



# THE ACWECA

The Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa

## Magazine



MAGAZINE

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**ACWECA lauds  
CHF President**



**Religious Institutes  
unite to combat  
human trafficking**

# Editor's Note



Sr. Helen Kasaka, LSMI

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- Mabvuto Munthali – Malawi
- Sr. Immaculate Tusingwire - AWRIM
- Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru - ARU
- Sr. Kayula Lesa – Zambia
- Samuel Daka – ZAS
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Welcome to the second edition of The ACWECA Magazine. This is a magazine for the Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa.

It covers several issues that include Activities of the association in the ACWECA region, and issues of governance, development news from the Church organisations, major events in the Church, topical issues in the church, matters of national importance, which are related to the church.

The magazine also carries adverts. We urge companies, individuals, national associations, our partners, and our readers to advertise with us. Your involvement can be through subscriptions, financial contributions, or contributions in kind, all of which play a pivotal role in sustaining and furthering our initiatives.

I take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the ACWECA President, Sr. Rosalia Sakayombo, for her steadfast support and collaboration. Your guidance and encouragement inspire us to relentlessly pursue our objectives for the benefit of the association.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General,

Sr. Bridgita Samba, and ACWECA staff for the support they are giving to the communication office. I do not take that for granted.

In a particular way, let me also express gratitude to ACWECA correspondents who have consistently contributed when called upon, demonstrating their commitment to our noble cause. When they are asked to submit a write-up, they do so promptly beating the deadlines. They are there for us any time we need them.

In the same breath, I express my sincere gratitude to our generous sponsors, whose unwavering support has propelled our flagship activities.

In conclusion, I look forward to receiving support towards this exciting journey with you, our cherished members. ACWECA is not just an association; it is a family where we come together to support, uplift, and celebrate each other. Let us join hands and work towards a stronger and more vibrant community.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to ACWECA.



# ACWECA announces theme for **THE 2024 PLENARY**

**By Staff Reporter**



The Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA) has unveiled the theme for next year's Golden Jubilee Plenary scheduled for August 2024 in Malawi.

The theme of the plenary is **"Transformative holistic formation for authentic living towards a deeper evangelization in the ACWECA Region and beyond."**

Announcing the theme during a recent meeting in Uganda, attended by the Board Members of ACWECA and Executive Secretaries from the ten member countries of ACWECA, the President Sr. Rosalia Sakayombo said that this would be a two-tier celebration, as ACWECA will be marking 50 years since its inception.

Sr. Sakayombo urged each national association to spread the word and prepare

members for the milestone event.

"We therefore invite each other, especially as Chairpersons and Secretaries General of the National Associations to take back the message to our national Conferences and beyond, and put the Associations in the mood of prayer and intensive preparations for this great event in our Region," Sr. Sakayombo said.

## THEME

*"Transformative holistic formation for authentic living towards a deeper evangelization in the ACWECA Region and beyond."*

# ACWECA lauds CHF President

By Staff Reporter

Thank you, CHF,  
for serving humanity  
through the work  
of the Sisters



The Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa, (ACWECA) has commended the President and Chief Executive Officer for the Conrad Hilton Foundation (CHF) Peter Laugharn for supporting Sisters in the region.

ACWECA Secretary General Sister Bridgita Mwawasi heaped praises on Laugharn during his recent visit to Kenya this year.

“What the Foundation has done for the Sisters of this region has, and is already leaving a lasting impression. The fact that Catholic Sisters can now work with professional partners like Strathmore University, is a sign that Sisters can stop at nothing in their quest to impact society

positively. This is a leap of faith for the Sisters, thanks to supporters like CHF that continuously make this possible,” Sister Mwawasi said.

Sr. Mwawasi said Sisters are benefiting from the foundation at both individual and congregational levels in knowledge, skills, and business.

“Sisters are guided by their charisms to transform their ministries into social enterprises. Is that not business like no







other? This is possible. Thanks to the enthusiasm, passion, and commitment that each of the parties to the collaboration is putting into the initiative," she said.

She said Sisters in the region are following in Conrad Hilton's, entrepreneurial footsteps and are able to be supported by the CHF through Partners like Strathmore Business School.

"Thank you, CHF, for serving humanity through the work of the Sisters. Together, let us continue to dream big, so that, like Mr. Hilton would say, we can continue to achieve big things!

Laugharn said Conrad Hilton believed in Sisters and included them in his will. He commended the Sisters for the good work they do in serving mankind.

"You are devoted to social good. You are devoted to the betterment of mankind, and you do business. I think that's a powerful combination, one that we are very glad to support," he said.

Sr. Mwawasi assured the President and Team as well as the entire CHF family, unending prayers from the Sisters in the ACWECA Region.

The Associate Vice President of

Programme Operations and Head of Catholic Sisters Sr. Jane Wakahiu also commended the Sisters for their work.

"Today that panel has demonstrated that really dreaming big, thinking big, and acting big can always become a true action.

"I am so delighted and I look forward to more engagement. We know that sisters work and stay in rural areas where sometimes even government services do not exist. Please continue supporting them," Sr. Wakahiu said.

***"You are devoted to social good. You are devoted to the betterment of mankind, and you do business. I think that's a powerful combination, one that we are very glad to support"***

# AMECEA Bishops commend religious women for bringing energised positivity and cohesion to the mission of Christ.

By Staff Reporter



The Bishop Chairman of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA), Charles Kasonde, has congratulated and commended the Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA) for bringing energised positivity and cohesion to the mission of Christ.

The appreciation and commendation by AMECEA was made at the "synod on synodality" second meeting between Bishops representing the AMECEA regions and the ACWECA religious women leadership team.

"We cherish these bonds of relationships, but in so doing, we realised that the associations under ACWECA, the mother of religious women organisations, bring a lot of positivity and cohesion to the mission of Christ, and this has to be commended. To our sisters, we say congratulations!" said Bishop Charles Kasonde. He was speaking in his capacity as AMECEA Bishop President.

The meeting took place at the Donum Dei

Centre in Nairobi, Kenya.

Speaking about how AMECEA and ACWECA could contribute to the greater vision of the African continent, Bishop Kasonde spoke of the need to challenge African politicians and presidents under the African Union (AU) to look at ways and means of strengthening their bonds of relationship as political leaders. This would enable Africa's politicians to contribute to the governance of Africa in a manner that helps the emancipation of Africa.

The Bishop said that Africa is a sleeping giant endowed by the grace of God with various gifts, ranging from good climate, mineral wealth, and resources that can clearly develop Africa and emancipate it by empowering its poor populations.

"We are a very rich people but poor at the same time. We sleep on minerals, eat on top of minerals, and suffer on top of the wealth God has given us," the Bishop pointed out. Bishop Kasonde said that some areas in Africa are war-torn, where there is great suffering of people who are internally and



externally displaced by the violent conflicts. Some of these wars are unceasing, killing innocent brothers and sisters and destroying property.

This is a lost moment for Africa which cannot be recovered, he observed.

“If only our leaders at that political level would come together and clearly look at the importance of Africa and the use of the gifts that God has given us, with fairness, justice, and equity in the extraction of our resources and the maintenance of the peace with which we are enrolled by our Lord, Africa can change in five days,” The Bishop said.

Bishop Kasonde said that religious leaders, priests, religious men, and women could contribute in various ways to the governance of the continent. “We should not belittle our contribution to the development of Africa. We need to accompany our political leaders and encourage them to act fairly and with sincerity of heart as they govern over the people of Africa,” he added.

The Zambian prelate further observed that Africans desire to live in a continent that erases artificial borders created by the colonisers. They wish to be identified as one people of Africa. The resulting intra-trade would enhance Africa's economies as a whole.

The AMECEA President believes that the battle is not lost. There is a need, though, for commitment to what Africans want to achieve and develop. The continent can still improve its prospects for peace and ensure that the joy and peace that the Lord has given to Africans continue to sustain the environment and add to the desire for a clean environment. Africa can do better than it is doing now. The hope is still intact; people have faith in those political leaders of goodwill striving to make positive contributions to the development of Africa.

Bishop Kasonde further spoke of the Church's call for continuous accompaniment

to Africa's younger generation – “our children and young adults,” he said.

He appreciated the spirit of synodality prevailing in the AMECEA region. He commended the region for the unique interaction between women religious leaders and the Bishops of AMECEA. Bishop Kasonde said it was the wish of the AEMCEA Bishops that the bond created so far be strengthened.

“May God continue to bless our efforts, and may He continue to enrich this relationship between AMECEA and ACWECA,” he prayed.

For her part, the President of the Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA), Sr. Rosalia Sakayombo, said that as leaders of religious women, they had come to the meeting bearing in mind the synodal discussions at the just-ended Synod on Synodality meeting, in Rome and still going on in local communities and dioceses.

She said the women religious leaders of the region had come to the ACWECA – AMECEA second meeting with open minds and in a spirit of collaboration.

“We would also like to mention that, as ACWECA, we are happy with what has happened from the last time that we met. We are having remarkable collaboration that has continued to happen between AMECEA and ACWECA at different levels,” she said.

Sr. Sakayombo further urged continued evaluation of the growing partnership between the Bishops and the religious women of the region.

“We hope that as we gather here, we shall go back from the first time we met to the current time. How has the spirit moved all of us, what has happened from what we called ourselves to be previously and appreciate the progress made,” she stressed.

### **The ACWECA 2024 Golden Jubilee**

Sr. Sakayombo officially informed the

Bishops that the upcoming ACWECA 19th Plenary Assembly had been convened.

The Plenary Assembly will be held in Lilongwe, the capital of Malawi, from 18 to 25 August 2024. It would be marked as a milestone celebration of ACWECA's 50 years," said Sr. Sakayombo.

She invited religious sisters of the region, to prepare members for the event. "Let us put

our national conferences and association in the mood for prayer and intensive preparations for this great event in our region," said the ACWECA President.

The ACWECA region comprises 10 countries: Sudan, South Sudan, Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritria, and Zambia. Zimbabwe is an affiliate member.

# JPIC coordinators meet

By Srs. Immaculate Tusingwire and Mary Lilly Driciru



they can develop a JPIC Regional Plan.

The topical discussions of the workshop revolved around understanding the mission of the Church; the global, regional, and country situation and how to respond to them, and JPIC communication strategies and use of technology and visibility strategies.

The main facilitator of the workshop, Peter Kiama appealed to participants in the beautiful words of St. Francis of Assisi, "Start by doing what is necessary, then do what is possible, then you will do the impossible."

Kiama also affirmed that JPIC is part of the mission of the Church and that the guiding principle of justice, peace, and integrity of creation is the Catholic Social Teaching, which is also a call to action.

He advised the participants to come up with prioritized common issues affecting the ACWECA region that they wish to focus on. Each Association drew up a four-quarter plan based on these issues. The participants in their sharing attested that this workshop created a base for the beginning of their journey together as ACWECA JPIC Coordinators.

The participants had the opportunity to learn from ACWECA staff what happens at the Secretariat level on a day-to-day basis with regard to the various programs and projects such as the Sisters Blended Value Program (SBVP), Communication Office, Leadership and Formation, Strengthening the Capacity of Religious Women in Early Childhood Development, (SCORECD) and finances.

The Secretary General of the Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA) Sr. Bridgita Samba has called for collaboration among Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) coordinators of the association to be strong witnesses of a possible just world.

Sr. Samba said this during a six-day workshop organized by the association in Nairobi, Kenya.

The workshop attracted participants from eight countries under the ACWECA region, namely Uganda, Malawi, South Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Ethiopia.

"It is good to work as a team," Sr. Samba said.

ACWECA JPIC Coordinator Sr. Clara Mangwengwe said that the workshop was intended to help the coordinators understand better the JPIC concept and the role of women Religious on issues of JPIC.

The meeting also wanted to remind them of the national activities aligned to the ACWECA Strategic Plan (2024 – 2028) so that together



# SBVP

## turns Sisters into business experts

**By Staff Reporter**

Strathmore Business School (SBS) says it is impressed with the Sisters' Blended Value Programme (SBVP) because it has transformed the lives of Sisters under the Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA).

SBS principal investigator Dr. Angela Ndunge said this when the school paid a courtesy visit to ACWECA in Ongata Rongai in May this year.

"We came to appreciate the role ACWECA is playing in transforming the lives of people wherever your Sisters are," Dr. Ndunge said.

The ACWECA SBVP coordinator Sr. Celestine Nasiali said the Sisters are now able to write business plans and proposals. "The program was hectic at first but we thank God that we were able to finish successfully, especially in 2022. More Sisters in each country are now expressing a lot of interest in the program. In general, Sisters have embraced this program," Sr. Celestine said.

"After the training, Sisters are able to better use available resources in their communities. They are able to engage their communities and extend the knowledge and skills to the surrounding communities," said Lucy Kuria, SBS Regional Project Coordinator of the programme.



Lucy said it is her desire to see more Sisters in the programme.

"We also have 3 level programs that target the Major Superiors, managers, and the support staff of Sisters projects respectively. Strathmore also organizes conferences and other networking opportunities for the Sisters," said Kuria.

The ACWECA Secretary General, Sr. Bridgita Samba commended SBS for the support given to the Sisters. She said that SBS had been angels to the sisters by putting their hearts, strength, and everything into the project.

"The kind of training and exposure you are giving to the sisters is something beyond what we expected. It is not just about training. The sisters are also receiving mentorship, coaching, as well as accompaniment in their business endeavors". Sr. Samba said

Through this project, the sisters are aligning their initiatives – i.e. their ministries into UN's Sustainable Development Goals, (SDGs) to bring the change and transformation the world is looking for.

In whatever enterprise the sisters wish to venture into, ACWECA strives to ensure that it must be in line with their charism, vision, and mission, as "Social enterprises are always mission-driven".

# ACWECA trains 211 Sisters under the Leadership for Mission program

By Staff Reporter



Financial management is very important in the running of our institutions. It enhances the organizational capacity to fulfil its mission and continue to make a lasting impact on society. For this reason, the Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa, (ACWECA) carried out a series of workshops that trained 211 Catholic sisters in basic financial management in five countries as part of the ongoing formation of the Sisters. The training also focused on the rights and dignity of consecrated women, and the gift of human sexuality in the life of consecrated women – who are the key protagonists in the mission of ACWECA. These workshops happened in five ACWECA member countries of Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, and Ethiopia.

Commenting on the training that happened in her country, the Secretary General of the Conference of Major Religious Superiors (CMRS) in Zimbabwe, Sr. Mercy Machona, (CMFC) said the three-day workshop was fruitful and that “the sisters have learned how to manage and administer funds in their different congregations as they run many institutions”.

“It was an opportunity to have an overview of different policies for example; assets policy, finance policy, and handover and takeover policy amongst others. This would help them for accountability purposes and that they become responsible for whatever

would be taking place in their congregations,” Sr Machona said.

Sr. Bridgid Chibesa of the Little Servant of Mary Immaculate Sisters in Zambia who works as an administrator for St. Paul's Hospital in Kashikishi, Nchelenge, and leader of the community of sisters said the training helped her to understand how to take care of herself and to make choices that reflect who she is and what she believes.

“My sexuality is central to my identity and not being able to express myself leads to damaging my sense of self-worth and overall mental health,” Sr. Chibesa said.

Leadership for Mission programme Coordinator, Sr. Christine Mwangi of the Sisters of Emmanuel commended Missio Aachen for their support and concern for consecrated women.

“As I followed keenly on the workshops in the five countries I was overwhelmed by the appreciation of the sisters. The topics were relevant and fitted to different groups. The National Associations knew the needs of the different groups of sisters,” Sr Mwangi said.

The training mainly targeted Congregational superiors and formators. However, other Sisters who participated in the training appreciated the gift they are to the Church and to society. Understanding their gift of sexuality was a benefit to help the sisters appreciate the gift of their motherhood and their role in the Church.

Enlightening them on their dignity, rights, and obligations was also of great importance as it created awareness of the contribution that the consecrated women make to the formation of other members of the society.



# REFLECTIONS ON CSW

By Sr. Kayula Lesa - ZAS

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the United Nations' principal global policy-making body dedicated to gender equality and the advancement of women.

The 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women – the first in-person gathering since 2019 – took place from 6-17 March 2023.

The CSW's work focuses on promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Bringing together all member states along with a large civil society presence, the Commission meets annually in March.

Each year, the CSW focuses on a priority theme as well as the review of a previous theme. In 2023, the priority theme was 'Innovation and technological change and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls'.

When I was informed that I would be attending the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) session at the UN in New York, two important points resurfaced on gender from what I would have learnt from my studies:

- Your gender matters because it determines your access to resources and power.
- No country in the world treats its women as well as it does with its men.

Therefore, I was looking forward to learning about the changes that have taken place globally in closing the gender gap.

Of particular interest to me was the priority theme: Innovation and technological change and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.”

This was important to me because I did not quite know how women and girls were fairing in the area of technology. Prior to the beginning of the Conference, I was privileged to participate in an orientation workshop organized by the Justice Coalition of Religious (JCOR) New York, on



the CSW Sessions.

The information from the workshop was helpful because I now knew I needed to reflect on how best I could make use of my time at the conference with hundreds of events. I, therefore, thought I needed to be strategic to get the most out of the conference.

So, I made the timetable for what events I would attend based on my areas of interest and what I wanted to learn. I also formulated my objective: To be more informed, more inspired, and more committed. Thus, I recorded what I felt I was learning, moments of inspiration, and insights that would help me commit to addressing issues of gender at a personal level.

### **Technology as a disrupter:**

The Conference affirmed that there is a digital gender gap in many contexts and this is a new form of poverty. A significant number of presentations acknowledged that in career paths that relate to technology, for example, there are more men than women. In the coming years, there will be more employment opportunities in this area and if girls and women are not adequately prepared, it will be difficult for them to seize these opportunities.

It was also clear that technology is facilitating gender-based violence (GBV). Women, for instance, in important political positions are harassed online to the extent that they are forced to give up their positions. In an arena where women are already the minority in every sense of the word, women's opportunities for participation dwindle.

### **Evaluation of Men and women in the workplace**

It was also interesting for me to be awakened to the concept of how we

evaluate people in the workplace. The discussion that society is all the time evaluating men and women, I found interesting. Little credit is given to what women do while more credit is given to what men do. In this evaluation, women accumulate disadvantages and these are significant in achieving gender equality and they need attention.



### **Where did I draw inspiration?**

The presence of political leaders such as Teresa May was an important source of inspiration. These were a symbol of the talents and gifts women possess that are often not put to maximum use, especially in the political arena.

At another level, they symbolized the difficulty there is for a woman to be at the highest level of the political space, not because they have no capacity but because they are a woman and that is not their space. I could only admire them for the hard choices they made to be in arenas where they aren't expected to be. They encouraged me to continue to work hard and make contributions in areas where



society does not expect me to be, of course, in my own space as a Religious woman.

Another moment of inspiration was simply the presence of many women at the UN. It did not matter what race, age, or social class one was in, for we were just women in one place with a passion to make the world better for generations to come and for themselves now. The common question, when I met others, was; which country are you from?" This was then followed by a photo session with strangers. What a lovely world!!

Listening to the experiences of Black women who have experienced racism in societies got my attention. This is an area I have not perhaps generally paid attention to because I was not brought up in a society where I had to be called "Black" as nearly everyone was my colour and there was and there is nothing wrong with being that. Black in my society was not synonymous with being "a thief, a criminal, or a symbol of poverty.

So, I have lived my life, very much at home in my skin, although aware that there is discrimination based on race. The experience of others left me with some key questions, "What is their main source of discrimination? Is it race or gender? Are we looking into issues of women because at least these affect many around the world and ignoring race because it affects fewer people? These were my thoughts within the context of the CSW and they just made me conclude that everything that discriminates needs attention whether it affects fewer or more people.

### **More Commitment**

"Charity begins at home," it is often said. Thus, I committed to ensuring that the girls in my family (my nieces) are exposed to technology from an early age. To be practical, I asked my nephew to have lessons for the 6-9-year-old girls in computers beyond what they learn at

school. I believe this will contribute to narrowing the digital gender gap.

At a macro level, I committed to promoting access to computers for children in rural schools in Zambia. I have been working in 20 villages in Shiwangáandu District to promote a culture of child safeguarding.

Through my work, I realized that children in these schools have computer lessons in theory-no computers for practical engagement. This context needs advocacy as this is where the digital gap begins not just between girls and boys but between the poor and the rich.



# Religious institutes unite to combat HUMAN TRAFFICKING

By *Benedict Mukoni - ARU*



**W**hen Talitha Kum Uganda Network (TAKUN) convened at the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) in February 2023, its main objective was to prepare Religious Institutes to participate in the processes of combating human trafficking from an informed perspective. It was to also train and integrate the new and old members of the network.

The meeting also aimed to build synergies of religious institutes to combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and modern slavery in Uganda.

TAKUN Coordinator, Uganda, Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru said the network started when ARU sent four sisters to attend the Talitha Kum conference in Nairobi Kenya in 2011, which prompted the sisters in Uganda to get involved in anti-trafficking activities immediately after the training.

In 2016, a representative from Uganda

attended the second International Coordination Committee of Talitha Kum in Rome and the following year, the International Coordinator of Talitha Kum Sr. Gabriella Bottani, CMS, visited Uganda and ARU to support the organization of the Network.

In 2018, the religious sisters in Uganda were able to organize an inter-congregational group of religious sisters working on this issue and establish the basis for a Uganda Network.

Representatives from ARU also attended the first General Assembly of Talitha Kum International in Rome, in 2019. The team came back with the hope of igniting the fire of Talitha Kum Uganda.

However, due to a non-functional committee, it could not take off as expected. Another big blow to the growth of the network was the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, (2020-21).



“This workshop is expected, among others, to forge a way forward. In addition, streamline the committee, and activities and introduce the sisters of the Holy Cross as Fiscal Agents to propel TAKUN to another level,” the coordinator said.

The Secretary-General, ARU, Sr Lydia Apili Bwor reminded the participants about the importance of the network.

“With a communication network in place, the task force for effective communication about charity works, health, anti-trafficking, care for the elderly, and the like would ensure group sustainability and enable sharing of success stories and good practices,” she said.

TAKUN hopes to enhance continuous education to families and communities on the misuse of the workforce and human trafficking and facilitate the generation of

collective data that will demonstrate and highlight the collective impact of the sisters' ministries.

It also empowers survivors of human trafficking, promotes awareness creation through the media and other platforms to combat human trafficking and amplifies advocacy on critical elements of human development.

Thirteen institutes of Consecrated Life attended the workshop, which culminated in the selection of a new committee. Members of the Committee include; Talitha Kum Uganda Network Coordinator, Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru, MSMMC), Project Coordinator; Sr. Semerita Mbambu, CSC, Kampala Arch Diocese coordinator; Br. Dominic Joseph Bwambale, BSCL, Tororo Arch Diocese coordinator; Sr. Fernanda Christinelli, CMS, Gulu Arch Diocese coordinator; Br. Rogers Mwansa, M. Afr., Mbarara Arch Diocese coordinator; Sr. Rose Mary Kemigisha, DST.



## TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN

# Bishop of Ngong Visits ACWECA Secretariat

By Staff Reporter



The Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA) plays a key role in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ through integral evangelisation in this region.

This was said by the bishop of Kenya's Catholic Diocese of Ngong Rt. Rev. John Oballa at the ACWECA Secretariat recently. Bishop Oballa who was on a pastoral visit in Nkoroi Parish where the ACWECA Secretariat is domiciled, was accompanied by the parish priest of Nkoroi Fr. Boniface Kimondolo, and his assistant Fr. Eugene Ekeya, both of the Order of Carmelites.

Welcoming the bishop, ACWECA Secretary General Sr. Bridgita Samba SSJ said the visit was very significant to the Sisters working at the secretariat. She thanked the bishop for his concern for Sisters living and working in his diocese.

She shared with the bishop the different activities that the Sisters at ACWECA are involved in, highlighting Leadership for Mission (LM), Strengthening the Capacity of Religious Women in Early Childhood Development (SCORE – ECD), Sisters Blended Value Project (SBVP), and Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC), and Youth and Family as among the key programs of ACWECA. She also appreciated the pastoral care extended to the ACWECA Secretariat by the Carmelite missionaries working in the parish.

Rt. Rev. John Oballa said he is proud to have the Sisters in his diocese and acknowledged that the nuns have made it possible to evangelize the whole person through the provision of quality education, pastoral care, care of the most vulnerable children, and many other initiatives that they have initiated throughout the region.



# Recounting

## COVID-19 Nasty Experiences

By Staff Reporter

The COVID-19 pandemic situation affected the ministries of many Sisters in the AMECEA and ACWECA region. Many institutes' operations were affected economically, socially, and spiritually. A number of congregations experienced a big crisis in terms of stability, efficiency, and performance.

With funds from the Hilton Foundation ACWECA embarked on a project to support the ministries of sisters affected by the pandemic in the region. We bring you a glimpse of the impact of the project across the region.

In Tanzania, the medical officer in charge of St. Joseph Hospital in Moshi Sr. Dr. Hellen Kyilyosudu recounts the untold and unforgettable experience that she went through during the breakout of Covid-19, which led to the loss of lives of many people.

Sr. Kyilyosudu, narrated to ACWECA staff writer how her hospital was affected by the pandemic. Former medical officer in charge Sr. Dr. Urbani Marceli Lyimo CDNK, died during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic while treating and taking care of Covid-19 patients.

That was the first painful experience of the COVID-19 pandemic that Sr Dr Hellen went through as she had worked with the deceased since November 2015 at her first appointment after she had completed her internship at Bugando Medical Centre in Mwanza City.

She remembers Sr. Dr. Urbani Marceli Lyimo as her lovely spiritual director as well as Apostolate Mentor.

During the outbreak of the pandemic, 10





staff members at the hospital confirmed COVID-19 positive while others were exempted from daily duties due to COVID-19 signs and symptoms and even others due to fear of contracting the disease.

At the height of the viral infections, people died from pulmonary embolism causing great distress to the medical staff. There was support from the government which provided 30 oxygen Cylinders (from the Ministry of Health through the RMO office), but this was not enough when the situation worsened during the third wave.

Sr. Kyilyosudu also points out that the mutation of the virus witnessed during the third wave of the made it very difficult to treat the symptoms as compared to the first and second waves. This wave also claimed a number of priests and Sisters, a big blow to the local church.

Sisters at the hospital with other health workers did their best but still, patients with very serious conditions in need of oxygen (with breathing difficulties) were referred to Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre due to lack of an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at St. Joseph hospital; some reached safely whereas others died on the way to KCMC. According to Sr. Kyilyosudu, Sisters at the hospital attended to 747 suspected cases in total, and about 240 were confirmed positive for Covid-19 among which, 202 patients were treated and recovered and unfortunately 27 deaths were registered.

The religious Sister expressed disappointment that a number of consecrated sisters and priests at the hospital passed on due to the unavailability of Intensive Care Units (ICU), and a standard radiology department.

In all three waves of the pandemic, the hospital operated with difficulties due to insufficient funds to purchase medicine, medical supplies, and medical equipment necessary for treating COVID-19 cases.

With the donation from ACWECA, Dr. Kyilyosudu said the hospital was able to purchase medicine and other medical supplies that was in great need. Those who could not afford treatment costs were now able to get service easily. There is now improved infrastructure (construction of the well-ventilated waiting area for the patients and visitors; the initiation of the construction of the new maternity building with five floors which will contain the ICU and departments which were lacking at the hospital) and sufficient knowledge on emergency preparedness.

The fund also enabled the hospital to accommodate a larger number of COVID-19 cases as compared to other hospitals of the same level around the Kilimanjaro region. Many patients were thus saved from the severe effects of the virus. St. Joseph became the leading Hospital in Kilimanjaro region with a good cure rate of 88.9 percent Covid-19 cases.

St. Joseph Hospital belongs to the Sisters of Our Lady of Kilimanjaro (CDNK). It was founded by Sr. Cecilia Mbuya CDNK, who served as the first African Superior General of the Congregation. She was inspired to establish a health centre in 1998 after she saw a woman delivering a baby at the farm where currently the Hospital is located, while she was on the way to Mawenzi Referral Regional Hospital.



# ZAS Launches Counter-Human Trafficking Project

By Staff Reporter



The Zambia Association of Sisterhoods (ZAS) has launched a counter-human trafficking project, Talitha Kum Zambia (TAKUZA) to end human trafficking in Zambia.

The project was launched at the Mika Hotel in Lusaka in April.

TAKUZA is a faith-based national network whose vision is to ensure that everyone is free from exploitation. It is present in all provincial headquarters in Zambia and other districts where sisters are serving. TAKUZA is part of the story that began in 2009, in Rome, Italy, when the International Union of Superiors General established Talitha Kum International, a global network working to end human trafficking.

On the other hand, ZAS is committed to supporting women Religious in their formation and evangelisation mission by offering relevant programmes that meet

spiritual and development needs. It was founded in 1958 and currently has a membership of 45 Congregations.

Speaking during the launch, TAKUZA Director Sr. Kayula Lesa said the project had raised awareness of human trafficking to 43,451 people in Zambia.

Speaking at the same function, the Caritas Director Fr. Gabriel Mapulanga said human trafficking was evil and real. The vice, he added, was not only ensnaring to so many women and girls but also men and boys.

“Human trafficking is horrible. Pope Francis has stressed repeatedly that 'human trafficking is an open wound on the body of contemporary society,'” Fr. Mapulanga said adding that it is also a crime against humanity and an atrocious scourge that is present throughout the world on a broad scale.



He commended TAKUZA for its efforts to collaborate with the government through its various departments in sensitising the Zambian community about human trafficking.

“All of us need to get involved in the fight. To eliminate human trafficking, we need a mobilisation comparable in size to that of the phenomenon itself,” he said adding, “And since its inception, TAKUZA has been doing a lot of work in ensuring that the masses are sensitised on the issue and it is amazing to see that other organisations are also working with the network.”

Fr. Mapulanga called for prosecution of traffickers.

The Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security Permanent Secretary Dickson Matembo in a speech read on his behalf by the Anti-Human Trafficking Secretariat National Co-ordinator Boris Mulengu said that human trafficking remains a huge challenge in Zambia due to the complexity of the issue, and the sophistication of traffickers.

Mulengu indicated that the recent increase in cases of domestic human trafficking is of particular concern to the government, hence the need to enhance awareness across all sections of society.

“Traffickers treat human beings in a manner that commodifies and dehumanises their victims for personal gain. Therefore, the government has put in place measures to prevent human trafficking, protect victims and punish perpetrators,” he said.

Mulengu commended TAKUZA for its efforts to end human through education, research and advocacy.

“The Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security has opened the anti-human trafficking space to non-state actors, both Non- Governmental and Inter-Governmental to ensure a strong multi-faceted approach against the scourge of human trafficking,” Mulengu said.

The expression “Talitha Kum” has the transformative power of compassion and mercy, which awakens the deep desire for dignity and life which may be asleep and injured by the many forms of exploitation.

The shared mission of TAKUZA and its network members is to end human trafficking. For this purpose, TAKUZA engages in education and advocacy and promotes initiatives that address the root causes of human trafficking and victims' access to protection services



# Escaping War in Sudan

By Sr. Jane Ngamita, SHS

ACWECA implores all members to keep in prayer our member Sudan. The effects of war has hugely affected the Church and the ministries of the Sisters in that country. We continue to pray for peace and an end to the war in the Sudan.

Sr. Jane Ngamita, SHS

The tension in Khartoum began in April 2019 when President Omar El Bashir was overthrown in a military coup. Since then, there have been shootings here and there in the major towns and the city of Khartoum.

Discontent from civilians who wanted civilian rule started showing by the burning of motor vehicle tyres in the city of Khartoum making the beautiful city look ugly.

On April 15, 2023, the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) sparked up an armed conflict that burned down most towns and Khartoum city, displacing almost 1.1 million people internally and into neighbouring countries of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Chad, and South Sudan.

Those who fled Khartoum include bishops, priests, and religious brothers and sisters to various destinations. Among them were four sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus who fled on April 26 2023 through the Renk border into South Sudan.

The four sisters were Sr. Karmela Diakon, Provincial Superior, South Sudan, Sr. Domenica Nyalam, Sr. Lily Iboro, and Sr. Agnes Ladur from Renk Catholic Parish.

The sisters plus other people who were escaping the conflict were given a Toyota vehicle that could take them to Folouch where they would be airlifted on a cargo plane to Juba.

The unfortunate thing was that on the way the rear tyre of the vehicle burst leading to overturning of the vehicle four times. The passengers sustained injuries but thank God all survived the ordeal.

One sister was injured on the leg, another broke the collarbone, the third got cracks on three ribs and the last one got wounded on the arm. All of them are on physical and psychological treatment in Juba. The Franciscan priest among them was hospitalised at Juba Teaching Hospital for a week but now recuperating in his community.

Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus have four communities in Sudan. The story above was about the sisters in one community. It is reported that the community in the refugee camp in the Coast region is rather safe and has remained with the refugees in the camp. Those in the Diocese of El'Obeid have also remained since the Bishop and priests did not escape. One more community in Omdurman, Khartoum had to be evacuated with other 300 people to Juba by bus on Tuesday, May 16, 2023. They arrived in Juba tired after five days of travel partly by bus and by plane on May 20, 2023

We thank God for the safe arrival of all who escaped from Khartoum, Sudan.



# Sr. Kagulura

## earns recognition from her Congregation

*By Staff Reporter*



Sr. Sylvia Kagulura has been a Board member of ACWECA for 4 years. ACWECA was honored to have her on board. As she exits the office, ACWECA welcomes on board Sr. Clare Moomba who is the new National President of ZAS.

**F**ormer Provincial Superior for The Little Servant Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary Conceived Immaculate (LSSBVMCI) for St. Charles Lwanga Province, Rev. Sister Sylvia N. Kagulura has earned special recognition from her congregation and the Zambia Association of Sisterhoods (ZAS) for being at the service of the Church and the institute, leading the province with affection and commitment.

Speaking to the sisters during the installation of the new Provincial Superior, Rev. Sr. Edith Sokoshi at Kasisi Retreat Centre in Lusaka in August 2023, the Superior General for the congregation Mother Dorota Baranowska said Sr. Kagulura displayed a true expression of the charism and spirituality of the institute in the St. Charles Lwanga Province.

Baranowska added that Sr. Kagulura accomplished the mission under her charge.

“I would like to thank you Mother Sylvia for the service rendered in the St. Charles Lwanga Province. You took a keen interest in all the apostolates and especially the



concern for formation. Sometimes you experienced hard times but through personal talk and community visitation and most of all through your prayers, perseverance, and sacrifice you made your service fruitful.

“Dear mother only God knows what you experienced in this time but you beautifully expressed everything before God during the long hours spent before the Blessed Sacrament,” Mother Baranowska said.

The new Provincial Superior, Sr. Edith Sokoshi also thanked Sr. Kagulura for accepting her into the previous council for a period of two terms.

“Through this, you have given me the opportunity to increase my understanding of the management of the province and the responsibility involved in the position of serving the sisters,” Sr. Sokoshi said.

Two of the Sisters, Clementina Phiri, headteacher of Lwitikila Girls Secondary School, and Dorothy Chongo, Student nurse at Lusaka Apex University commended Sr. Kagulura for her “visionary leadership” during her nine-year term.

Concurring with Sr. Phiri, Sr. Chongo said Sr. Kagulura was cheerful and caring.

“She dedicated to her prayer life and oftentimes when I visited Kasisi, I could see her adoring our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament at night. Her welcoming and charming character helped her to pull through in those nine years of service in the institute. She had a good spirit of sacrifice and love for both the young and the elderly sisters. Always ready to assist any sister who needed her attention and support,” Sr Chongo said.

The Secretary General of Zambia Association of Sisterhoods (ZAS) Sr. Elizabeth Muleya expressed deep appreciation for the pivotal role played by Sr. Kagulura.

Sr. Sylvia had a lot of influence; “She spearheaded the development of workplace policies and guidelines ensuring that the association had the required policies; she supported ongoing formation for all the sisters in Zambia; spearheaded the construction of the three storey-building – sustainability for the association; brought all major superiors in the implementation of projects through networking and she embraced new projects that came to the association,”

Sr. Kagulura was provincial superior for the Little Servant Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary Conceived Immaculate from 2014 to 2023. According to Sr. Muleya, Sr. Kagulura contributed a lot to the growth of ZAS as she served as its president for two terms from 2019 to 2022. It was at this time that she also served as ACWECA Board member.

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# ACWECA Catholic sisters hone advocacy, networking skills



Catholic sisters under the Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA) have described a two-day training on advocacy and networking they had as successful.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and ACWECA conducted a two-day training on how to use the advocacy manual for improving programming targeting 52 sisters from the Associations of Sisterhoods of Kenya (AOSK), Zambian Association of Sisterhoods (ZAS), Association of Women Religious in Malawi (AWRIM) and the member congregations.

The virtual training was facilitated by Florence Ogola a global media officer working with Oxfam International.

Ogola urged the sisters to implement what they had learnt.

Speaking on behalf of the participants, Sr. Joyce Nyagucha (ASE) former AOSK-SCORE Early Child Development (ECD) coordinator challenged the sisters to become good communicators since they had received the skills.

“The participants have realized that they need spokespersons; people who can talk, convince and articulate their problems very well; choose tools of communication according to their audience,” said Sr Nyagucha.

The participants also attained skills in monitoring and evaluation.

“We are going back empowered to make action plans on what to do next and make an impact in the community.” Sr. Nyagucha said.

On her part, Sr Alice Mkandawire, (SHR) AWRIM –SCORE ECD Coordinator said she felt enriched by the training.

“We have been doing advocacy training on different messages concerning ECD but this training has helped me to see a lot of gaps that were missing when doing our different advocacy. Now we will be able to conduct stakeholder mapping and stakeholder analysis.

Sr. Christabel Kazembe, ZAS –SCORE ECD Coordinator said the training had brought about awareness of what should be done as they advocated for identified issues in their communities.

“Before it was not easy to implement the advocacy well due to some challenges in understanding what advocacy was all about. After this training, we will try to put in place what we have learned because our knowledge about advocacy has been strengthened. We were not monitoring and



evaluating the progress of our advocacy but now we will try to monitor and evaluate the progress,” she said.

The SCORE ECD regional coordinator Sr. Teresa Banda (TS) said the training focused on equipping the sisters and their congregations with deeper knowledge and understanding of how they can plan and execute effective advocacy and networking initiatives.

The ACWECA Secretary General, Sr. Bridgita Samba (SSJ), revealed that

ACWECA challenged the sisters to take up leadership roles that will make a difference in the region.

“Sisters, I am seeing leaders in you and people who will take ACWECA to greater heights and I hope all of you have been mapping your stakeholders throughout this process.” Sr. Samba said.

Sr. Pauline Acayo (LSMIG) the coordinator of the SCORE ECD project commended the participants for their active participation.

# Gone but not Forgotten

**By Staff Reporter**

ACWECA continues to remember and to pray for Sister Mary Daniel Abut and Regina Luate Roba Catholic sisters who were, assassinated in South Sudan.

An act so blatant, evil, and hard to comprehend is the brutal killing of two Catholic Sisters, Mary Daniel Abut and Regina Luate Roba in South Sudan on August 16, 2021.

The two sisters had traveled with other Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to celebrate their 100th anniversary dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption Parish in Loa, where the congregation was founded in 1951. It took place on August 15, 2021.

The brutal incident happened on their



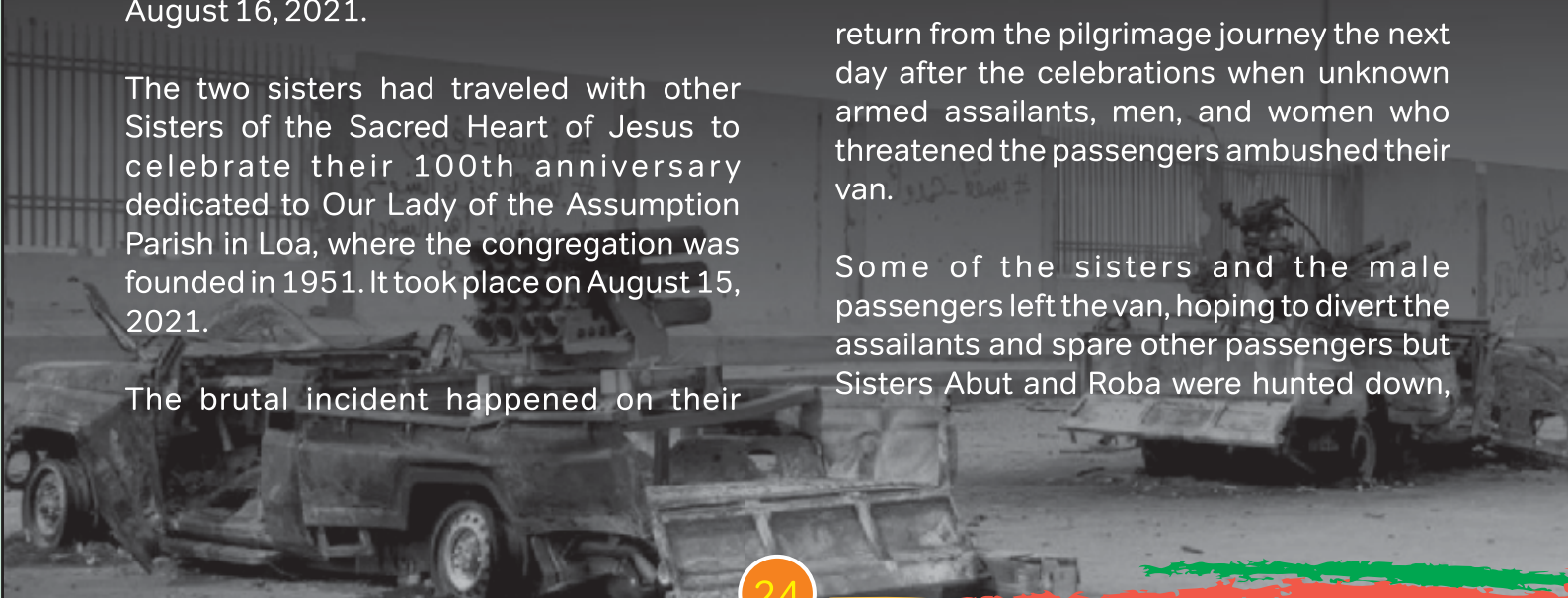
Sr. Regina Luate Roba



Sr. Mary Daniel Abut

return from the pilgrimage journey the next day after the celebrations when unknown armed assailants, men, and women who threatened the passengers ambushed their van.

Some of the sisters and the male passengers left the van, hoping to divert the assailants and spare other passengers but Sisters Abut and Roba were hunted down,



shot at, and killed, along with three other passengers.

They had left at 7:20 a.m. and made a stopover at a marketplace called ARU to buy vegetables and other necessities. But just a few metres from the marketplace, the bus was attacked by gunmen and a woman. Some Sisters and men who were able to flee escaped. Only three sisters were left on the bus because they were elderly and could not run.

One Sister sustained three bullets in the chest, another one was shot right in between the eye and the nose, and she died instantly.

According to eyewitnesses, the awful incident was not crossfire bullets that killed the Sisters but they were aimed at.

The assassinated, Sr. Abut was the head teacher of a primary school while Sr. Roba, a tutor, and administrator at the Catholic Health Training Institute. Both lived out their faith by working their best to improve the lives of others in the young and troubled nation of South Sudan.

The celebration was lively and attended by big officials from the Government among others including the President of South Sudan, the Vice President, and the Governor. It was a joyful moment and no one could imagine that such a catastrophic incident of killing could happen.

However, months later after the assassination, the relics of the two sisters were received at the altar dedicated to new Martyrs of Africa in the Basilica of St. Bartholomew.

Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia the President of the Pontifical Academy for Life said in the homily during the solemn introduction of the religious sisters' relics on Monday, May 23

“We are together in this Basilica of San Bartolomeo which Saint John Paul II wanted

to be dedicated to the New Martyrs. And we welcome the dress and sandals of Sister Regina and Sister Mary, killed in South Sudan on 16 August 2021 on the road to Juba as they returned, together with many other people, from the celebration for the centenary of the parish of Loa, in the diocese of Torit.”

Rome kept their relics in the Basilica of St. Bartholomew which has been dedicated to taking new Martyrs of Africa of the 21st century.

The relics were blessed on May 23, 2022, at the repository Altar in Rome for remembrance.

“As Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus connected to African Consecrated Women in the Eastern and Central African Countries (ACWECA), we feel bad but consoled that our sisters will intercede for us because they were killed because of the Gospel.

“ACWECA family now has two Martyrs in Heaven to intercede for us. We continue to pray for South Sudan that peace may prevail.” A sister from the Sacred Heart of Jesus said.

“It is very painful that there is no information about this killing from the Government so far or any traces. Some anonymous person has kept on intruding on a Postulant to interrogate novices on why they have come to undertake the training of Sisters.

“This happened in December 2021. At one time, one of the novices was kidnapped for four hours to interrogate her about the Formation house of Sisters and was later released,” another sister said at that time





# Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa, ACWECA



FIRST PRESIDENT OF ACWECA  
SR. MARIE THERESE GACHAMBI  
OF THE ASSUMPTION SISTERS OF NAIROBI

**Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA)** is comprised of the national associations of women religious from nine African nations: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Republic of Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, South Sudan and Zambia. Zimbabwe is an affiliate member.

## Vision

The Association envisions an empowered Women Religious with enhanced evangelization tools. It shall strive to promote the dignity and validity of human life of women religious in Eastern and Central Africa.

## Aim

To promote the spirit of collaboration and sharing of spiritual, human and economic resources among Member Conferences to enhance religious formation and strengthen leadership capacity for deeper evangelization

## GRATITUDE TO OUR FUNDERS

- Missio Aachen
- Conrad HILTON Foundation
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- Kindermissionswerk
- Diocese of Cologne
- Nancy Ottoboni
- Porticus
- Propaganda Fide
- Missio Munich
- Diocese of Augsburg

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