid and Reliability of Research Instruments

**Validity.** Validity refers to the quality that a procedure or an instrument used in research is accurate, correct, true, meaningful and right. Leedy and Ormrod (2013) define validity as the extent to which a method of data collection represents what it is supposed to do, or the extent to which a method of data collection measures what it is supposed to measure and measures it correctly.

To ensure the validity of the research, data collection instruments were discussed. The tools were designed so that each question and scale would have a relationship with the objectives and research questions and cover a full range of issues to be measured, and to ensure relevance.

**Reliability.** Reliability refers to how consistent a research procedure is in obtaining information. Hence reliability implies stability or dependability of an instrument or a procedure used to obtain information. Reliability, therefore, means that whatever is done should be done consistently. To ensure the reliability of research, the researcher selected key respondents with a heterogeneous population of participants drawn from a cross-section of stakeholders.

Participants were found in their normal environment so as to capture information about the topic under study in its natural setting. Furthermore, the data collection instruments were constructed using simple language and clear instructions appropriate for the respondents. The researcher, with the help of research assistants, administered the questionnaires to the participants. The researcher checked the questionnaires and ensured that all study participants’ questions were answered, and that participants were assured of their preserved anonymity so as to motivate them to give reliable information.

The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient test was employed in this study to measure internal consistency of the instruments.

Data Analysis

After collecting all the necessary data, the data was coded and edited, analysed and rephrased to eliminate errors and ensure consistency. This involved categorising, discussing, classifying and summarising the responses to each question in coding frames, based on the various responses. This was intended to ease the tabulation work. It also helped to remove unwanted responses which were considered insignificant. Data collected from the field with the use of study instruments was classified into meaningful categories. This enabled the researcher to bring out essential patterns from the data that would organise the presentation. Data was then entered into a computer and analysed with the use of SPSS. Finally, a research report was derived from the findings along with discussions, conclusions, and recommendations.

Ethical Issues

The researcher assured the respondents of confidentiality. The information that was given to the researcher is to be used solely for the purposes of research. The researcher avoided using any kind of enticement for the purpose of obtaining information. Throughout the period of the study, ethical issues were taken into consideration to ensure reliability and accuracy of data. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly observed during description and reporting of findings. From the beginning of the research, the researcher ensured that the respondents’ privacy was respected.

Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of Findings

This section presents the analysis and discusses the findings of the study titled “Transformative Partnership: Contributions of Women Religious in Ensuring Healthy Communities in Uganda”. In the presentation, pie charts, tables, frequencies and percentages were used to explain the findings. The presentation, analysis and discussion of the findings were arranged according to the objectives of the study that included: 1) to examine factors influencing women religious institutes in achieving success during their health service provision in Uganda, 2) to establish constraints encountered by women religious institutes during health service provision in Uganda, and 3) to find out possible ways of improving on the effectiveness of women religious institutes during health service provision in Uganda. The researcher administered 36 questionnaires, of which 31 were returned fully completed by the respondents in their respective categories; on these the findings are based.
Response Rate

Table 1

Response Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Received</th>
<th>Non response</th>
<th>Expected response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample size</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>86.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The expected respondents were 100% (36), but only 86.1% (31) responded to the questionnaires. Five questionnaires (13.9%) were not returned, which was as a result of many factors, time being among them.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The background information of respondents was considered necessary because the ability of the respondents to give satisfactory information on the study variables greatly depended on their background. The background information of respondents solicited data on the samples and this has been presented below categorised into gender, level of education, position at work, and period spent working with the organisation.

Table 2

Gender of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>71.0</td>
<td>71.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: primary data

Table 2 shows the gender of the respondents. According to the findings, 29% of the respondents were male and 71% were female, indicating that there are more female employees than male employees in the religious institutes that are running hospitals in South and Central Uganda. This was necessary for the study to get a balanced discussion from the respondents.

Figure 2. Gender of the respondents. Source: primary data

Figure 2 shows the exact representation of the gender of the staff of religious institutes who are running hospitals in South and Central Uganda with percentages of 71% and 29% for females and males respectively. This is a clear indication that the study was gender sensitive.

Table 3

Education Level of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>71.0</td>
<td>71.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: primary data
Research findings in relation to education level revealed that majority of respondents who were also the employees of religious institutes who are running hospitals in South and Central Uganda held university qualifications, followed by tertiary holders. This was rated in order of 71% and 29% respectively. This implies that the respondents were qualified enough to respond and give an inference response to the questionnaires with ease.

Position of the Respondents

![Position of the Respondents](image)

Research findings in relation to the positions of the respondents at their places of work revealed that a majority of respondents who were also the employees of religious institutes who are running hospitals in South and Central Uganda were medical workers, followed by chief executive officers, and then community members who included accountants, administrators, account assistants, and superior generals. This was rated in order of 45.2%, 38.7%, and 16.1%, respectively. This implies that the respondents were qualified enough to respond and give an inference response to the questionnaires with ease.

As shown in Table 4, a majority of the respondents (45.2%) had spent a period of more than 7 years working with the organisation; this was followed by 29% who had spent 5-7 years, then those who had spent 3-5 years (16.1%), and finally 1-3 years (9.7%). This indicates that the respondents had enough experience with the institution, since in total the majority had been part of religious institutes in South and Central Uganda for quite a long period of time.

**Table 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period Spent Working with the Organisation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid 1 – 3 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – 5 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 7 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>54.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 7 years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: primary data

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis status was generated quantitatively and the information was exported to Microsoft Word as illustrated in the tables below. Mean standard deviation and variance was used in the tables as illustrated. The analysis was in accordance with the objectives of the study. The percentages of over 50 indicated in either case the awareness or unawareness level of the variable under study.
Findings on the factors influencing the organisation in achieving success during their health service provision in Uganda. The study sought to examine the factors influencing the organisation in achieving success during their health service provision in Uganda. A Likert scale of responses ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” was established. Study findings on the above are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors Influencing the Organisation in Achieving Success During their Health Service Provision in Uganda</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coordination with local government offices</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>1.093</td>
<td>1.196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to finances / funding</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>1.253</td>
<td>1.570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proper coordination with similar women and Religious Institutes</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>1.293</td>
<td>1.673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proper planning and accountability</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.086</td>
<td>1.178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation has an effective fundraising function</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.340</td>
<td>1.796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation has availability of diverse sources of funding</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>.508</td>
<td>.258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is effective recruitment and retention strategies which have ensured good staffing in the organisation</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>.979</td>
<td>.959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: primary data

Research questions sought to establish the factors influencing the organisation in achieving success during their health service provision in Uganda. Data answering this research question was collected using a questionnaire for the staff of religious institutes who are running hospitals in South and Central Uganda. Findings revealed that a majority of respondents (as seen from mean values ranging between 1.52 to 2.68, and standard deviation values ranging between .508 to 1.340) were in agreement with the items of measurement, such as: coordination with local government offices, access to finances/funding, proper coordination with similar women and religious institutes, proper planning and accountability, the organisation has an effective fundraising function, the organisation has availability of diverse sources of funding, and there is effective recruitment and retention strategies which have ensured good staffing in the organisation.

These findings were in conformity to the findings of Olivier and Wodon (2013), who emphasized that some of the forces impacting organisational success are more challenging to master than others. The degree to which one can control them varies. At the same time, one can improve the state of internal and external factors influencing organisational success. Managers are required to use the resources (people, money, equipment, information) that have been delegated to them to produce results. Managers impact organisational performance by how well they “manage” their resources. They must be clear about delegation of budgets, equipment, and work that needs to be done.

Findings on the extent of the organisation’s organisational performance. The study further sought to establish findings on the extent of the organisation’s organisational performance. Study findings on the above are presented in Table 6.

Findings on the extent of the organisation’s organisational performance indicated that the majority of respondents (as seen from mean values ranging between 2.13 to 2.52, and standard deviation values ranging between .877 to 1.288) agreed with the items of measurement, such as: meeting organisational objectives, board and management effectiveness, staff retention, financial stability, beneficiaries reached, and reduction in death cases related to basic health cases. These findings were in conformity with the findings of Ssewamala and Ismayilova (2008), who stated that organisational performance is more than the end of the year appraisal. It
is about translating goals into results. Health institutional performance focuses not only on individual employees, but also on teams, programs, processes and the organisation as a whole. A well-developed performance program addresses individual and organisational performance matters necessary to properly create and sustain a healthy and effective results-oriented culture. Public agencies like health institutions have a greater challenge to define and measure results than private sector organisations, whose results are almost exclusively tied to financial goals. Public health institutions are also required to comply with complex regulations that govern their performance management programs.

Table 6

Extent of the Organisation’s Organisational Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting organisational objectives</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>1.157</td>
<td>1.340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board and management effectiveness</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>1.146</td>
<td>1.314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff retention</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>.845</td>
<td>.714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial stability</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.288</td>
<td>1.658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiaries reached</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>.991</td>
<td>.983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction in death cases related to basic health cases</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>.877</td>
<td>.770</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: primary data

Findings revealed that the majority of respondents (as seen from mean values ranging between 1.81 to 2.42, and standard deviation values ranging between 0.70 to 1.26) are about translating goals into results. Health institutional performance focuses not only on individual employees, but also on teams, programs, processes and the organisation as a whole. A well-developed performance program addresses individual and organisational performance matters necessary to properly create and sustain a healthy and effective results-oriented culture. Public agencies like health institutions have a greater challenge to define and measure results than private sector organisations, whose results are almost exclusively tied to financial goals. Public health institutions are also required to comply with complex regulations that govern their performance management programs.

Table 7

Findings on the Constraints Encountered by the Organisation During Health Service Provision in Uganda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate external financing</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>.870</td>
<td>.757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Staff innovativeness to improve programs</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>1.259</td>
<td>1.585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our organisation has a poorly developed rapport with the community, local government and the donors</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>.912</td>
<td>.832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our organisation uses technologies suitable to local culture</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>1.175</td>
<td>1.381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid Dependency Culture</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>.792</td>
<td>.628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequacy of the organisation board’s capacity in ensuring that our resources are used responsibly to meet our mission</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>.919</td>
<td>.845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our organisation cannot do well with internal support</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>.978</td>
<td>.957</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: primary data

Findings revealed that the majority of respondents (as seen from mean values ranging between 1.81 to 2.42, and standard deviation values ranging
Findings on the possible ways of improving the effectiveness of women religious institutes during health service provision in Uganda.

The study further sought to establish the findings on the possible ways of improving the effectiveness of women religious institutes during health service provision in Uganda. Study findings on the above are presented in Table 8.

Findings revealed that the majority of respondents (as seen from mean values ranging between 1.58 to 2.19, and standard deviation values ranging from 0.502 to 1.276) were in agreement with the items of measurement, such as: ensure self-sustainability practices for financial stability, ensure key stakeholder strategic planning through intense consultation and communication, capacity building of health personnel, maintenance and building of new health infrastructures, ensure proper accountability to donors, and improve on financial management policies.
These findings were in conformity with the findings of Banda et al. (2006), who stated that a possible strategy of improving the effectiveness of women religious institutes’ organisation during health service provision was to improve access and break down barriers to access to goods and services, thus making the attempt to obtain them less frustrating and more likely to be repeated. Strategies might include providing transportation to and from existing services or distribution points, locating new services closer to where they are needed, or lessening bureaucratic requirements. If the intervention involves action by participants, actions should be planned in small steps, so that people can easily experience success, at least at the beginning. A series of small successes is more likely to develop a sense of efficacy and keep people moving ahead than a grand failure.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is time to move beyond prejudices and positions of mistrust to create partnerships based on mutual trust and respect and with joint commitments to achieving universal access targets. There is a lot of common ground between how other organisations and women religious respond to health service delivery; for example, service delivery is often similar. With health provision, attitudes are changing, and there is a new openness among other actors to engage with women religious. Sharing goals and activities will help to build mutual trust. Thus, it makes sense to use a participatory approach to analyse and address social determinants of health and development issues. By including those who know the history and context of the issue, and by subjecting it to analysis from many minds and perspectives, one is more likely to arrive at a thorough understanding of it. This kind of analysis is especially effective when it is clear that simply putting a Band-Aid on the symptoms of the issue is not enough, and that one has to employ a long-term strategy in order to address it effectively. Such a strategy may incorporate advocacy for a change in law or policy and leadership training, as well as community-based actions.

**Recommendations**

In view of the above conclusions drawn from the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to hopefully contribute to the practices of health service provision. The following recommendations must be well noted.

The prevalence of inefficiency in the hospitals indicates the need for managerial interventions from the supervisory agencies that have oversight of these hospitals. Such managerial interventions could be focused on reduction of health input resources from inefficient hospitals and injection of the freed resources to health institutions that are currently making the most of the resources. The injected input savings, consequently, will help address the inequities in the health system and extend care to more segments of the population.

A range of options may be considered for input reduction and redeployment throughout the hospital system. For example, idle beds may be transferred to more efficient facilities or partnership could be fostered with private providers to use those beds at prices not below the marginal costs. This implies that ‘next neighbour’ private providers which have demand overflow due to inadequate beds capacity can prevent blocking or ‘premature’ discharges of old patients for new patients. This is because unoccupied beds in public health institutions could be hired to accommodate patients under private hospitals’ care. Put differently, private providers may transfer patients to beds in health institutions while such patients remain under the care of the private provider.

In addition, excess health attendants in some of the facilities may be redeployed to other facilities or to primary health care facilities. In this respect, however, a restructuring of the health system may be required in such a manner that affiliates a certain number of primary care facilities to a general hospital with a reasonable level of managerial control over the primary facilities residing in the hospitals where they are affiliated. Unutilised resources at the hospitals can then be easily transferred from a particular general hospital to lower-level health care facilities affiliated to such a general hospital. This will strengthen health care delivery at the primary level and the referral system in the nation’s health system, and resources at both care levels will be maximally utilised. This approach has the advantage of reducing absentee control of the primary facilities.
by bridging the managerial gap between primary facilities and the organ overseeing these facilities.

Doctors are relatively scarce in most developing countries of Africa. Therefore, it is profitable that full utilisation of doctors be provided for in order to raise the efficiency of the health care system. The research suggests the need to consider the concept of resource-sharing among hospitals that are in close geographical proximity. Telemedicine, which promotes the idea of doctors attending to patients who are geographically removed from them, may be explored.

The governmental organ responsible for managing these health institutions may take the path of provision of tangible evidences of quality, such as state-of-the-art equipment, in order to increase capacity utilisation. This option may not require additional inflow of financial resources to the system if inefficiency is eliminated or minimised; the extra resources saved can be invested in a range of operational areas such as better-quality patient care or new technology. The focus is to improve output of these health institutions.

**Area for Further Research**

An additional study area for future research is the factors affecting the performance of women religious in government hospitals in Uganda.

**References**


Abstract

Malawi, like most African countries, has many children who are vulnerable, under-privileged, neglected, or socially excluded due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic and inadequate knowledge, among other reasons. Case studies of three purposively selected women religious congregations and their beneficiaries were carried out to find out whether programs implemented by women religious organisations are transforming the lives of people in the communities. Data was collected through program document reviews, interviews with key program informants, and beneficiaries. Multiple data collection and analysis methods were adopted to develop and understand the cases. Data was analysed using thematic coding while also taking into consideration the physical and institutional setup of each program. Findings indicate that programs implemented by women religious organisations in Malawi are transforming the lives of many people. Transformation has been shown through acquisition of new knowledge, self-reliance, a strong spirit of voluntarism, and program sustainability. In addition, women religious congregations implement their programs with passion and love. The study has shown the importance of leadership in promoting individual and community transformation. It was demonstrated that people need to see value in order to support a program, and that transformation requires attitude change. In conclusion, women religious congregations need financial and material support to expand their programs to benefit more vulnerable and neglected children. It is important...
to recognise the remarkable work that women religious organisations are doing in Malawi.

**Keywords:** women religious, Malawi, vulnerable populations, child welfare, transformational leadership.

**Introduction**

Malawi, like most African countries, has children and adults who are vulnerable, under-privileged, neglected, or socially excluded (Milanzi, 2016). A number of circumstances, such as loss of caregivers, children with disabilities, and high rates of malnutrition in children due to inadequate knowledge on appropriate food preparation, all contribute to the marginalisation of these vulnerable groups.

Malawi has close to 30 women religious congregations whose mandates guide their operations (AWRIM Plan, 2004). Their principle goal is to reduce suffering and transform people’s lives. Christianity plays a distinct role in the social transformation of communities (Soko et al., 2012). However, contributions made by women religious congregations in transforming the lives of the vulnerable and the socially excluded are not recognised. Hence there is need to demonstrate the capabilities of congregations in bringing positive outcomes to the people they serve. This study will investigate how transformational leadership impacts these outcomes.

Despite varied definitions, there is a general agreement that transformation is a continuous process that aims to produce sustainable positive change in the lives of those affected (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Daszko & Sheinberg, 2005). It is believed that leaders transform people’s lives if their followers trust in them due to their honest behaviour. Bass (1985) outlines the four major elements of transformational leadership as idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration.

The findings of this study reveal that transformational leadership qualities are essential in influencing the follower of transformation process. Burns’ (1978) transformation leadership theory focuses mainly on the charism of a leader. Bass (1985), meanwhile, focuses mainly on transformational leaders as change agents who have an effect on follower beliefs, attitudes, and motivations.

This explanatory qualitative study was designed to explain how transformation leadership positively affects follower outcomes, and was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do the qualities of leaders influence followers in the transformation process?
2. How is intellectual stimulation through innovation and creative problem-solving assessed?
3. Is the inspirational motivation of beneficiaries expressed through increased levels of self-confidence and adoption of new affirmative values?
4. How is individual and community empowerment through skill improvement and growth affected as a whole?

**Methodology**

**Study Design**

This study adopted a qualitative explanatory method where data was collected through in-depth interviews and review of program records. Participants were selected from various nunneries with the aim of coming up with results from different involvements. Case studies were selected as a research method to “examine contemporary real-life situations” (Soy, 1997). Case studies encourage detailed data collection not normally and easily obtained by other research designs (PSUD43, 2012). The research objects in the case studies are leaders of the women religious congregations, their programs, and the beneficiaries.

**Study Location**

This study was conducted in three dioceses of Malawi, namely the dioceses of Karonga, Blantyre and Lilongwe. At Blantyre Diocese in the Southern Province, the study took place at Nguludi School for the Deaf, which operates under Servants of Blessed Virgin Mary. In the Central Province, Lilongwe Diocese, the study was carried out in the Nkhota-kota District under the Teresian Sisters. In the Northern Province of Karonga
Diocese, the study took place at the Lusubilo Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) program under the Rosarian Sisters.

**Sample Selection and Study Participants**

Because this was an explanatory study on transformational leadership, participants needed to be Sisters in leading positions and beneficiaries of the Sisters’ programs. This was purposively designed to allow the researcher to access the knowledge and experiences that are exclusive to these individuals.

**Data Collection and Management**

The author collected data from participants of the study through in-depth interviews using a guide. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, coded and categorised into themes using the inductive thematic analysis approach. Summaries of handwritten notes were made as a backup. Program documents were reviewed to strengthen findings on follower outcomes. Observation of some the programs implemented reinforced the information gathered from in-depth interviews and program documents. The questions asked helped guide the assessment of transformational leadership in the promotion of positive follower outcomes among beneficiaries.

**Data Analysis**

Data was analysed using the thematic content analysis approach (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2007). A list of common themes that helped to give expression to the common voices of participants were grouped under four major themes: leader qualities, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and empowerment. Direct quotes from participants strengthened some findings.

**Theoretical Perspective**

Bass (1985) identified the four main areas of transformation as idealised influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individualised consideration. Bass’ (1985) transformation theory assumes that leaders’ attributes like trust, confidence, respect, and ideals influence the reactions of followers, which conform to idealised influence. Burns (1978) believes that leaders’ qualities influence followers by altering their perceptions, expectations, or values.

Inspirational motivation basically looks at what motivates people to follow the leader. According to Bass (1985), people are motivated to participate when they see the importance of a vision or a credible realistic purpose for undertaking a particular task (Burns, 1978; Khondker & Schuerkens, 2014). People need to understand why and how the issue concerns them. Level of self-confidence and development affirmative values are of importance.

Leaders provide intellectual stimulation to followers through innovation and a creative problem-solving approach (Bass, 1985). Ideas are sought from individuals or groups which inspire them to actively participate in decision-making on issues of value. Active participation fosters acquisition of new skills and encourages both the development of self-confidence and a spirit of self-reliance. Individual transformation needs to have an impact on social and community transformation (Hille, 1996; Khondker & Schuerkens, 2014).

Individualised consideration highlights the importance of taking individual personal needs into consideration (Khondker & Schuerkens, 2014). Attitude change or acquisition of new knowledge may be required before individuals are effectively integrated into groups. This should promote development and empowerment.

**Findings**

Findings from three purposively selected case studies of women religious congregations and the beneficiaries of their programs are narrated below.

**Case Study of the Lusubilo OVC Program, Karonga Diocese, Northern Province**

**Lusubilo OVC program background.** The Lusubilo Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) initiative was pioneered by Sister Beatrice Chipeta of the Rosarian Sisters in Malawi. Sister Chipeta retired from
her teaching profession to respond to the growing number of homeless children who ended up in the streets or indulging in sex work in Karonga District. The program’s vision is “So that they have life and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

 Approximately 80% of street children are orphaned by AIDS, which became a problem in the late 1990s (Mandalazi et al., 2013). Due to neglect and a lack of food and shelter, most OVCs ended up in streets (Mandalazi et al., 2013). Street children are vulnerable to life risks such as violence, drugs, alcohol abuse, and sexual and psychological abuse, in addition to a lack of opportunity to go to school (Mandalazi et al., 2013; Masina, 2013). Reports from the Family Planning Association of Malawi (FPAM) confirm that homeless street children and child prostitution are on the increase in Malawi, partially due to effects of HIV and AIDS (Chizimba, 2011).

 **Findings from the Lusubilo OVC program.** After Sister Chipeta hatched the idea, she sought permission from the District Social Welfare Office to implement an OVC program. Sister Chipeta explained that the OVC program was initially implemented in two villages with no financial or material support. The OVC program has four main activities, namely capacity building, home visits, vocational training, and institutionalised OVCs.

 Capacity building of community members has been done through community awareness campaigns and through staff and volunteer trainings on the need to protect and care for OVCs. In order to appreciate and see the value of the proposed intervention, intense community awareness and sensitisation meetings were conducted before the initiation of the program. Those who saw the need and the importance of the program joined as volunteers.

 After counselling, according to Sister Chipeta, street children are taken back to their villages, where they are supported by relatives or willing community members. Children are ensured of shelter, food, care and protection. Communities are empowered and act as extended guardians to ensure OVCs are cared for with respect and dignity in the communities.

 Sister Chipeta stated that through home visits, community volunteers are able to identify OVCs and link them to care. To ensure that children are cared for with love, community members entrusted with the care of orphans are trained in child care. Through home visits, community volunteers are able to prevent child abuse and identify signs of abuse or lack of child care.

 Children lacking care in the community or whose relatives have not been traced are referred to an orphanage which is within the Rosarian Sisters’ convent premises in Karonga District.

 The Lusubilo OVC program believes that good education is key to ensuring that children are self-reliant. The program ensures that inadequate finances do not hinder children from attending school. Through the payment of school fees, the program financially supports approximately 1,000 children attending secondary and tertiary education. Through a cost-sharing agreement, the community pays 50% of these educational support costs while the OVC program pays the other 50%. This program has greatly changed the lives of most of its beneficiaries, as Maureen, a beneficiary, explained:

 I am so happy that I was one of the pioneers to benefit from Lusubilo OVC program after my parents passed away. The Sisters took me to the community since they had not established an orphanage. They paid all my tuition for secondary and tertiary education. I graduated with a Diploma in Business Administration at Skyway College. I now work for Lusubilo and I am independent. (Maureen, Lusubilo OVC beneficiary)

 Approximately 10 beneficiaries of the OVC education program have graduated from different local universities. Children who are not able to go back to school are given skills-based vocational training. Each child is given all skills provided by the OVC vocational training center including tailoring, hair dressing, and cooking, among other courses offered at the institution. The reason is to make beneficiaries multi-skilled so that they can choose which skill to use at any given time according to the needs of the community they are in. This is a very unique arrangement not found anywhere else in Malawi.

 Some of the beneficiaries from the OVC program are now successful businessmen and women. They are able to support themselves and their families. Some graduates of Lusubilo have taken care of fellow OVCs who were either their siblings or non-siblings to show their appreciation and to give back to the program. For example, Thandiwe Sesa is one beneficiary of OVC program who graduated with a Diploma in Nutrition and Livelihood in Food Security. She supports other needy children, as she elaborates below:

 I was staying with my uncle as my mother could not afford to support me. At the time I was doing a course in tailoring. I found myself at Lusubilo
Sister Chipeta affirmed that the community plays a crucial role in the implementation and success of the Lusubilo OVC program. Communities support the program by contributing their time, energy and expertise. The program is implemented by willing and motivated community members with support of the local leaders. Communities mobilise resources through implementation of community gardens and other fund-raising activities. District and developmental partners have given technical and material support to these communities. Despite support from partners, communities are always reminded to maintain their spirit of self-reliance to ensure program sustainability.

The program outcomes have shown that most lives have transformed as a result of the Lusubilo OVC program. Capacity building of the community has promoted a sense of program ownership and sustainability. Community members are motivated to care for, love, and protect OVCs in their communities. The majority of beneficiaries, like Maureen and Thandie, have shown that their lives have completely changed for the better.

Case Study of the Alinafe Kitchen Project, Nkhotakota District of Lilongwe Diocese, Central Province

Alinafe Kitchen Project background. Alinafe Kitchen Project was established by the Teresian Sisters as a Nutrition Rehabilitation Unit (NRU) in 1999, whose main aim was to reduce malnutrition among children under the age of five (The Project Committee, Teresian Sisters, 2014). At the time the NRU was established, the catchment area had malnutrition rate of 60% (UNESCO, 2003). Alinafe Kitchen Project was established to prevent the development of malnutrition. After the establishment of Alinafe Kitchen Project, women were trained to prepare nutritious food using locally available food resources to fight malnutrition. Alinafe has since grown into a Community Hospital serving a population of 30,000 from its catchment area and an additional 60,000 people from the neighbouring districts of Salima, Dowa, and Ntchisi (The Project Committee-Teresian Sisters, 2014).

As reported by Sister Chipeta, communities caring for OVCs have community gardens which were largely established to assist in ensuring that households are food secure throughout the year. The program stresses the importance of treating all children equally and fairly. Communities are encouraged to share and eat food in groups. Communities are also encouraged to say “our children” instead of just embracing their own biological children.

There is true love and care among children at the orphanage. There are close to 100 orphans at the orphanage at any given time. The children are well mannered and respect each other despite being many. Older children help and give advice to young ones. The children live as one big family and support each other like brothers and sisters. They are gentle and kind to each other.

Sister Rita Mbalule, the hospital administrator, stated that Alinafe operates through the charism of the Teresian Sisters, which is to liberate people from ignorance and ill health and to give people spiritual freedom. The charism was introduced by Bishop Maturino Guillime, the founder...
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respectively. We make juice from local fruits like paw-paws, mangoes, baobab and leafy vegetables like sweet-potato leaves. Our families drink these and we get nutrients like vitamin A and C. This program has taught us to use these fruits and vegetables wisely because they are all nutritious.

Women in the kitchen groups have been taught how to recognise and manage mild malnutrition in the community. Locally made peanut butter from groundnuts (known locally as chiponde) is used to feed children who show signs of mild malnutrition. This is evidenced by the statement of Chrissie Daniel, one of the community volunteers who is a beneficiary of the program:

We are taught how to make peanut butter from groundnuts. Apart from using peanut butter in our dishes, we feed peanut butter as a form of medicine to children when they show signs of mild malnutrition. This prevents our children from being hospitalised.

Sister Mbalule explained that kitchen groups have been given additional skills like sewing and knitting. The skills are for home use and also for income generation activities. This is one way of motivating community volunteers. On the day of the visit, some volunteers from the community kitchens were sewing clothes while some were knitting. Chrissie Daniel said:

Neither did I know how to use a sewing machine nor how to knit. I am able to make dresses, shorts and mend my children’s clothes. I made this dress I am wearing myself. I do not need to pay a tailor to do work for my family, I am saving money and I am happy with this arrangement.

The major program outcome is that the rate of malnutrition in the catchment area has reduced significantly. The hospital administrator, homecraft workers, and community volunteers agree that malnutrition has reduced greatly. This is manifested by the fact that very few children are being admitted to the NRU. They all stated that most of the children admitted at the NRU are not from the hospital’s catchment area. The NRU records show a steady decrease of malnutrition, as shown in Figure 1.

Findings from the Alinafe Kitchen Project. As a result of the many problems communities experienced due to malnutrition, authorities recognised the need to focus on the prevention of malnutrition rather than its treatment. Sister Patricia Chimphalika, a home craft worker, reported that the Alinafe community kitchen was established in 2008 to empower communities with knowledge and skills on food preparation and utilisation of locally available foods so that meals are nutritious and palatable. It is noted that most people have the necessary food items but do not have the appropriate knowledge and skills on food preparation and feeding practices for children. Hence children end up being malnourished.

Stella Nsamala, another home craft worker, stated that awareness campaigns were launched about the state of malnutrition in the communities. This was done to ensure that these communities appreciated the gravity of the problem. During the awareness campaigns interested members, especially women, were recruited and trained on child care, home management, the six food groups, and food preparation to ensure that children ate healthy and adequate foods to prevent malnutrition.

This account was echoed by community volunteers, who stated that their kitchen groups were taught to care for children and prepare different types of dishes from local food items. The community volunteers also demonstrated knowledge on food nutrients and how to mix different types of food items to get nutritious foods. Idesi Palawo, a community volunteer, explained some of the things she learned through the trainings:

We make milk from soya beans and groundnuts. Leftovers from groundnut and soya milk processing are used to make groundnut or soya sausages of the congregation, who used to buy slaves to liberate them from the slave traders.

Sister Mbalule testified that the high rate of malnutrition (60%) in the 1990s contributed to high child mortality in the catchment area. Since malnutrition takes a long time to treat, houses were built where children with severe malnutrition were admitted and managed. In the early days, the houses were always full, confirming the severity of the problem. This resulted in a number of effects, such as a lack of care for children left at home, increased poverty due to the loss of income for the family, and marriage breakups. While women were attending to malnourished children at the NRU, some men had extramarital relationships.
Chief Chindamba, who is male, is motivated and joined the community kitchen group which is mainly comprised of women. This shows how much the program is being valued in the community. Men who used to eat out at restaurants are now eating at home as women are preparing tasty foods. We are now keeping our men in the homes because of the delicious food we prepare. (Idesi Palawo, community volunteer)

Other initiatives such as fruit and vegetable growing projects have been introduced to support community kitchen groups. Although these are good initiatives, they are facing problems in some communities due to lack of water.

Through the trainings and mentoring by staff and authorities from Alinafe Community Hospital, community kitchen groups have written project proposals to request for things they need in the communities. Some projects have been initiated through the vision of community kitchen members. In partnership with Alinafe Community Hospital, an early child development (ECD) center has been constructed to promote education and care of young children.

To socially and economically improve the lives of their families and communities, the volunteers would like to have business skills, clean water, and animals they can rear for food and sell. The group members would also want to be linked to organisations that can assist them in having products they produce certified and in finding markets.

Case Study of the Montfort School for the Deaf (Nguludi), Blantyre Diocese, Southern Province

Montfort School for the Deaf background. Montfort School for the Deaf was established in 1968 by the Brothers of Mary Immaculate Conception (FIC). The Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary (SBVM) congregation was entrusted with providing care and support for children at the school. There are many deaf children in Malawi who are neglected and have no education. According to Sister Bertha Wasibu, taking care of children at Montfort School for the Deaf responds to the SBVM charism of serving the poor, the marginalised, and the disadvantaged.

Malawi`s education system promotes inclusive education where children with various physical challenges, like visual and hearing impairment, learn
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among children without physical challenges (Chimwaza, 2015). While this system is good, it has some major shortcomings in that most secondary and tertiary schools do not have teachers trained in special needs. As a result, most individuals with special needs do not have equal opportunities to excel in education.

Findings from the Montfort School for the Deaf. Sisters who are given the responsibility of caring for children with hearing problems are mostly those who are passionate and show keen interest in children. The Sisters are trained and empowered to handle the children with hearing impairments. Those who do not pass the examination after training are withdrawn. Sister Bertha Wasibu, one of mentors of children with hearing impairment, shares her experience as follows:

Initially when I was sent to Montfort School for the Deaf I was overwhelmed. I like children. I suppose that was the reason my mother superior felt I would do well at this school. I deliberately failed the exam with the hope that I will be withdrawn. To my surprise, the Brother-in-Charge of the School called me. He said, “I know you did this deliberately but I see potential in you. Are you sure you don’t want to care for these little children with special needs?” That was when something touched me. I said to myself, there is Christ in these children as well as the others. God will guide me and give the wisdom to love and care for them. I took the test again and passed.

In addition to the general roles the Sisters are supposed to perform, Sister Wasibu took the initiative to teach the children how to pray. Though the children were from different religious backgrounds, she taught them how to say the Lord’s Prayer. She taught the children how to cook, simple household chores, personal hygiene, issues of morality, and also to work hard in school so that they could be independent.

It is not only mentors who have had happy stories to tell. Some beneficiaries who have graduated from Montfort School for the Deaf explained how their lives have improved because of the formal and informal education they received at the institution. The graduates realised that there are very few people who have had a chance to obtain a qualification that assisted them to have knowledge for everyday use and also to get employment. Esther Mbewe had this to say:

I was born with the hearing impairment. A white lady who I call Mama Susan identified me from my village in Ntcheu. After completing my primary education I did a three year computer course at Ekwendeni. I taught computer lessons to children with hearing problems at Ekwendeni for two

months. In 1995, I transferred to Montfort School for the Deaf to work in the laboratory where ear pieces for hearing aids are manufactured. I was trained to manufacture hearing aids for two months by specialists from South Africa. There are three major roles I perform. These are examination of the ears, managing ear problems and manufacturing hearing aids. I assist many people through my work. This is satisfying to me.

Juliana Mwase is a beneficiary who developed hearing problems at the age of 9 but received support to the extent that she went to Malawi Polytechnic (a constituent college of the University of Malawi). She has served as the chairperson of Malawi National Association for the Deaf (MANAD) and is in the forefront in promoting use of sign language in Malawi.

Another beneficiary is Dorothy Chanukha, who said she developed hearing problems when she was five years old after falling in a dam. Dorothy was sent to Montfort School through Holy Family Hospital-Phalombe. She is a happy woman who now works in a maize mill. She manages to help her family with what she earns.

All the beneficiaries of Montfort School for the Deaf indicated that in addition to classroom education, they were taught personal hygiene alongside children without physical challenges (Chimwaza, 2015). While this system is good, it has some major shortcomings in that most secondary and tertiary schools do not have teachers trained in special needs. As a result, most individuals with special needs do not have equal opportunities to excel in education.

Discussion

The three case studies show that transformational leadership qualities have produced many follower outcomes similar to those found in the literature. These include the importance of leader qualities, development of
The determination of leaders resulted in success and permanent changes in the lives of individuals and communities (Bass, 1985). Sustainability and self-reliance are some of the outcome elements demonstrated by the programs despite lack of financial support for program operations. This is probably because people understand the value and importance of the program.

There are three important issues not found in the literature which are common in the three programs. First is the fact that programs implemented by women religious are influenced by the formation they have to the love of God. Relating gospel stories to the community problems helped to convince people to see Christ in others. Incredible love is seen through inclusion, relieving suffering, and dedication to work. Despite the financial problems most programs face, the spirit of volunteerism and perseverance is strong.

The second aspect identified is that programs in the case studies have effects in non-program areas. The communities outside the implementation area have made efforts to engage in the change process in their own communities. Response to the needs above depends on the availability of human, financial, and material resources.

Lastly, developmental partners like Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) financially support the Lusubilo OVC program and Alinafe community kitchens. While this is a good development, the program initiators caution that programs need not lose their original vision to suit the mandates of the NGOs. Program initiators encouraged programs to foster the spirit of self-reliance which promotes sustainability of programs.

In the end, the projects’ outcomes have impacted the country’s development positively by reducing sickness and mortality through addressing malnutrition. The lives of orphaned children have been improved through the Lusubilo OVC project, which started without any financial support but was sustained through commitment of community leaders and their people. Children with hearing impairments have been given a bright future.
Conclusion

Transformational leadership qualities greatly influence follower outcomes in the transformation process. The case studies revealed that innovative programs have been implemented. The overall findings indicate that all three programs have greatly contributed to transforming the lives of the majority of beneficiaries. Several elements have contributed to the success of the programs including charismatic leadership, relating development projects to faith, and engaging communities in projects.

Women religious in Malawi are implementing innovative programs and using a problem-solving approach to implement programs. Self-confidence has been crucial in transforming lives for the majority of beneficiaries. Program leader qualities have promoted self-development and empowerment.

The programs have shown a high level of volunteerism, volunteer retention, program ownership and program sustainability. In addition, the programs have contributed to transforming lives by reducing malnutrition, instilling family values, and preventing development of unruly children.

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ASSOCIATION OF RELIGIOUS IN UGANDA AND A RESPONSE TO FOOD SECURITY

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Abstract

The coming of Christian missionaries to Uganda during the nineteenth century not only marked the beginning of Christianity but was also the origin of developmental activities such as the practice of improved agriculture. Missionaries demonstrated models in farming so as to build up self-sustaining Christian communities. This idea is still being pursued through different initiatives such as the establishment of the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU). Since 2007, ARU positioned itself through the Congregational Agricultural Development Program as an organisation that intends to achieve food security among member congregations. This chapter therefore is about the ARU and its response to food security. An examination of the relevance of ARU in ensuring food security for member congregations is presented. The role of the ARU in ensuring food availability, food accessibility, and food utilisation for member congregations is specifically analysed. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from religious members within ARU using structured questionnaires and interviews as appropriate. Data were then analysed using SPSS or content analysis. Study findings indicated that many convents previously faced food insecurity but that the situation improved after interventions from ARU. Food availability and food access improved, while food utilisation and food stability were yet to be fully improved. Thus, on average, ARU interventions helped congregations move towards achievement of food security, though there was room for improvement. To achieve the desired end, therefore, it was recommended that ARU should ensure capacity building by training all member congregations; establish food banks to store surplus food; establish irrigation schemes; and seek more sources of funding, among other recommendations. The Association should move beyond improving incomes, entitlements, or livelihoods of convents and identify the root causes of food insecurity for a systematic mitigation measure.

Keywords: Association of Religious in Uganda, ARU, women religious, food security

Introduction

Christian missionaries crossed the borders into Uganda during the nineteenth century. It was during this time that Ugandans were converted to Christianity and also learned developmental activities such as the practice of improved agriculture. Construction of schools and hospitals by the missionaries also occurred during this time (Nyamoti, 2016). As part of this program of development, Christian missionaries demonstrated models in farming to help converts build up self-sustaining Christian communities (Parsons, 2016).

To preserve the intention of building self-sustaining Christian communities, different efforts have been put in place. A case in point has been the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU), which was founded in 1968 and approved by the Holy See in 1972. ARU envisions becoming “a prophetic body of religious men and women inspired by gospel values for the transformation of members and of society.” This is coupled with a mission of collaborating, supporting, and empowering each institute to live its unique charism within the mission of the Church today. To achieve the conceived mission and vision, in 2007 ARU pursued through the Congregational Agricultural Development Program (CADeP) a goal of ensuring food security for its member congregations.

Food security is a cosmopolitan challenge (Conceicao, et al., 2016) and calls for concerted efforts from governmental, nongovernmental, religious, supranational and international bodies. Currently, there are some public and private programs operating at national and local levels that are intended to ameliorate food insecurity and hunger (Huseynov & Boratynska, 2017). With the same aim, the Catholic Church in Uganda supports the available efforts to eliminate food insecurity. In line with these agents, ARU/CADeP intervened to minimize challenges from food insecurity.
As suggested by FAO (2011), there is enough food produced to feed everyone in the world. This, however, seems to contradict the findings reported by World Food Program (2009) that hunger, which is an indicator of food insecurity, kills more people every year than AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis combined. The same report also claims that hunger tops the list of the world’s ten greatest health risks, with one in seven people going to bed hungry each night. Clearly, then, there is a gap between production and food usage. This study examines such a gap in the Ugandan context.

The latest estimates indicate that about 795 million people in the world – just over one in nine – were undernourished in 2014–16 (FAO, 2015). This statistic may have changed for the worse since then. The above notwithstanding, Uganda, a country with favourable climate and two rainy seasons per year, deserves to be free of food insecurity. But this is not the case.

Some scholars such as Klein (2013) claim that usually, much of the food grown, processed, produced, and manufactured is never consumed due to factors such as a failure to harvest, post-harvest losses, and product disposal due to expiration, overproduction, or damage. Is such a claim valid in the Ugandan context, or are there some other factors that have led to the existing food security situation in Uganda? This study sought to analyse the food security situation in Uganda and diagnose ARU interventions.

Analytical Framework

There are different approaches to the analysis of food security. These different approaches draw attention to different components of food security and their foci together with contributions that are equally variable. This researcher, however, adopts the human development and capability approach to food security elaborated in 1989 by Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen to formulate the theoretical foundations of the study at hand. Drèze and Sen do not focus on food security though they developed a framework that has a general application.

According to Buchi & De Mulo (2016), competing theories to the human development and capability approach include the food availability approach, the basic needs approach, the income-based approach, the entitlement approach, and the sustainable livelihoods approach. No one of these approaches alone would suffice for this study. Each of the theories considers a pillar of food security in isolation, neglecting the other equally important pillars (Huseynov & Boratynska, 2017). The entitlement approach, for example, was not considered appropriate for this study because it is not a sufficient general approach to hunger issues. There is a need to move beyond food entitlements towards nutritional capabilities. The entitlements theory focuses on rights (entitlements); this is a concern with food commodities (and access to such food items), and is hence only instrumentally important. It is important, however, to go beyond such entitlements and focus on basic human capabilities (Drèze & Sen, 1989). Considering such inadequacies, a combination of the entitlement and capability theoretical approaches was adopted. This approach, in addition to the access dimension of food security (as indicated in the basic needs, entitlement, and sustainable livelihoods approaches), also includes the “utilisation” dimension. This is a fundamental concept for a holistic analysis of a food security situation.

The relationship between food intake and nutritional achievement can vary greatly depending not only on features such as age, sex, pregnancy, metabolic rates, climatic conditions, and activities, but also on access to complementary inputs (Buchi & De Mulo, 2016). This explains why access is not sufficient and utilisation is crucial, such that it is not about the amount of a particular food that is provided but also how it is accessed and used. This makes the capability approach to food security the best for analysing food security and its three dimensions, availability, access, and utilisation, as defined in the World Food Summit of 1996.

The sustainable livelihoods approach to food security only analyses the strategies put in place to make life achievable (livelihood strategies), as indicated in the submissions of Conceicao, et al. (2016). The capability approach, on the other hand, goes beyond the standard of living and personal well-being and includes other valuable goals (Conceicao, et al., 2016). It is through the capability approach that we also analyse stability through the lenses of food security. Stability in this case is not just food price stability but also stability in the food supply and the ability to access or even buy the desired items. Basing analysis on the capabilities approach, therefore, suggests that the absence of hunger is dependent upon expanding other capabilities – for example, being healthy and attaining high levels of education. The capabilities approach not only acknowledges the instrumental effects that expanding one set of capabilities may have on another, but also puts emphasis on their intrinsic value.
While appreciating this approach, the researcher doesn’t ignore its shortfalls. This approach ignores the “human security” concept, firstly proposed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in its Human Development Report of 1994. As food security, according to UNDP, is one of the seven areas of human security, introducing human security into the capability approach would allow us to advance from the “capability to avoid undernourishment”. To downplay such a flaw, this researcher considers the individual humans as an important component in the analysis of a food security situation.

From the preceding framework, the researcher examined the contributions of ARU to food security using the capability approach. The researcher was particularly interested in diagnosing how ARU contributed to food availability, improved food access, utilisation, and stability for her member congregations.

**Research Design**

Using a qualitative approach, data were collected from 65 religious members of ARU purposively selected from ten convents in Uganda. Respondents were knowledgeable about the topic under investigation since they were selected from congregations that are currently practicing agriculture. Quantitative data were collected by using structured questionnaires and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for Windows Version 18.0. Interviews were conducted, and relevant policy documents were reviewed to investigate the role of ARU in ensuring food security for member congregations. In particular, the study evaluated contributions by ARU towards food security, examined the extent to which ARU improved the food security situation, and assessed effectiveness of ARU intervention measures towards achievement of food security. During interviews, respondents provided background information and described significant roles of ARU in terms of ensuring food security. To cross-validate the results from interviews, emergent themes were followed up by qualitative self-administered questionnaires with members of the religious across all the convents that were visited. The data collected were analysed using narrative (content) analysis, in which summary statements with representative quotations were developed and used to examine identified themes.

**Findings and their Interpretation**

**Respondents’ Demographic Characteristics**

Convents were primarily composed of members in the 30-64 years age group (65.3%), followed by the 18-30 age group (22.3%), with the over 65 years age group being the least represented (12.4%), as presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age bracket</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-30</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-64</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and above</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the convents visited were mostly composed of members in the 30-64 age group, most members can engage in agriculture for food production. At the same time, all the respondents contacted had been in those convents for at least a year. Their responses, therefore, had a historical backing and were certainly reliable. All convents had lay people helping on farms. Thus, ARU not only impacts the lives of the religious but also those in the wider society; if convents are food secure, it is certain that the immediate community would be food secure in comparable terms. Seven respondents were interviewed; six of these were Superior Generals and one was ARU Secretary General. Interviewees were qualified to the bachelor’s degree level and beyond.

**Food Security Before ARU Intervention**

A majority of respondents (83%) had two crop growing and harvesting seasons per year before ARU intervention, though one of the two harvest...
seasons offered minimum yields. Some respondents (12%) reported harvesting once per year because they lacked money to buy agricultural inputs. Other reasons for single annual harvests included unreliable rainfall, wild animals and pests, and lack of interest. Figure 1 shows the distribution of respondents by number of harvests per year:

![Distribution of respondents by number of harvests made per year.](image)

Those who grew and harvested crops twice per year were more likely to be food secure compared to their counterparts who harvested only once. Crops grown included maize, beans, bananas, fruits, vegetables, and groundnuts for food. A small percentage grew coffee. Only one convent had never engaged in arable agriculture. The food crops harvested would be of minimum quantities and would be consumed with no surplus for sale. Whereas this caters to food availability, access, utilisation and stability aspects would not be considered; for example, there would be no money to buy the food items not grown by the convent in question. The table below shows food items grown by one of the convents visited.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Quantity Harvested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>10 Kilograms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>20 Kilograms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>80 Kilograms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>70 Kilograms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bananas</td>
<td>60 bunches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results in Table 2 show that maize had the highest yield, followed by beans. These are non-perishable food items, which is probably why their quantities are comparatively higher compared to vegetables and bananas. Food production used to be limited by the following factors: negative attitude towards agriculture, limited agricultural skills, climatic change, labour constraints, limited funds, lack of markets for agricultural products, excessive use of inorganic chemicals (especially in Eastern Uganda), traditional agricultural practices, and war (in Northern Uganda). Other limitations included drought, infestation by pests, lack of agricultural inputs, and soil exhaustion. Because of such limitations, 92% of respondents reported that some years were characterised by crop failures. This reduced food security such that coping strategies including selling livestock, soliciting for food items from well-wishers, reducing quantity of food eaten, soliciting for cash to buy food, and hoarding were necessary. This shows that even though the religious might face famine, they would always manage it. However, some convents were food secure while others were not.

Rearing of animals such as cattle, poultry, pigs, bees, sheep, and goats is an activity convents engaged in before ARU intervention. This was however for subsistence purposes. Table 3 shows the different types of livestock reared and the number of each type of animal owned by each convent:
Table 3

Type of Livestock Reared in Different Convents Before ARU Intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Livestock</th>
<th>Number of Livestock Type per Convent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goats</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows that the most common of the livestock types is cattle, while sheep is the least abundant. Certainly, respondents have not been exposed to the benefits of keeping sheep, or they are limited by interests.

The pre-ARU intervention period was characterised by many problems. Common problems included labour constraints, lack of agricultural inputs, limited finances, lack of credit facilities, and lack of grazing land. Less common problems, but still of importance, included price instability, transport problems, drought, theft, pests, and diseases. These problems reduced the food security of the religious by reducing food availability (famine) and encouraging malnutrition, poverty, in-convent conflicts and, in some cases, exploitation.

Food Security After ARU Intervention

To bring about food security, ARU initiated several interventions. These included trainings, the funding of farming projects, and the provision of credit facilities. Impacts of these interventions are assessed within this chapter. After ARU intervention, food production improved, yields became better than what they had been, and food losses due to poor storage were reduced. The number of respondents who grew and harvested crops twice a year increased from 83% (before ARU intervention) to 100% (after ARU intervention). This was attributed to the training services provided by ARU, the use of improved farm appliances, and credit facility. Respondents reported improved cooperation that made them more productive with ARU intervention. Respondents also reported being able to predict the weather, such that they could plant and harvest early to avoid losses brought by weather changes. As a result of this, quantities of harvested crops increased. Table 4 compares quantities of different crops harvested before and after ARU intervention for one convent.

Table 4

Quantities of Different Crops Harvested Before and After ARU Intervention for a Particular Convent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of crop</th>
<th>Quantity harvested before ARU intervention</th>
<th>Quantity harvested after ARU intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>150 kilograms</td>
<td>300 kilograms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>200 kilograms</td>
<td>250 kilograms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>1000 kilograms</td>
<td>2000 kilograms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>300 kilograms</td>
<td>1000 kilograms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bananas</td>
<td>800 bunches</td>
<td>2000 bunches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 4, quantities of almost all crops harvested at least doubled after ARU intervention; only the quantity of fruits remained almost constant. Thus, with ARU intervention, food availability (a component of food security) in all convents increased. With increased food availability, food security also increased as reported by respondents. Figure 2 shows distribution of respondents with regard to food availability after ARU intervention.
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Association of Religious in Uganda and a Response to Food Security

Minor problems identified included epidemics (such as foot and mouth diseases in cattle and banana wilt), drought, theft, lack of markets for the products, and transportation-related challenges. Such are areas onto which ARU could focus its efforts to bring about food security for member congregations. The identified problems reduced food production to an extent that 33% of the respondents reported that they have experienced famine, and over 41% reported that they have experienced poverty. Some respondents even reported sickness (16.7%) and malnutrition (8.3%) as problems resulting from limited food production. Therefore, if ARU is to stamp out food insecurity, addressing the above problems is fundamental.

Despite the above, ARU improved agricultural skills for its members, and increased food production among member congregations; convents have expanded the size of their gardens, food security in novitiate houses improved, land usage is better, and members know better food preservation methods. All of these are important in ensuring food security.

After ARU intervention, all convents are engaged in livestock rearing and some have engaged in apiary. This was attributed mainly to the training and credit facilities provided by ARU. What had previously limited livestock rearing included lack of money to buy the animals and necessary requirements as well as lack of technical skills in livestock management and animal diseases. After access to training opportunities and credit facilities was provided by ARU, members chose to buy livestock to expand or start farms. In a few instances, ARU through CAPeP directly provided livestock, while in other cases the animals were given as gifts from well-wishers. ARU trained members to the extent that over 90% of the respondents had been trained. Through these trainings, respondents gained skills in manure making, land usage, farm and livestock management, post-harvest practices, organic agriculture, value addition in agricultural products, and grant writing, among others. These acquired skills had an effect on food security directly (by increasing food production) and indirectly (by improving the financial status of the religious).

The above ARU interventions addressed aspects of food availability and access; what has not been tackled is food utilisation. The study revealed that some of the members are allergic to some foods, which prevents them from obtaining the nutrients associated with such foods. Others eat quantity rather than quality, an indication that members have not appreciated the importance of a balanced diet. To correct this, some

![Figure 2. Respondents’ distribution in relation to food availability after ARU intervention.](image)

As Figure 2 indicates, about 56% of the respondents had surplus food supply, over 33% had food that was just enough for their convent, and about 11% had inadequate food in their convent. From this we note that over 88% of the religious achieved food security after ARU intervention. This indicates that about 12% of the religious are not food secure. Therefore, while ARU has improved food availability, more effort is needed to make this remaining 12% food secure. Respondents who reported limited food supply attributed it to unreliable rainfall (which has been a problem in many parts of Uganda). Thus, ARU can intervene in managing climatic change, which will in turn bring about food security.

Food production, though satisfactory, has been limited greatly by a lack of farm implements, labour constraints, limited funds to support farms, and lack of credit facilities.

Food production, though satisfactory, has been limited greatly by a lack of farm implements, labour constraints, limited funds to support
members of convents should be trained as nutritionists, and sensitisation programs should be initiated to ensure that the religious are advised about their diet. Improving the financial statuses of convents, so that food items that are not grown in the convents can be bought, will also improve the food utilisation dimension. Most important, however, is to grow and eat all the food items that constitute a balanced diet. It is in such a spirit that respondents claimed that ARU has improved banana production for the convents in Eastern Uganda.

Whereas ARU interventions are appreciated, respondents showed that more needs to be done. For purposes of sustainability, ARU should seek an extension of funding or obtain alternative sources of funding; otherwise, areas that are still in infancy are likely to deteriorate if not supported further. In the same way, ARU should consider putting in place irrigation systems so as to combat challenges brought about by unreliable rainfall or drought. Convents having vast land need tractors so as to fully utilise the land for agriculture; the use of hand hoes or any other traditional means is unsustainable. Tractors can be hired to generate funds (to minimise poverty and food insecurity) and further help in tilling the land.

Implications, Conclusion and Reflections

This study investigated contributions of ARU towards food security in terms of food availability, food access, food utilisation, and stability. The conclusions presented here are in line with these four concepts of food security. Issues of climatic change, land use and management, and livestock management, among others, are supplementary. Study findings show that the human development and capability approaches, in the perspective of ARU, are applicable in evaluating interventions towards realising food security. This approach shows the importance of training in attempt to minimize food insecurity. Training equips or individuals with knowledge and skills required to produce food, and to prepare and use it in all possible ways to sustain the livelihood of either the individual in question or a household (or, in this case, a convent). Thus, from the propositions of the capability approach and the findings of this study, it can be argued that food insecurity is the result of a lack of education, health, or other basic capabilities that constitute people’s well-being, placing the study of food security within the broader conceptual framework of well-being and development.

Using the capability approach and the four pillars of food security, it can be concluded that it is not enough to have food available to attain food security; access, nutritional content, and sustainability are also important. In this study, therefore, it is argued that ARU should make an effort to harness all four aspects of food security.

Some convents have a lot of land while others have less. Those with vast land have not fully utilised it for food production and by extension the reduction of poverty. It should, however, be noted that what matters most is the productivity of land and the inputs that increase its productivity, not the size. If convents that have vast land can put it to use, all the better, but if this is not feasible, then working with smaller chunks is still appropriate. This calls for modern agricultural practices, including intensive agriculture. This will improve agricultural yields even in the face of land challenges.

ARU and Food Availability

Some of the convents had basic food supplies before the intervention of ARU, while others were simply managing situations. However, even those that had enough food were not entirely food secure, since they had irregular cash flow. It is, however, noted that food availability is affected by poverty. Thus, in the context of this study, the food available to convents was that harvested from their gardens, with no supplements being bought. It implies that in situations of crop failure, some convents’ food supply was minimised, bringing about food insecurity. In conclusion, then, before ARU intervention, convents expanded gardens and animal farm sizes, diversified in terms of crops grown, or even started new projects. Some convents showed capacity to expand even more with an argument that they be provided with tractors to help in fully utilising the available land. This shows that
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however, improved food availability and access; what remains a challenge
is whether the results of this intervention will be maintained. Members
have been equipped with knowledge and skills which can be used over
and over again. These can be put to use in sustaining the ARU intervention
measures to ensure food security in the future even after ARU has changed
focus. However, this remains a pillar upon which the researcher may not
make an absolute conclusion. Income-generating activities have not been
fully diversified, and only a few convents have considered growing cash
crops such as coffee. These areas need to be exploited fully.

On the whole, the study concludes that ARU interventions helped
congregations move towards achievement of food security. Members were
trained and skills attained, and convents have become food secure in terms
of food availability and accessibility. The pillar of food utilisation is yet to
be developed and needs more time for an exhaustive analysis. Similarly,
there are still more avenues that need further development to ensure total
food security for member congregations.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations were
made:

Capacity building through training was carried out with a few members
of the convents; it is recommended that training be extended to include all
members of these convents. Follow-up measures should also be put in place
so that those who are trained practice the acquired knowledge and skills.
This should be coupled with accountability: members should account for
time and other resources used during training sessions – otherwise, the
exercise will be a waste. Furthermore, if ARU achievements are to be
sustained, they should be backed by both formal and informal education
and training activities.

To ensure that member congregations are never threatened with food
insecurity, ARU should also consider establishment of food banks so
that in times of surplus, food can be deposited in the said banks to be
used in times of scarcity. This, however, calls for sensitisation, resource
mobilisation, and the involvement of all stakeholders before embarking
on the whole project. It is also worth noting that member congregations
need to implement or improve the practice of food storage in order to

even the interest in agricultural activities improved within the members
of ARU. These increased food supply besides providing potential
income sources. These are precursors to food security in terms of food
availability. Thus, with ARU intervention, food security with regard to
food availability improved.

ARU and Food Access

Food availability largely goes hand in hand with food access. Before
ARU intervention, there was limited access to food. This was due to post-
harvest losses resulting from poor storage. Convents were not united;
those who had a surplus of particular food items but a shortage of other
food items could not easily find buyers or those to exchange with. There
was also improper food preservation; collectively, these factors reduced
the amount that would be accessed by members. With ARU intervention,
however, members were trained in post-harvest practices to minimise food
losses. They also learned food preservation techniques, and cooperation
both within and between convents improved. This has improved the food
security situation of the members.

ARU and Food Utilisation

It is a challenge to discuss food utilisation without full achievement
of food availability. As noted earlier, in the pre-ARU period, members
had challenges relating to food availability and certainly utilisation was
a challenge. This situation has not been made better even with ARU
intervention. While food is now available, the usage is still wanting. One
member intimated that “the sisters eat quantity and not quality”, implying
that the importance of having a balanced nutrition has not been taken
seriously. It is likely that nutrient deficiency-related illnesses may soon
destabilise the convents (if they have not begun to do so already).

ARU and Food Stability

In the pre-ARU period, food supply stability was not a concern; what was
of interest was the supply of food to convent members. ARU intervention,
reinforce the already existing interventions to increase availability of food. This will require joint effort from ARU administration and the Superior Generals of congregations.

Drought and unreliable rainfall limit food production during certain periods of the year. It is recommended that members be trained in irrigation practices. Convents will thus need rain water harvesting equipment like tanks in areas where water sources are scant, or any other facilities required for a successful irrigation system. As already noted, the interventions by ARU are highly relevant; they brought remarkable changes in the lives of the members. It is therefore argued that more funding be sought to sustain the interventions. Diversification to complement the present set of interventions with new ones, so as to bring all the members concerned on board, is equally important. The pattern of looking at these interventions should be changed to bring in the concept of business into agriculture (agribusiness). As some respondents suggested, marketing strategies have to be advanced so that surplus food items are easily sold to cater for other necessities. Better still, a canteen near the ARU Secretariat to sell Sisters’ products can be considered.

Also, building on the ideas from the capability approach, the Association of Religious should move beyond improving the incomes, entitlements or livelihoods of the convents, and identify the root causes of food insecurity. This will provide sustainable solutions to the challenges related to food security.

Lastly, the interventions could be expanded to include even the immediate Christian communities so as to benefit the wider societies. This may require that the existing farms and gardens be expanded to include demonstration centers where people could be trained with a major focus on women and youth.

References


THE ROLE OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NGUGO COMMUNITY OF IMO STATE, NIGERIA

Anthony Amadi, CSSp, PhD
Veritas University, Nigeria

Abstract
This chapter explores the role that two women indigenous congregations played in the development of Ngugo, a rural town in Imo State, Nigeria. From the time the convent was opened in 1965 until today, only these two congregations have worked in Ngugo. The two women religious congregations involved are the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Daughters of Charity of the Most Precious Blood (DCPB). The study made use of qualitative research design where purposive sampling was utilised. Ten Sisters from the two congregations were interviewed as well as two townspeople. Questionnaires were administered to eight students taught by DCPB Sisters. In all, twenty participants took part in this research. The information gathered revealed that these two congregations of women religious have brought outstanding development to Ngugo, to the extent that whenever the history of the town is written, the names of these two congregations must be mentioned. The findings also showed that the people of Ngugo love and appreciate the work of these Sisters.

Keywords: Ngugo, development, congregations, women religious, role.

Introduction
Life is enriched when it is nourished by the gifts of God through the services of human beings. In the same way, society grows and develops when people work hard together with good intentions for a common goal and directed by common good. Development, therefore, is very central to human growth as well as to the expansion of any society. Both human and societal developments are collaborative ventures, and the religious are part of this collaboration. Based on these premises, I would like to begin this introduction with the commentary on religious in general by Hoffman and Cole:

For religious are called to show Christ to the world. Thus, all know us through our many works and writings, and a lesser number by our words spoken to them in public or in private. No one, of course, thinks that religious life is seen completely through the side turned toward the world, as if we were ministering angels sent on various missions instead of men and women that we really are. They may have been taught by us in schools or nursed by us in their illness. There is no end to the ways they can come in contact with us and understand that they are in the presence of someone who has chosen this special way to follow Christ. (Hoffman & Cole, 2011, pp. 13-14)

Though the quotation above speaks of ‘religious’ in general, it has captured in a nutshell what this chapter sets out to investigate – namely, the role of women religious in the development of the Ngugo community of Imo State, Nigeria. Situating this chapter in the context in which it belongs, Eschewa presents a comprehensive view of a woman religious in these elaborate lines:

A female religious is first and foremost a rational being: a woman who is sound in head, heart and body; a woman who is active and responsible. She is a woman who is alive, fertile and fruitful. Secondly, the female religious is a Christian who is called to the life of holiness like every other Christian by the observance of God’s commandments and precepts of the Church. (Eschewa, 1999, p. 13)

These two quotations explain the religious in general and the women religious in particular, as well as the role the religious should play in society – which is the focus of this research. This chapter, therefore, intends to explore the various ways in which women religious have developed and continue to develop the Ngugo community through their various apostolates. The chapter also sets out to investigate the extent of human development among the people of Ngugo and the amount of collaboration between them and the women religious. However, it must be stated that development is a gradual process; it is this gradual process in human development in particular that we intend to discover in this discussion. In order to achieve these objectives, qualitative research...
The Role of Women Religious in the Development of the Ngugo Community…

The Arrival of the First Women Religious Congregation

According to Mr Sam Ugochukwu, “The Ngugo town union in 1959 decided to bring in the Reverend Sisters for the development of Ngugo people. The people raised money to build a convent for these religious sisters. Though an Anglican, I supported the idea since it is for the good of the town” (Personal communication). In 1965, the first congregation of women religious, the Immaculate Heart Sisters, came to Ngugo. This congregation sent two Sisters: Rev Sr Paschal Onuoha and Rev. Sr Mary Paul. Before these two women religious came to Ngugo, the Holy Rosary Sisters at Emekuku Hospital – situated at a distance of about twenty kilometres – were visiting and supervising Ngugo maternity. This visit was not frequent because of poor roads and the lack of a means of transport. As soon as the Immaculate Heart Sisters came to Ngugo, the Holy Rosary Sisters stopped their visits from Emekuku.

Foundation of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and her Apostolate in Ngugo

In 1937, the congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was founded by Archbishop Charles Heerey, an Irish Spiritan working in Nigeria.
The Role of Women Religious in the Development of the Ngugo Community

In the words of Sr Genevive, who granted an interview to the researcher, “Ngugo people appreciated our work – we taught the children and treated the sick.” It was at the time of Sr Genevive’s leadership that trouble arose which brought about the closure of the convent.

The Closure of Ngugo Convent

When Ngugo as a town started waxing strong with the hope of building a full-fledged hospital, a dispute erupted. The town, in agreement with the Sisters, invited the military governor to visit the town in order to see the progress taking place in Ngugo. When the governor saw the progress already made, he made a cash donation for the building of the proposed hospital. It was this money donated by the military governor that sparked off the rift which led to prolonged court cases and the final closure of the convent. Some segments of the community wanted to be in control of the money, but the signatories of the account with the sister-in-charge refused. This refusal to surrender the money resulted in accusations and counter-accusations. The segment of the community asking for control of the money was powerful and forceful because they had supporters. The situation worsened when the sister-in-charge merged the running of the maternity and the hospital. Those who wanted to control the donated money used this as an opportunity to win more people to their side, and ultimately the Sisters were expelled from Ngugo. The situation was so volatile that it was impossible for these women religious to cope. In her own words, Sr Genevive said she was the target. However, the congregation had to withdraw all the Sisters for safety reasons, and this led to the closure of the convent for a long time. Appreciating what the Immaculate Heart Sisters did at Ngugo, Mr Sam Ugochukwu has this to say:

During the civil war, the Sisters ran the refugee camps, fed hungry children with Caritas food. There was hope of having a vibrant Ngugo through the work of these Sisters. Their departure dashed the hope of Ngugo for a better and bigger hospital. If the Immaculate Heart Sisters had continued to stay in Ngugo, we would have had a school of nursing and a booming hospital. (Personal communication)
The Role of Women Religious in the Development of the Ngugo Community...

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After eleven years of absence of any female religious congregation in the Ngugo convent, an international congregation of women religious arrived. This congregation is called the Daughters of Charity of the Most Precious Blood (DCPB). Their founder was Blessed Thomas Maria Fusco from Pagani, Italy. In 1873, when he was praying before the crucifix, Fr Thomas received an inspiration to found a congregation to take care of orphans and abandoned children. He started with seven orphans of whom he took care. The Sisters in the congregation he founded took care of these orphans, who were kept in the orphanage till they reached marriageable age, and Fr Thomas played the role of the father to these orphans, whom he accompanied until they were settled in their new homes.

According to Rev Sr Georgina Odor, the current Delegate Superior, the DCPB Sisters came to Ngugo on August 15, 1988. The first Nigerian Sisters that joined this congregation made their first religious vows in Rome in 1987. The contact person through whom the Sisters of DCPB came to Ngugo is Rev Fr Dr Gerald Anyanwu, who by then was studying in Rome. The first group that came to Ngugo in 1988 was made up of a white Italian woman, Rev Sr Corrada, and two Nigerian women, Sisters Maria Diala and Angela Ugo. The Catholic Bishop of Owerri at the time, the late Bishop Mark Unegbu, gave the Sisters permission to settle in Ngugo. Rev Sr Georgina affirmed that the Ngugo people welcomed the first DCPB Sisters warmly. For her, that was the beginning of a peaceful co-existence between the townspeople and the DCPB Sisters. She was emphatic when she said, “This warm reception gave us confidence that brought about the development in Ngugo we are proud to recount.” Presently, there are three DCPB religious communities. The biggest is called the Ngugo Convent Community, which has twenty-one Sisters. The second is Hope House Community with eleven sisters. The Sisters in this community look after eighteen orphans. The third is the Postulant Community with eight Sisters; DCPB postulants do their formation here under the careful watch of the convent’s Sisters.

Involvement and Development

Before the Immaculate Heart sisters came to Ngugo in 1965, the spot where the hospital, the three DCPB religious communities, and two schools are presently located was known as “Okohia” – a very thick forest feared and dreaded because of the prevailing belief that it belonged to the gods. The people of Ngugo, to welcome the Immaculate Heart Encyclopedia said about the Middle Ages: “For some historians, it is used as a term of disparagement, since the great classics of the ancient world went into eclipse during these centuries, only to be rediscovered by the humanists on the eve of Renaissance” (1991, p. 642). Ngugo was in a deep eclipse. Since Ngugo people have trust in the work of women religious, they decided to invite an international women religious congregation to come and re-open the closed convent.
Methodology

Because of its nature, the study made use of qualitative research design whereby purposive sampling was utilised. The definition of purposive sampling, according to Cohen et al. as cited by Kasonde, is very apt to this research: purposeful sampling is “a feature of qualitative research where researchers hand pick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of the typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought” (2015, p. 423). Mhlanga and Ncube provide a good illustration of qualitative research: “Qualitative data…consists in any information gathered during research [that] has not been quantified in any rigorous way. Often it could be in the narrative form like the experiences of people… or attitudes of people subjected to a particular type of education” (2003, p. 12).

Discussion

In this study, two congregations of women religious are involved – the Immaculate Heart Sisters, founded in 1937, and the Daughters of Charity of the Most Precious Blood, founded in 1873. The participants in this research were drawn mainly from these two congregations. At the time under review – the establishment of a convent in Ngugo – there was
only one religious congregation in one community and the researcher interviewed the main actors, when available. In keeping with the principles of purposive sampling, the three Immaculate Heart Sisters interviewed were not merely involved, but also had the needed information. Seven Sisters from Daughters of Charity of the Most Precious Blood (DCPB) were also interviewed. In addition to the ten religious sisters interviewed, two townspeople were also interviewed. While most of those interviewed allowed their names to be used in this study, some preferred to remain anonymous. Questionnaires were administered to eight students who have graduated from the two schools run by DCPB Sisters. The research used a Likert scale in order to solicit responses from the six students who completed their senior secondary program and the two women who graduated from the sewing vestment training center. While the interviews were directed to respondents in order to solicit information from the two women congregations, the questionnaires were meant to solicit information from respondents taught by DCPB Sisters. In all, twenty participants were involved in this research. With the interviews and questionnaires, the data were analysed based on the specific involvement of each congregation and the respondents’ opinion on the type of development that this involvement brought to the people of Ngugo as a whole. The resultant effect is human development, as will be evidenced in the testimonies below.

**Interpretation of Data and Comments**

Both interviews and questionnaires were used to assess the development that the DCPB brought to Ngugo. By the time the questionnaires were administered, we were able to reach six of the ten students who had expressed interest in participating, and all six of them returned their questionnaires. Two out of three graduates from the sewing vestment training center also returned their questionnaires. In all, there were eight questionnaires administered and all of them were returned. Using a Likert scale, the questionnaires were structured using Highly Disagree, Disagree, Undecided, Highly Agree, and Agree. The analysis of the questionnaires administered revealed the following results. Question 1 was aimed at sampling the opinions of the respondents on the level and effectiveness of the training or education they received from DCPB. All eight (100%) chose “Highly Agree” on the effectiveness of the education they received. Question 2 was utilised to determine how DCPB Sisters have improved the people through development. The responses showed 50% “Highly Agree”, 37% “Agree”, and 13% “Undecided”. For health care services, the results were 36% “Highly Agree” and 64% “Agree”. For a question on the pastoral involvement of DCPB Sisters in the parish, the respondents recorded 100% “Highly Agree”. Asked whether the presence of DCPB Sisters attracts neighbouring towns to Ngugo, the respondents chose “Highly Agree” (50%) and “Agree” (50%). Remarkably, the question about whether the people of Ngugo appreciate the work DCPB Sisters do in their community showed a different result; only 12% of respondents recorded “Highly Agree”, 75% “Agree” and 13% “Highly Disagree”. The doubts in the minds of the respondents could be the result of a recent misunderstanding between the town and the DCPB congregation. The DCPB congregation intends to move the secondary school section from Ngugo to Okpala, citing space as their reason for doing so. This decision has not gone well with the leaders of Ngugo, because the secondary school is part of the intended human development. Mr Innocent Iwu, a retired teacher now at DCPB Primary School, shared the results of the school’s 2014 Certificate of Primary Education examinations during an interview; the results, which reflect the human development promoted by the Sisters, are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

2014 Certificate of Primary Education Examination Results for DCPB Primary School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distinction</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand total</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commenting on the primary school run by the DCPB congregation,
The students who gained education and skills, the workers who were re-trained to enable them to function effectively and efficiently and who earn salaries to improve the lives of their family members, and the physical structures in place: all of these constitute the development that is the focus of this study. Undoubtedly, the presence of the two women religious congregations has brought development to Ngugo.

Importance of Development

The discussion so far brings us to examine the place of development in this research. In his foresight, Byrne cautions, “While it is true to say that buildings, equipment and money are useful and often necessary for development, nevertheless, we must be careful to remind ourselves that development is concerned principally with people and not just things like institutions and projects. The main reason for development work is the development of people” (1983, p. 5). I am keenly interested in the comments Byrne made about the book written by Pope Paul VI titled “The Development of People.” Firstly, Byrne re-stated the definition of development by Pope Paul VI as “the promotion of the good of people, every person and the whole persons.” After analysing the Pope’s definition, Byrne produced this comprehensive synthesis:

It should be noted that Pope Paul VI stressed the development of people and not the development of things like buildings or projects. He said that we should be interested in the development of every person, therefore, we should not be interested in the development of Protestants or Catholics only, or the development of our particular parish or ethnic group. As Christians we must be interested in the development of every person, the youth, the elderly, the rich, the poor and the middle class. Pope Paul VI said that development must be concerned with the whole person, i.e., spiritual and material progress or what is called integral development. (Byrne, 1983, p. 6)

This synthesis, therefore, becomes the yardstick by which our idea of development in this research is assessed. It is interesting to visit the orphanage run by DCPB Sisters at Ngugo. The visitor will observe at the first instance the good health, peace, and love that characterise the orphanage. The good relationship existing between these orphans and the Sisters is very impressive and contagious. Mr Innocent Iwu, acknowledging the personal development he has received as a teacher at the DCPB school,
has this to say: “The self-empowerment I have received has helped me to
train the children in physical exercise even at my old age. I have taught in
this school for twenty years after my retirement, and the Sisters appreciate
the contributions I make at school as well as my stay with them. They
support me when I am sick.” It is reasonable to argue that if the DCPB
Sisters were not at Ngugo, it is highly probable that Mr Innocent Iwu
would not have been as active as he has been in these twenty years of
active work. If he were in a place where he is not empowered, where he
is not appreciated, and where he is not happy, he would not have been
able to stay and teach for these twenty years. Similarly, two of the women
who learned to sew vestments and other costumes are now self-employed,
whereby they support themselves and their families.

I would like to borrow the sentiments expressed by Tomasi when
she said, “Journeying with women mentioned in this book was a unique
spiritual experience. It was like walking on another planet, the planet of
faith, the planet where everything is possible, the planet of God” (2000, p.
7). To this I would add that this planet where development of people and
infrastructure is possible can be found in Ngugo, thanks to the hard work
of women religious with the cooperation of the townspeople. In light of
all that has been said concerning development, I agree with Njageh, who
explained professional development thusly:

Important aspects of professional development [include] utilization of
“natural,” opportunistic learning experiences as well as planned ones;
the notion that the learning experiences benefit the professionals, their
institutions, and the clients served and the notion of professional development
as a life-long process that is morally driven and involves growth in the area
of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. All these aspects are applicable when we
look at the professional development of people, Sisters included, in any given
sector. (Njageh, 2015, p. 127).

It is said that no one gives what one does not have. One should develop
oneself before developing others. This is where I admire and praise the
organisers and sponsors of the African Sisters Education Collaborative
(ASEC) program, through which African religious sisters are encouraged
to further their education at the tertiary level. Some professed Sisters
who are benefiting from this program are studying at Veritas University
Abuja. Two Sisters from the DCPB congregation are also beneficiaries of
this program, and are now taking 400-level courses at Veritas University.
Thus, professional development is important if the overall development
is to be realised. The world is moving and developing fast. The women
religious who will be challenged by multiple socio-economic problems
while they are serving the needs of the society must be fully prepared.
Human development is initiated by human beings. In this research, the
Ngugo people and the women religious played a collaborative role to bring
about physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development in human
beings. This research is replete with testimonies from orphans, primary
pupils, and secondary students. Many patients received free treatment to
prolong their lifespans. All of these mentioned services promote human
development. In terms of physical structures, there was also a collaborative
venture, because the Ngugo people donated the land to build the first
maternity and the first convent house, thus paving the way for the women
religious to continue.

**Women Religious and the Year of Mercy**

Women religious also played an important role during the Jubilee Year
of Mercy, a worldwide Catholic celebration proclaimed by Pope Francis.
In his article “Holy Spirit in the African Church of the 21st Century”, which
was published in the African Journal of Contextual Theology, Amadi
reviews how the Holy Spirit inspired Pope Francis to proclaim the Jubilee
Year of Mercy. “It commenced on 8 December 2015, the Solemnity of the
Immaculate Conception, and it is expected to close on the Solemnity of
Christ the King, 20 November 2016. Pope Francis (2015:6), encouraging
the people of God on the importance of this Jubilee, explains:

We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a well-spring
of Joy, serenity and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals
the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme
act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells
in the hearts of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers
and sisters on the part of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man,
opening our hearts to a hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.
(Amadi, 2016, pp. 233-234)

It is the Holy Spirit that opens the hearts of the people of God and
raises them to hope for the forgiveness of their sins. It is the Holy Spirit
that inspired Pope Francis to proclaim the Jubilee Year of Mercy. It is
also the Holy Spirit that guided and directed Catholics, including those in Nigeria, to live this Year of Mercy fruitfully to the end.

The attention now is specifically on women religious, beginning with those who worked and are still working in Ngugo. This is not the main theme of this research; it becomes necessary to include it in order to examine the important place this prominent event occupied at the time when this research was conducted. The DCPB Sisters used the Jubilee Year of Mercy to remind themselves of the importance of returning to the origin of the main source of consecrated life and that of their founding father. In the message the Delegate Superior Sr Georgina sent to her fellow Sisters, she used the parable of the prodigal son to illustrate the importance of forgiveness in the lives of the Sisters. To live the Year of Mercy fruitfully, she admonished the Sisters, “You should forgive yourselves from your hearts no matter the hurt experienced. It is only when you have forgiven yourselves out of love and charity can you show the same mercy, love and forgiveness to outsiders.” In addition to the orphanage centre, DCPB Sisters increased the number of orphans from other schools they sponsored to pay their school fees as a way of promoting the Year of Mercy.

For their own part, the Immaculate Heart Sisters embarked on a robust program of creating awareness of the significance of the Year of Mercy through seminars among themselves and for outsiders. It is in the spirit of the Year of Mercy that a massive campaign for reconciliation and forgiveness was carried out, and it paid off. In the words of a Sister who remains anonymous, “We are not silent on this important Year of Mercy because our Sisters in their various professions and workplaces promote the Year of Mercy through works of charity.”

Conclusion

This chapter has tried to explore the various ways in which women religious have worked to bring development to Ngugo. Through the instrumentation of questionnaires and interviews, the researcher gathered information that testified to the authentic role of women religious in the development of Ngugo in spite of an early obstacle, which they surmounted through the grace of God made manifest in their patience and hard work.

Realising the importance of collaboration, the Sisters carried along the people they were serving, knowing very well that unity is strength. When Ngugo’s people saw that the Sisters came with good intentions, they gave their full support. It is on this basis that what the Catholic Church said in its social teaching becomes relevant here: “Collaboration in the development of the whole person and of every human being is in fact a duty of all towards all, and must be shared by the four parts of the world: East and West, North and South” (2008, p.24). The chapter showed how the integral development of a person is paramount to physical and economic development.

An observation made by Baur is very pertinent to this chapter, and that is why I have adapted it in this conclusion: “The Sisters contributed to the growth of the church primarily in a qualitative way. They gave to the institutional church in Africa a mother, balancing the one-sided father image. Their influence on Christian womanhood went far beyond their immediate work in school and hospital. They enhanced the human dignity of the African women and hastened her emancipation” (1998, p. 410).

From 1965 to the present, Ngugo has produced more than twenty professed religious sisters who are serving in different parts of the country. Through their services, the education of the girl-child is enhanced. Hoffman and Cole are correct to say: “Thus all know us through our many works and writings, and a lesser number by our words spoken to them in public or in private” (2011, pp. 13, 16). In other words, women religious together with other religious members are known by their works and by the abundant fruits of their hands. The history of Ngugo cannot be complete without mentioning the roles the two congregations of women religious have played in the development of the town. The standing new hospital, primary and secondary schools, and vestment sewing center, among other works, are visible signs and evidence of the presence of these two congregations. Those they taught in schools, catechism, and vestment sewing and those they treated when they were sick continue to testify to the importance of the women religious in Ngugo.

References

Transformative Partnerships

The Catholic Church’s establishment in most countries in Africa, with her mission of evangelisation, required transformation and partnership if she were to be successful. From the beginning, the Church embarked on social services by establishing schools and health centres. This strategy was enshrined in the philosophy of ‘a healthy mind in a healthy body’. The literature describes caravans of these early evangelisers comprising priests, religious brothers, and nuns. The former were for the mission stations, constructed by religious brothers of the same founders or order, to catechise and liberate the souls of the natives, while the latter arrived to care for and liberate the natives’ minds in schools and their bodies in health facilities. As the church grew and developed, the aforementioned ministries, some of their educands and collaborators embraced religious life in the Church. Over time, African women religious assumed positions and responsibilities of the missionaries on the eve of their departure and in the wake of the Church’s Africanisation, and new forms of congregations were even started. Among these in Uganda are the Sisters of Immaculate Heart of Mary Reparatrix—Ggogonya in Kisubi.

The researcher explored how Sisters and their activities in two of their establishments, together with their managerial styles, have influenced people’s lives in several established social and economic businesses in

THE IMPACT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES ON PEOPLE’S LIVELIHOOD: A CASE STUDY OF THE SISTERS OF IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY REPARATRIX – GGOGONYA IN KISUBI, UGANDA

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Abstract

The Catholic Church’s establishment in most countries in Africa, with her mission of evangelisation, required transformation and partnership if she were to be successful. From the beginning, the Church embarked on social services by establishing schools and health centres. This strategy was enshrined in the philosophy of ‘a healthy mind in a healthy body’. The literature describes caravans of these early evangelisers comprising priests, religious brothers, and nuns. The former were for the mission stations, constructed by religious brothers of the same founders or order, to catechise and liberate the souls of the natives, while the latter arrived to care for and liberate the natives’ minds in schools and their bodies in health facilities. As the church grew and developed, the aforementioned ministries, some of their educands and collaborators embraced religious life in the Church. Over time, African women religious assumed positions and responsibilities of the missionaries on the eve of their departure and in the wake of the Church’s Africanisation, and new forms of congregations were even started. Among these in Uganda are the Sisters of Immaculate Heart of Mary Reparatrix—Ggogonya in Kisubi.

The researcher explored how Sisters and their activities in two of their establishments, together with their managerial styles, have influenced people’s lives in several established social and economic businesses in

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the Kisubi area. The study investigated whether people in Kisubi were inspired by these Sisters to set up businesses. To examine the kind of impact they had on people’s livelihood, the study focused on two of the Sisters’ establishments, namely the Cabana Restaurant and the Ulrika Institute of Home Economics, a training school for domestic and catering services. Key areas investigated included employment opportunities, education, skills imparted and mentorship. The study examined approaches to stimulating development by way of cultivating good relationships and partnering with people in the area to match and market their produce to these establishments.

Keywords: women religious, business development, sustainability, mentorship, Kisubi

Introduction

The Institute of the Sisters of Immaculate Heart of Mary Reparatrix–Ggogonya (IHMR) is of a diocesan rite and was founded by the late Archbishop Joseph Louis Cabana on April 21, 1948 at Bugonga convent, Entebbe. Cabana was one of the members of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa, commonly known then as the White Fathers. It was this society that Rome entrusted with the task of becoming the first evangelisers of the central and western regions of Uganda.

Being a diligent young priest, Cabana was appointed in 1929 as Treasurer General of the then vast vicariate which comprised the current Kampala Archdiocese as well as the dioceses of Kasana-Luweero, Kiyinda-Mityana, Masaka, Mbarara, Kabale, Hoima, Fort Portal and Kasese, plus some parts of Busia and Zaire, which is now the Democratic Republic of Congo. Since the treasury headquarters were located at Bugonga parish in Entebbe, Cabana moved and resided there in order to execute with ease all the duties pertaining to his new apostolate.

By that time, the European/French Sisters of Mary Reparatrix (SMR) had been settled at Bugonga for 17 years, for they had arrived in Uganda in November of 1912 at the invitation of Bishop Henry Streitcher to intercede for the success of the mission of evangelisation in the vicariate of Uganda. Because this Institute was and still is both contemplative and active, and the mission for which it had been invited needed more devotion to prayer than active apostolate, the SMR Sisters led an almost purely contemplative life. They nevertheless met a lot of domestic demands, such as cooking, housekeeping, and laundry, and taught catechism to the pupils of the nearby St Agnes Bugonga Primary School. For that reason, they requested permission from Bishop Streitcher to get some young women to assist them in this active side of life while they devoted much of their time to the contemplative side, particularly the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Why this adoration of the Blessed Sacrament? It is for Reparation, which is the charism of these European Sisters of Mary Reparatrix.

It was during his interactions with the Sisters of SMR at Bugonga that Cabana encountered these young women, the “helpers” or “auxiliaries” of the above-mentioned Sisters. The young women had come to be called “helpers” in 1927, before Cabana’s appointment to the office of the Treasurer General. In their own minds, these “helpers” were convinced that they were women religious – that is, members of the SMR Institute – given the new robe they had received and the promise of obedience they had made to the Superior of the Sisters of SMR at Bugonga. Canonically, however, they were not religious, since they had never undergone the official religious formation and had not even taken the religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Though they had left their respective homes to pursue religious life, the “helpers” never understood this distinction, which was clear only to the Sisters and to Fr Cabana. On several occasions, Cabana appealed to the ecclesiastical authorities and the Superiors of the Sisters to change the status of the “helpers” to full religious membership, but all was in vain because at the time their Constitutions did not allow them to admit native sisters to their Institute.

An opportune time came in 1947, when Cabana was appointed the Apostolic Vicar of the Vicariate of Uganda. By April 21, 1948, Archbishop Cabana had already completed the process of founding an Institute for the Ugandan natives out of the young women who had been acting as “helpers” of the European nuns of Bugonga (SMR), Entebbe. He entrusted their formation to the SMR Sisters.

The first five members who had joined the Institute made their first profession in 1949 and, after a period of ten years, were allowed to make their perpetual vows in 1959. The new Institute was given the name – the Congregation of the African Sisters of Mary Reparatrix. There was confusion about this name between the new Institute and that of the
European sisters of Mary Reparatrix (SMR), who were their formators. In 1963, the confusion was solved by changing the name of the new Institute to the “Congregation of African Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary”. Issues with the name of this congregation persisted but were finally settled once for all on September 11, 1996 when they became the “Sisters of Immaculate Heart of Mary Reparatrix–Ggogonya” (IHMR), as they are known today.

The Newly Founded Religious and their Mission

The Sisters of IHMR were to maintain the same charism of Reparation, like their Mothers and formators, the SMR, who were physically established just five miles away. They were to become more active while committing sufficient time to the work of evangelisation, without neglecting the contemplative dimension through worthy celebration of the Eucharist, mortification, praying the rosary and, above all, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

It is against this background that the Sisters of IHMR took on an active dimension of evangelisation focusing on social work, with its field of diversified services such as orphanages, education, homes for the elderly, farms, restaurants, and guest houses. They offer secretarial services and work in social communication and financial sectors. They also work as lawyers specialising in both civil and canon laws, to mention but a few of their ministries.

The Sisters and their New Forms of Evangelisation

Gichure (2015) asserts that the Church in Africa as a whole is blessed with many vocations to religious life. Uganda alone has more than 80 different forms of religious congregations of men and women. The missionaries came and planted the seed of evangelisation that bore branches such as the Sisters of Mary Reparatrix–Ggogonya, who have carried on the mission of Christ, and now the Christians and all people of God are reaping the copious fruits of their sacrifice, love, and labour. They have not wavered away from the Gospel (Matthew 28:19). By the time these Sisters were founded, the white missionaries had already carried out some of the work of evangelisation. Cardinals Larvigerie and Daniel Comboni were founders of two missionary groups to evangelise Africa, and these Sisters can be referred to as “granddaughters” of Larvigerie because Cabana, their founder, was a “son” of the White Fathers. The White Fathers Missionaries had to change their name in the early 1990s, when the society allowed young Africans to join them and the reference to complexion became irrelevant; breaking down barriers of race and colour advanced the spread of the Good News in modern times. The White Fathers are now popularly known as Missionaries of Africa (Mafr). Likewise, the “White Sisters”, the nuns who came together with the White Fathers, became known as the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa (MSOLA). This stage of development of allowing Africans to join ranks with their evangelisers, to be recruited and accepted to take religious vows – or Missionary Oaths, as they referred to them – instead of founding parallel religious congregation for Africans, was already a new form of evangelisation.

Larvigerie, the founder of the two aforementioned missionary evangelizers, had in his mind the spirit of a self-reliant church, which translates into a major theme and concern of today’s global world, which is socio-economic development for all. Larvigerie repeatedly told his sons and daughters that “The missionaries must be mainly initiators; the lasting work must be accomplished by the Africans themselves, once they have become Christians and Apostles” (Kampala Archdiocese Information News Report, December 1992, p.7).

On Kisubi Hill, where the Sisters are located, many religious institutes have their headquarters and run a consortium of Church services within and outside related circles, such as educational institutions and health facilities. All of these religious institutes have their roots in and are connected with the first evangelisers, the White Fathers (now the Mafr) and the White Sisters (now the MSOLA). This relates to the notion of “spheres of influence”, which were determined by which evangelising group went to each part of Africa. Historically, it relates to the political “scramble for Africa”.

However, the issue of development among these institutions was tackled at different times following the first historic visit of a reigning pope in modern times to Africa, and particularly Uganda, in 1969. Addressing the Bishops who had gathered for a conference at Gaba National Seminary, Pope Paul VI shared these words: “The time has come now for the African… people to evangelise themselves. It is time for Africans to be missionaries on the African Continent,” (Paul VI, 1969).
In the same spirit, Kalama (1993) quoted the parish priest of Kisubi on a parish day about development, writing:

We are asking each sub-parish to try to be self-reliant by having something to do or take on a job collectively to generate money. This money would be enough to construct or erect a church or a school, to support the up-keep of a catechist, orphanage, or disabled person in your locality. Look at what you have at hand, especially land. Try to utilise it by growing produce on it and if so, try to put the money from the sales in the bank. *Bannakisubi* ["men of Kisubi"], the work ahead of us is a lot. We need self sacrificing people for the development of others. (Kalama, 1993)

It is clear that the Sisters have gone to great lengths to put into practice what was then recommended, in light of their many socio-economic development projects in various locations. The Sisters’ years of foundation came only a few years prior to the centenary celebrations of the Catholic faith in Uganda. This implies growth and development in several aspects of human endeavours. Before that period, it was easy to tell where both human and material resources were coming from. It meant that the church in Kisubi at large was not self-reliant (as will be discussed below; see also Table 6).

**Witnessing the Gospel: through Sustainable Development**

Development comes about when there is peace and security in an environment. Much as the Catholic Church in Uganda had reached that maturity of a hundred years in faith, many missionaries would have loved to stay and deepen the faith of Christians, or even move to other areas beyond their original prescribed spheres of influence to advance other forms of evangelisation in the new millennium. This did not happen, due to the insecurity and instability of the governments of the day. At the same time, back home, the missionaries’ countries of origin were experiencing shortages of vocations. Donor countries were also crippled by “donor fatigue”. As a result of these combined factors, the environment was not conducive to the mushrooming of religious projects for sustainable development.

The Sisters were able to translate their three religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience into visible signs of the times, through commitment, hard work, and love. In this regard, Pope John Paul II wrote:

Work is a duty, because our Creator demanded it and because it maintains and develops our humanity. We must work out of regard for others, especially our own families, but also because of the society we belong to and in fact because of the whole humanity. (John Paul II, *Laborem Excercens*, 1981)

The pontiff’s words are mirrored by the Sisters’ objectives in creating the Cabana Restaurant and the Ulrika Institute of Home Economics. The Kisubi area is no longer fertile, due to its long-time settlement and overgrazing activities. The Socio-Economic Department of the Sisters started these two projects to boost their finances, not only for their upkeep but for sustainable development at large. The latter has a full-time training model, while the former enshrines a socio-economic model of social amenities and recreational services. Ulrika students train in domestic, catering, and hotel and hospitality service provision and skills acquisition. Cabana Restaurant, located a stone’s throw away from the Institute, is the first choice of Ulrika internees for placement. Owners of other similar businesses regularly come in contact with these students while being served by them. It is easy to identify the internees, for they wear name tags listing who they are and what they are studying. Some are retained by the restaurant at the completion of their internship period, and quite a few are quickly recruited by hotels both near and far – including some five-star facilities.

As a country, Uganda has gone through a period of unrest. Two wars have left indelible scars and marks in people’s lives. The first war was at the peak of the Centenary Celebrations. As if that were not enough, another “Bush War” ravaged peoples’ livelihoods five years later. Many displaced people ran to Ulrika for shelter. How the Sisters sustained them only God knows. Some of these refugees remain to this day, for they lost everything where they came from. The Sisters assisted these people using their charity to slowly settle them, and helped them to secure employment to sustain their families.

The Catholic Bishops of Uganda, in an effort to call on Christians to get involved in the rehabilitation and development of a “new nation” after the guerilla war, had the following to say:

The common good can only be understood and defined in relation to the dignity of the human person. Its objective is the physical, social, economic, cultural and religious well-being of the person understood not only as a single individual but as all citizens united as a community. (U.E.C. Pastoral letter, 1986, *With a New Heart and New Spirit*)
This was a call to all people to get involved in the process of drafting a new Constitution, and for their part, they released one of their best priests, Rev Fr Dr J. M. Waliggo, to become the Secretary of the Constitution Review Commission. We can see now that this was a call to new forms of evangelisation. By setting up socio-economic projects for sustainable development in their midst, they are not making a mistake nor are they diverting attention from the way and light of the Gospel. When the early evangelisers practised the spirit of self-reliance by growing their own food, and introducing new crops, they were teaching and leading by example. As a result, many Christians copied these initiatives and their way of life was transformed, never to be the same again. The Sisters fell too in the same footsteps of the early Church, the Apostolic Church, in which St Paul advised Christians in the following exhortation:

Our beloved brothers, we commend you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from brothers who are living a lazy life…. We kept working day and night so as not to be an expense to any of you. (2 Thessalonians 3:6-10)

The Sisters have continued to work in partnership together with lay Christians in their projects and settings. Such interactions have influenced their ways of earning a living, with improved dietary systems and socio-economic status, and have also influenced their prayer and spiritual lives. In a recent Sunday sermon, A. Guma (personal communication, December 18, 2016), while summarising the second reading from St Paul (Romans 1:1-7), reminded the University Students of Kisubi and the whole congregation in attendance that “Prayer does not change society and situations, but rather changes people, and the people change their own situations and society”. In this regard, the Sisters have done well to open the doors of their prayer centres such as the chapel, which used to be used exclusively for Sisters’ prayer exercises and masses. The old form of evangelisation barred Christians from attending masses in these designated private chapels, to the extent that even relatives and old people, who lived within proximity, were expected to trek long distances to the parish churches.

Development refers to the traits, stature and wisdom acquired by individuals while growing up. The process involves thinking and seeking ideas, inwardly and outwardly, and then formulating a picture of aspirations. The population of Kisubi was originally dominated by the Baganda, but as a result of the above mentioned initiatives and many other developments, Kisubi is now a mixture of cultures. These Sisters’ institutions attracted people from other areas to come and work in them. The years of transformation were kicked off when Sr Richard Nayiga, a councillor in charge of development, partnered with a German donor to build new structures that would house the Ulrika Center. The name Ulrika became synonymous with Sr Richard; when one asked for directions, a mere mention of either of the two names would lead one to the right place or person. This confirms the fact that as Sisters continued to create more projects for their sustainance, men and women with indispensable skills stayed on and continued doing various skilled and semi-skilled jobs.

**Methodology**

The research was carried out to assess the impact that the Sisters’ socio-economic activities have had on peoples’ livelihoods in the Kisubi area. The procedures used examined the people who work with the Sisters and how their interactive modes influence others to set up similar projects for themselves. Other factors surveyed included mentorship and lifestyle aspects such as prayer life. The methodology evaluated how the knowledge and skills of students who attend the Ulrika Institute of Home Economics are making them attractive to employers on the local, national, and international job markets.

**Research Design**

The study employed a mixed methods design in which both qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection and analysis were used. A correlation was also used to describe in quantitative terms the degree to which variables were somehow related; this minimised bias. Respondents, who were remarkably similar in nearly all cases, but differed in age, education, and type of work experience, among other items, were accounted for.

**Target Population**

The study targeted 100 people within a five-mile radius of the Kisubi area. These included several Sisters, with a major focus on those working in key positions of the Sisters’ establishments, such as managers, heads
of schools and departments, and those in charge of the recruitment of both skilled and non-skilled staff. Managers of businesses similar to those run by the Sisters were also targeted. Work experience was arranged and grouped into five-year blocks.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to determine which two of the Sisters’ institutions would be studied, based on their accessibility and location within the five-mile target range. The sample comprised 17 participants. This number, according to Orodho and Kombo (2002), was representative enough to constitute ten percent of the target population.

Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaires were used to collect data on items designed to address a specific research question of the study, encompassing all objectives therein (Creswell, 2009). The items were developed with Likert scale responses on worker’s motivation, development, and salary satisfaction. Additional questions were used to extensively analyse the concepts.

Description of Data Analysis Procedures

Collected quantitative and qualitative row data was analysed and entered into a Likert scale template design. For qualitative data analysis, themes were developed after data collection and the coded transcripts were analysed. Editing was done only when necessary for clarity, legibility, and consistency of data collection. This information was formulated and added to the quantitative outcomes to produce a descriptive form that would facilitate reporting.

Findings

The findings depicting the Sisters’ two institutions were analysed. The respondents’ views were based on the Sisters’ managerial skills, inspiration received by workers, mentorship to both groups of students and co-workers, and employment opportunities created by their socio-economic projects. A number of qualitative responses from participants added value to findings of a quantitative nature. The number of respondents was 17 (n=17).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Founding Body</th>
<th>Year of Foundation</th>
<th>Year of Africanisation</th>
<th>Duration of Missionary Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.O.C.I.</td>
<td>Canadian Bros.</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>42 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIPOPEC</td>
<td>W.F.M. (Mafr.)</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.J.T.I.</td>
<td>W.F.M</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>51 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.S.T.</td>
<td>B.O.C.I.</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>30 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kisubi Hospital</td>
<td>W.S.M. (MSOLA)</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>83 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.F.C.-MST</td>
<td>M.H.M</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulrika Dom. Sch.</td>
<td>German Sisters</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savio Jun. Sch.</td>
<td>Canadian Bros.</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kisubi Boys Sch.</td>
<td>W.F.M.</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>31 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kisubi Girls Sch.</td>
<td>W.S.M. (MSOLA)</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>55 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kisubi Seminary</td>
<td>BP. Cabana W.F.M</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>12 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: B.O.C.I. = Brothers of Christian Instruction; KIPOPEC= Kisubi Post Primary Education Centre; S.J.T.I. = St Joseph’s Technical Institute; M.S.T.= Mount Saint Teresa; U.S.F.C. = Uganda Spiritual Formation
Table 1 shows religious institutions as founded by missionaries. It also shows the founding group, the year of founding, and year of africanisation as well as duration of foreign leadership for each institution. The table’s duration column reveals that out of the 12 founded institutions, there are only 4 institutions which do not reflect overstay of missionaries. Thus, it is unlikely these institutions represented “evangelisation by Africans”, which is only truly reflected through those institutions founded twenty years after political independence and after the Centenary Celebration of 100 years of growing in faith.

Table 2
Distribution of Respondents by Working Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working Experience</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>86.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in Table 2, a majority of respondents (86.7%) had 0-5 years working experience, while 13.4% had more than 5 years of experience.

Table 3
Enrollment and Workforce

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents’ views</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>NS</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kisubi area sets students/ workers enrollments go up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The workforce is drawn from within and around</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulrika/Cabana inspire socio-economic activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulrika/Cabana have imparted skills to Kisubi teens</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, NS=Not Sure, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree

Table 3 shows the influence of Ulrika Institute and Cabana Restaurant on student and worker enrollment around Kisubi; the majority of participants agreed that there was a significant influence (85.8%), while those who said they were not sure were the least at 5.9%.
Table 4

Salary Motivation and Multiplying Effect Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents’ views</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>NS</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workers are satisfied with salary packages</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers are paid in time to meet their obligations</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers receive salary increments on regular basis</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries are better than that of similar professional trainees of the same qualification elsewhere</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulrika/Cabana has boosted hotel management services near and far</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulrika/Cabana trainees have marketed the Outside Catering services on several occasions in the area</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters’ establishments make many employment offers to skilled/unskilled people of Kisubi area and beyond</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, NS=Not Sure, A=Agree and SA=Strongly Agree

Table 4 shows the effects of salary and motivation and their multiplying effects as employment opportunities on people’s livelihoods in the area. All respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that Sisters’ establishments create jobs for skilled and unskilled people.

Table 5

Effects of Mentorship on Development of Students and Sisters’ Coworkers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents’ views</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>NS</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Similar developmental projects in this area are a result of Sisters’ mentorship</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who receive Ulrika training are employable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulrika and Cabana Restaurant are people’s market targets for their produce in the area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulrika is an educational opportunity that empowers people to earn a livelihood</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters’ institutions/projects are a stimulating environment by the nature of their investments</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, NS=Not Sure, A=Agree and SA=Strongly Agree

Table 5 displays respondents’ views about the effect of mentorship on students and workers at both the Ulrika Institute of Home Economics and Cabana Restaurant. Most respondents (76.1%) agreed that these institutions provided a stimulating environment, while only 5.9% of respondents disagreed.
Table 6

Religious Projects in Kisubi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECTS STARTED</th>
<th>PROJECTS IN EXTINCTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Schools</td>
<td>1. Tree growing for timber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Hospitals</td>
<td>2. Health Centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Health Centres</td>
<td>3. School-leavers (boys’ agric.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Religious Institutes</td>
<td>4. Cocoa growing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Cocoa growing</td>
<td>5. Bricks &amp; Tiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Bricks &amp; Tiles</td>
<td>6. Fruits growing for making Jam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Fruits growing for making Jam</td>
<td>7. Cattle keeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Cattle keeping</td>
<td>8. latex (tree forest for gum/rubber)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Latex tree forest (gum/rubber)</td>
<td>9. Coffee growing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Stone-quarry</td>
<td>10. Stone quarry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Coffee growing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Home Economics (Ulrika)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Technical crafts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Tree growing (forest for timber)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Agriculture for Boys (School-leavers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Printing Press</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

68%  

PROJECTS THAT HAVE PERSISTED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECTS THAT HAVE PERSISTED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Hospitals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Religious Institutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Printing Press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Technical Crafts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Home Economics (Ulrika)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37%

Source: Field data developed by the researcher, 2016

Figure 1 reveals that 10 out of 16 projects (68%) suffered extinction while 6 (37%) have persisted and are ongoing.

Discussion

The respondents brought out the factors and the spirit behind the people’s growth of developmental projects in and around the Kisubi area, centering on those run by the Sisters, particularly the Ulrika Institute of Home Economics and Cabana Restaurant. The views expressed by respondents filled in the gap that was left by research conducted by Kalama (1993), which revealed that at the time of the study the people of Kisubi were not keen about setting up money-generating activities.

Missionary Overstay

Missionary overstay in Church leadership positions not only created a dependency syndrome, but also downplayed the spirit of africanisation as promulgated in several Vatican II Church documents.
Among the twelve enlisted religious institutions in this area, two of them, the Sisters of Mary Reparatrix–Ggogonya (I.H.M.R.) and Kisubi Minor Seminary, were founded by Bishop Cabana, the last missionary bishop of Rubaga Archdiocese, who was a member of the White Fathers Missionaries (Mafr).

Secondly, the Sisters have set a pace that became a challenge to the people they evangelised “silently” – without telling them to work directly, but rather working with them. The Sisters’ lives and managerial styles in the running of projects, as well as their mentorship mode of work, have reduced the dependency syndrome that had lingered on, as reflected in Table 1, as a result of missionary overstay. Most parishioners depended on handouts given by white missionaries. For example, school fees for parishioners’ children were paid for by these missionaries.

Respondents’ Working Experience

As shown in Table 2, the majority of participants (86.7%) had five or fewer years of working experience, while the number of those who had more than five years of experience was negligible. This is a healthy signal of development, and if projects continue, it means there is a spirit of continuity. By virtue of their vows, the Sisters through their charism of Reparation have “repaired” people at work. As a new form of evangelisation, they have sown the seeds of development through working for and with the people.

Enrollment and Workforce: a Contribution of Ulrika and Cabana Projects

The Vatican II Council Documents Gaudium et Spes, Ad Gentis, and Lumen Gentium all touched upon the themes of development. The Sisters were at the height of their development at the time when these documents came into force. Their founder, Msgr Cabana, led from 1947 to 1961. The year 1961 was significant for both the nation of Uganda, which was about to gain its independence, and for the church, which was about to change its top leadership. Bishop Joseph Kiwanuka, the first black bishop south of the Sahara, was a member of the White Fathers Missionary Society. It was right and fitting that he be transferred from Masaka to Kampala to “fill the shoes” of the shepherd Cabana. Cabana retired at the motherhouse of the Sisters, guiding them as a father figure in their development tasks, as a young congregation that had just gained “self-rule” from their formators, the European Sisters from Bugonga–Entebbe.

That the Sisters’ two institutions, Ulrika and Cabana, were set up amidst their premises meant being surrounded by parishioners who, according to the interpretation of the Church Documents and an upgrade in developmental understanding, were workers to be employed from within and around, as remains the case of Cabana Restaurant. Through interactions and challenges, Sisters empower their workers; as people who came to earn a living by earning a decent salary or wage, they ended up by being inspired to copy Sisters’ projects, thus starting similar socio-economic projects of their own.

When it came to the Ulrika Institute of Home Economics, the picture painted was slightly different, in that the school is not a preserve of students from the area. Enrollment is open even to distant parents who wish their children to acquire knowledge, skills, and values as imparted by Sisters. The Sisters’ influence through their educands goes beyond the Kampala Archdiocese.

Motivation and Multiplying Effect Factor

Motivation has both extrinsic and intrinsic value. The assessors looked mainly at opportunities offered by the Sisters’ two projects. These ranged from graduating from an institution run by Sisters to higher visibility in the job market. Ulrika presented more chances of getting employment due to the fact that Cabana Restaurant is next door. Cabana’s proximity to the Entebbe–Kampala highway allows for more high profile and middle-class visitors, who through being served well, view their servers as potential employees. The probability of internees and graduates getting connected to five-star hotels is higher among participants in these two projects than elsewhere.

Uganda has one of the fastest growing populations in the region. With population growth, the nation’s social strata become more complex. Copying and coping with standards as people travel and become more educated, society creates additional classes that befit it. Formerly, parties
for weddings, graduations, and birthdays used to take place in people’s homes. Today, the situation is different. These changes must be addressed by curricula in schools. In the current social landscape, a school like Ulrika has become a valuable resource for imparting knowledge and skills. Cabana, meanwhile, boosts the products of such a school, and creates recreation centers for hospitality, leisure, and relaxation. Weddings, graduation parties, and annual gift-giving ceremonies by corporate bodies like banks and NGOs all now take place in these two institutions run by the Sisters.

Ulrika and Cabana, in addition to being hosts of the above events, have also educated others from distant shores. Kiwanuka (1999) said that education is meant to “enlarge human possibilities for development”. Because of high levels of cleanliness and ambiance in both places, visitors who come to attend meetings, such as Rotarians, and even those who routinely come in for a drink or to eat, go back satisfied with the Sisters’ managerial and supervisory services. Often such guests host private functions in their homes or work places, and employ the outside catering services of either the Ulrika Institute or Cabana Restaurant. When a team of Sisters goes to these events, they are portraying a new form of evangelisation through service, a dimension of Jesus’ public ministry; indeed, after preaching the Word of God, he fed them.

The two projects need raw materials in order to function well. They both have cooking areas that need raw material supplies such as fresh foods, vegetables, eggs, chicken, and meat. As a result of the economics of supply and demand, the Sisters’ establishments have made many employment offers to the people of Kisubi, be they skilled or unskilled.

Effects of Mentorship on Students and Sisters’ Co-workers

Recent development in the areas of eateries, covering a radius of five kilometers, is attributed to at least two of the Sisters’ institutions, namely the Ulrika Institute and Cabana Restaurant. This is so because in areas where people struggle to get out of poverty traps, the institutions are market targets for people’s produce. As people work within these two institutions to earn a livelihood, the Sisters mentor them, using their charism of Reparation, and this leads to the production of similar kinds of projects that are now seen in the area.

Vatican II and Pope John Paul II’s encyclical Redemptoris Missio updated and deepened the theology of mission work, placing greater emphasis on the fact that the Good News of the coming of God’s Kingdom attains its perfection in heaven, but should start here on earth by the gradual spread of Good News and its distinctive traits such as peace, justice, reconciliation, and compassion as proclaimed by Jesus, giving special attention to the most marginalised and the poorest.

Popes since John Paul II have reminded all that extending the reign of God is not the exclusive work of priests and religious, especially in churches that have grown in faith for over a century, as is the case of Uganda. Their teaching obliges every baptised Christian to participate in furthering the already established kingdom of God by living and sharing its values. This mission encompasses the promotion of human well-being. The Sisters have understood this by establishing these two institutions for the people of Kisubi to promote their livelihood. Decent living standards, acceptable levels of good health, and universal education and the promotion of common good are integral parts of the Church’s call to holiness through service.

Religious Projects in Kisubi

As shown in Table 6, there were development projects started by missionaries, as well as by those Africans who took over positions of leadership during the post-independence period, which coincided with implementations of Vatican Council II. There were a variety of projects numbering 16 in all. It was surprising to see that projects which had immediate, human-promoting activities that would increase people’s spirit of self-reliance were among the ten that went into extinction. The six that persisted, and are still operational, all involve a physical location.

Socio-Economic Development Activities

There are evident human development activities in the Kisubi area within the realm of the Sisters’ two institutions, as revealed by the number of people copying Sisters’ projects (see Figure 1). This is a healthy competition. Sisters were aware of and were responding to post-Vatican
II and exhortation documents calling for a truly African Church which is self-sustaining. The Ulrika Institute of Home Economics and Cabana Restaurant are the Sisters’ backbone for socio-economic projects in the area. They not only support the Sisters, but are also an inspirational model for the people as well. The kind of interactions the Sisters have had with their workers greatly influenced people’s attitude and value towards work, and have also improved work ethics.

Development cannot be realised unless there are sacrifices undertaken in the process of performance aimed at producing results. Sisters with their vows, especially the vow of poverty, made sacrifices by pulling resources together, and when they practice charity it translates into sharing with those who are less privileged. While they do this they are mentoring people, teaching them by giving them work, which liberates them out of their poverty traps. This is translating and realising their charism of Reparation through work, which is a new form of evangelisation.

Conclusion

The pronounced development seen in the Kisubi area, especially within the vicinity of the Sisters, demonstrates that the women religious in the Church at large have a positive impact in the world. The Sisters’ socio-economic projects of the Ulrika Institute and Cabana Restaurant are in line with church documents, including Lumen Gentium (Light to the Nations), Ad Gentis (Dignity of the Human Person), and Gaudium et Spes (Joy and Hope). As one well-known interpretation of the Gospel and its values puts it, “no one lights a lamp and puts it under a table; rather, one finds a stand and puts it up for him and others to see”. This quotation fits well with the theme of Pope John Paul II’s 1993 visit to Uganda, Let your light shine.

Through employment policies, the Sisters have lived and implemented the Church documents concerning work in relation to the dignity of human persons. The projects in place offered job opportunities to both skilled and unskilled labours. Salaries and wages paid uplift people’s livelihoods. Again, this dimension of Gaudium et Spes is lived by the Sisters as they mentor people through teaching them a culture of saving. This prepares people to live within their means and limits while looking forward to a better tomorrow. This is in contrast to a non-Christian and worldly culture of consumerism, which evolved in the early- and mid-1970s and declared “Let us enjoy for today, tomorrow will take care of itself”.

Thanks to all these teachings, the Sisters are moving towards a self-sustaining Church through their projects, among others, and through working with lay Christians. They are blessed with a new and enriched understanding of the Church missionary vocation: WE ARE CHURCH. They are part of her mission. Pope Benedict XVI, in his encyclical Deus Caritas Est, deepened and enriched the understanding of the special role which ordinary Christians are called to play in the Church’s missionary vocation (Word of God, Eucharist and Active Charity). The Sisters have allowed ordinary Christians, including their employees, to pray together in their chapel and workplaces. They have given them opportunity to share in their charism of Reparation through adoration on certain days of the week, and have prepared a monthly tridium. Certainly, with all these varied forms of evangelisation, they cannot but produce the desired impact in the area.

In yet another encyclical, Spe Salvi, it is added that hope of salvation was not limited to eternal life but on the improvement of the human conditions here on earth. The Sisters have not only lived this message but have translated it into tangible results and visible signs of the time through their two institutions, the Ulrika Institute of Home Economics and Cabana Restaurant.

Recommendations

1. Findings from interviewees were compared with those from respondents; they revealed high percentage of extinct projects which were directly related to human activities of ordinary people in Kisubi area. Further research should be conducted in this area to bring the number of extinct projects down to acceptable levels.

2. The two new projects, that is, horticulture and zero-grazing, should be supported to yield acceptable standard products, with products added to boost the market targets of the two institutions.

3. Further research is needed to determine the impact that the Sisters’ prayer life and Center of Divine Mercy have made on the people of Kisubi and faraway places.
4. Women religious are instrumental in fostering Church vocations through their ministry of evangelisation; it would be useful to determine how many Religious and Priestly Vocations to the Church have come about as a result of the Sisters’ mentorship styles within their places of work.

References


CONTRIBUTORS

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