

Uganda Hosts ASEC Staff Training and Celebrates 20th Anniversary

Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru

It was all Jubilation when African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC) celebrated 20 years on January 10, 2020 during the ASEC Staff Training organised by Association of the Religious in Uganda (ARU).

“We thank the founders of ASEC and you the participants for blessing us with your presence! ASEC has done great things by educating our sisters especially counselors whom the world needs most. Thank you directors and coordinators especially those in Uganda for the job well done. As Africans let us use the opportunity offered; avoid being selfish by thinking in terms of tribes and institutions of origin so that we bring unity and remain prophetic voices,” Sr. Anamaria Nankusu RSCS the President of ARU remarked in her speech.

While Sr. Lydia Apili Bwor, the Secretary General – ARU in a welcome remark thanked ASEC for choosing Uganda for their training. She promised prayers for ASEC to grow from strength to strength. And CONGRATULATED ASEC for clocking 20. She invited ASEC team for dinner which turned to be a huge celebration animated by Misizi entertainment group.

Sr. Lydia also recalled how they experienced tough love as pioneers of ASEC. Joined by Sr. Germina Keneema, the program Director of Uganda and Sr. Leonard Andrew; they sang to memorize the good time they had together during ASEC training.

The staff training that took place at Mestil Hotel, Kampala attracted 18 participants from 10 African countries: Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, South Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Zambia, Lesotho and with its Executive Director Sr. Cecilia Draru from the USA. The participants were basically Country ASEC Program Directors and Coordinators.

The eight- day training (Jan.5-12th) was guided by the theme: *Strengthening Capacity for efficient Management of ASEC Offices in Africa*. Among others, the team made country reports, they were also inducted into various disciplines like Leadership styles and competence, effective communication, Professional code of conduct and ethics, Finance, time and resource management.

Sr. Cecilia the Executive Director thanked ARU team under the leadership of Sr. Anamaria Nankusu the President: “Thank you for being prophetic voices, for praying, loving, for righteousness and neighborliness. The Conference of Sisters is helping to share the beauty of dynamic charisms, mission and spirituality. Hilton Foundation is a result of sisters’ good ministry-the Loreto Sisters. Yet the beneficiaries are worldwide! There is need for diversity not competition but collaboration,” Sr. Cecilia the ASEC Director remarked.

Sr. Draru was also happy with what she referred to as “nice shock of ASEC Anniversary”. She appreciated ARU for being a home for all sisters. And added that there is need to give knowledge and skills for the growing Church in Africa. “Sisters are the social face of the Catholic Church. ASEC is ready to train vibrant religious who are ardent in ministry. Sisters often do work for which they are underqualified. Hence, ASEC is set out to provide expertise through capacity building programs,” she concluded.

Given a phenomenon where the African Catholic Consecrated Women have been moving uphill, trying day by day to overcome myriads of obstacles: Such as poverty, hunger, disease, let alone war, violence and effects of global warming; ASEC came in handy and offered rescue through educational programs.

The collaborative strength powered and pioneered by the African Sisters with USA partners bridged many gaps in Africa: Institute of the Servant of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (SIHM)- Mary Hood University, Society of Holy Child Jesus (SHCJ)- Rosemont College, Sisters of St Joseph –Philadelphia- Chestnut Hill College, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia-Neuman University Are Charter Members who collaborate with Partners like Conrad Hilton Foundation and other Associate Members in ASEC program.

The history of ASEC dates back to 1995 when growing solidarity among women religious in Africa and the United States sparked a commitment to work together to address the issue of educational access. As a result of needs assessment and careful analysis, ASEC, was inaugurated in 1999 by leaders of four above –mentioned congregations of women religious in Pennsylvania.

The program zeroed to the Catholic Consecrated women in Africa because of their ability and disposition to use their education to solve some of the biggest development challenges our world is facing today like: Improving healthcare, hunger and access to clean water, voices to people who are persecuted and silenced, they care for the young, the old and the forgotten and mentor others, create jobs, strengthen congregations and unite communities.