

A young woman wearing an orange hijab and glasses is seated at a wooden desk, focused on her work on a laptop. She is wearing a matching orange short-sleeved top. The desk also holds a blue pen and some papers. In the background, a window with a metal railing looks out onto a green outdoor area. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting an indoor workspace or classroom.

# Building *the* Global Sisterhood

Measurement, Evaluation and Learning Report  
for the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation's  
Catholic Sisters Initiative Strategy

*“Give aid to... the sisters, who devote their love and life’s work for the good of mankind, for they appeal especially to me as deserving help from the Foundation.... It is my wish... to have the largest part of your benefactions dedicated to the sisters in all parts of the world.”*

— Last will and testament of Conrad N. Hilton



## CRCC's Measurement, Evaluation and Learning Model



The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation Catholic Sisters Initiative launched a five-year strategy in February 2013 to enhance the vitality of Catholic sisters, who in turn advance human development around the globe. The Sisters Initiative aims to support efforts to attract, form and retain members, develop their leadership skills and help them take advantage of the financial and social resources available to them.

The Foundation awarded the USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture (CRCC) a grant in April 2014 to evaluate the Catholic Sisters Initiative strategy over four years. As the Sisters Initiative's Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) partner, CRCC seeks to answer the question, *Does the strategy effectively increase the vitality of women religious across the globe as they advance human development?*

In order to answer this question, CRCC has developed an understanding of the landscape of Catholic sisters, where the Sisters Initiative's strategy fits into this landscape and how it can evolve. The evaluation also includes examining how the Sisters Initiative implements its strategy and how closely aligned the grants are to the goals of the strategy.

### ***Defining the Measurement, Evaluation and Learning Module***

CRCC is using the measurement, evaluation and learning (MEL) module to understand the effectiveness of the Sisters Initiative strategy in meeting its objectives. The MEL module also allows CRCC to identify models of success and opportunity areas for funding, and to cultivate best learning practices among Sisters Initiative grantees.

CRCC defines *measurement* as finding or creating metrics for various processes or activities. The Foundation developed key indicators of success for its strategy (figure 1). These indicators drive the strategy and are the measures used by CRCC to evaluate the effectiveness of the Sisters Initiative strategy to date. Important data points for the Sisters Initiative strategy include the number of women joining religious orders, the number of sisters with certain levels of education and training, the number of sisters in leadership roles and the financial health of religious congregations.

fig. 1

## Indicators of success

	Global South	Global North
MEMBERSHIP	Increase number of sisters with postsecondary credentials	Increase number of women who enter religious life
LEADERSHIP	High percentage of sisters with leadership training assume leadership positions	Increase number of qualified leaders under 60
RESOURCES	More congregations engage in effective financial planning	Higher percentage of congregations are more than 60 percent funded in retirement liability

Measurement also includes data collected on grant activities under the Sisters Initiative portfolio. Some programs, particularly those in Africa, predate the Sisters Initiative and have clear and promising data. Other grants are early in their lifecycle and are still generating data. The Sisters Initiative also has funded a number of grants that aim to define the field (see Appendices for list of grantees). These findings provide benchmarks that will be useful in future years of the evaluation.

CRCC defines *evaluation* as assessing the impact and effectiveness of the Sisters Initiative's funding practices. During the first year, CRCC has evaluated the Sisters Initiative's process of making grants, the capacity of its team and its place in the broader philanthropic world. An essential element of the evaluation has been analyzing the implementation and measurement of the strategy through individual grants and how these grants tie into the strategy.

CRCC defines *learning* as a process of understanding and interpreting the implications of the measurement, evaluation and contextual data. It also involves identifying best practices and models of success. Learning is used to inform the evolving Sisters Initiative strategy.

Measurement, evaluation and learning are interwoven elements. Each is necessary to understand the whole grantmaking picture. One of the early learning findings that

emerged from reviewing grants and their monitoring and evaluation plans is that it would be useful to have CRCC or another evaluation consultant assist grantees in drafting their objectives, activities, outputs and outcomes, as well as their overall monitoring and evaluation plan for their project.

This technical assistance helps grantees craft their metrics to reflect their activities and makes it easier for them and the Foundation to measure their work, evaluate its impact and learn from opportunities and challenges in the process. In turn, this assists the overall evaluation of the strategy by standardizing metrics and ensuring that the monitoring and evaluation plan is feasible and helps the Foundation map the outcomes of a specific grant to the indicators of success established by the Sisters Initiative.

For example, CRCC provided feedback to the U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph on early drafts of their grant application to develop, implement and evaluate a curriculum to help new sisters incorporate into ethnically and culturally diverse community living situations across their international congregations. In doing so, CRCC learned that the integration of young sisters into religious communities is a challenge around the world. Learning of this transnational need contributed to our evaluation that the Sisters Initiative strategy needs to evolve and blur its original geographic distinctions between the global north and south.

## First-year MEL Activities

CRCC's activities in its first year of the MEL grant have developed a strong foundation for the evaluation of the Sisters Initiative strategy during the next three years (figure 2). The structure of this report generally follows these four activities:

- 1) Understanding the diverse and growing portfolio of grants;
- 2) Learning about the social landscape and cultures of the Catholic Church and women religious;
- 3) Working closely with the Sisters Initiative team to provide strategic consultation and insight;
- 4) Building the capacity of grantees for measurement, learning and evaluation activities.

In order to evaluate the overall Sisters Initiative strategy, CRCC has had to become familiar with many individual grantees. During the first year of evaluation, CRCC visited Sisters Initiative grantees across the United States and Africa and interviewed more than 244 aspirants, novices, sisters and other area experts. These women have helped CRCC understand the obstacles that face young women when they hear the call to religious life and the challenges faced by resource-strapped congregations during early formation and throughout the lifecycle of a sister.

CRCC also has attended conferences, met with experts and church leaders, reviewed documents and data on the history of Catholic sisters, and become familiar with communities that sisters serve.<sup>1</sup> Meeting beneficiaries of sisters' educational, health, spiritual and income-generating ministries particularly helped CRCC understand sisters'

impact on human development around the world. These learning activities have helped CRCC find common threads across many countries, shaping the evaluation of the strategy.

As a research center at the University of Southern California, CRCC also draws upon its networks in religious, civic and scholarly communities to understand developments in religious life in a broader context. CRCC's close familiarity with the ways that religious traditions and movements grow and change allows us to facilitate new modes of engagement between faith groups and the social landscapes that they inhabit.

On a weekly basis CRCC and the Sisters Initiative team have established an ongoing dialogue about the MEL module and its findings. The teams exchange information on the Sisters Initiative's grantmaking strategy, grants in the pipeline and grantee activities. This active interchange of ideas and data has been useful since this field of study is in its nascent phase. Moreover, changes within the Catholic Church (e.g., the appointment of Pope Francis and the declaration of the Year of Consecrated Life) and society (e.g., spread of mobile technology and information around the globe) have been a catalyst for change among congregations of sisters. These changes have required the CRCC and Sisters Initiative teams to be flexible and open to the evolution of the Sisters Initiative strategy over a relatively short period of time.

By establishing relationships not only with the Sisters Initiative team but also grantees, CRCC has been able to identify opportunities within an individual grant and between different grants and to help the Foundation increase the impact of its philanthropic work. In particular CRCC has helped develop the monitoring and evaluation capacity in grantee organizations, which will ultimately help CRCC's evaluation in years two through four of the MEL process.

*fig. 2*

## MEL Activities\*

CONSULTING MEETINGS	48
DATA COLLECTION POINTS	63
INTERVIEWS	244

\* includes interactions with the Hilton Foundation, grantees and beneficiaries



## The Catholic Sisters Initiative



In order to evaluate its strategy, CRCC has developed a deep understanding of the Catholic Sisters Initiative. In a few short years, the Sisters Initiative has become a cornerstone of the Foundation. From January 2012 through June 2015, the Sisters Initiative has awarded 48 grants to 38 partner organizations, totaling more than \$55 million, and its portfolio continues to expand.<sup>2</sup> The following section captures the Sisters Initiative’s history, strategy, giving patterns and portfolio of grants.

### *The History of the Catholic Sisters Initiative*

Conrad N. Hilton recognized the important social contributions of Catholic sisters from his experiences with them as a child, and he directed that funds from his estate be used to support their work. The Catholic Sisters Initiative is one of 11 priority-funding areas for the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. The sisters’ work in health and education with the world’s poorest and most marginalized populations uniquely intersects with several other Foundation priority-funding areas, including children affected by HIV/AIDS, homelessness, safe water and disaster relief and recovery. Thus, Catholic sisters are a critical cornerstone of the Foundation’s grantmaking strategy, which endeavors to fulfill Conrad N. Hilton’s memorial wish to “relieve the suffering of the distressed and destitute.”

Through its philanthropic work in other arenas, the Foundation gained a growing awareness of the needs of sisters to attract new members and develop their congregations’ skills and expertise. In 2002 the African Sisters Education Leadership Collaborative (ASEC) was awarded a \$20,000 planning grant from the Hilton Fund for Sisters to research the priorities of the leaders of African congregations and the availability of technology and other resources for advancing the education of the sisters. A follow-up grant in 2003 funded additional research and educational workshops. In 2006 Steve Hilton, the president and CEO of the Foundation, envisioned the Sisters Leadership Development Institute (SLDI), a partnership with the Foundation, ASEC and Marywood University to educate African sisters and strengthen their human development work. Subsequently, the Foundation initiated an assessment of the needs of Catholic sisters.

The assessment showed three key and interrelated issues that sisters felt affected their ability to impact human development, namely:

- **MEMBERSHIP** – How can religious orders attract new members, and support and retain current members?
- **LEADERSHIP** – How can sisters develop and exercise effective leadership skills, including financial and organizational management?
- **RESOURCES** – How can sisters attract and steward resources, including not only physical and financial capital, but also knowledge and social capital?

The Catholic Sisters Initiative launched its strategy in February 2013 in order to address these challenges. These three capacities provide the Foundation’s strategic framework for funding a vital and growing global sisterhood in the 21st century.

*“The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation will partner with organizations, including associations and other foundations, in the development and implementation of strategic initiatives that build the capacity of congregations of women religious in the areas of leadership, membership and resources, enabling Catholic sisters to advance human development more widely and effectively.”*

— Conrad N. Hilton Foundation  
Catholic Sisters Initiative Strategy Proposal

### The Strategy of the Catholic Sisters Initiative

In order to amplify the impact of the Sisters Initiative beyond individual congregations, the Foundation makes strategic investments in partner organizations working across communities of women religious (figure 3). These organizations run projects that are designed to strengthen the vitality of sisters in terms of membership, leadership and resources. In doing so, the Sisters Initiative builds and enhances networks among and between congregations. These networks support a more vital global sisterhood that advances human development through both spiritual wellness and service.

Based on available data and trends in religious life, the Foundation decided to divide its strategy into two broad global regions: the global north and the global south. They further delineated geographic zones, including Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and the United States. The strategy is to be phased in over a five-year period with an initial focus on the United States and Africa and a staggered launch for additional regions.

fig. 3  
The Catholic Sisters Initiative Strategy

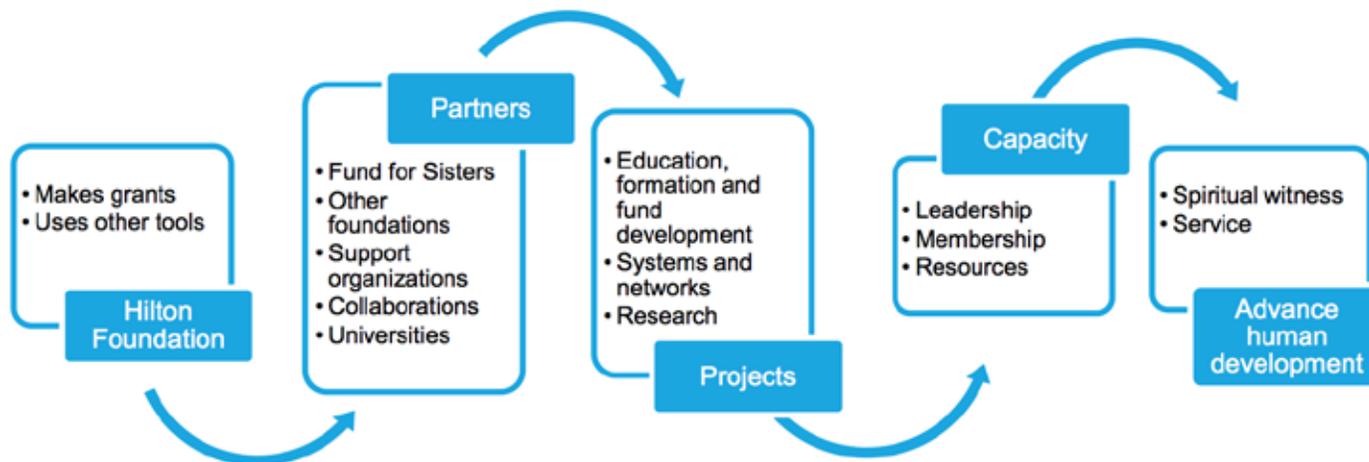


fig. 4

## Strategic Framework

	Global South	Global North
MEMBERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support quality formation</li> <li>Increase opportunities for member education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase awareness</li> <li>Enable laity to participate in religious life</li> <li>Reduce barriers to entry</li> <li>Network younger sisters</li> <li>Improve laity formation</li> </ul>
LEADERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop leadership and financial and organizational management skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop, empower younger leaders</li> <li>Retool long-term leaders for ministry</li> </ul>
RESOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop fundraising skills</li> <li>Improve financial expertise</li> <li>Develop skills to utilize land, e.g., through agriculture</li> <li>Generate research and data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop fundraising skills</li> <li>Improve financial expertise</li> <li>Support mergers and collaboration</li> <li>Support property divestment</li> <li>Support retired sisters</li> <li>Generate research and data</li> </ul>

The strategic framework addresses perceived differences in the needs of sisters across the globe, with a focus on increasing the numbers of sisters in the global north and increasing the capacity of sisters in the global south (figure 4).

In the global south, where Catholic sisters are more numerous and growing rapidly in some countries, the Sisters Initiative aims to support membership by building their capacity through religious formation and higher education. Leadership development is focused on financial and organizational management skills. To address the challenge of resources, the Sisters Initiative supports sisters' ability to fundraise and utilize their land holdings, for example through agriculture.

To build membership in the global north, the Sisters Initiative aims to increase awareness of Catholic sisters and reduce barriers to entering religious life. Its leadership development grants focus on empowering young sisters. The Sisters Initiative also supports the development of fundraising and financial skills to access resources, with a focus on mergers, collaboration, property divestment and retirement planning.

Membership, leadership and resources are interrelated, and some grantees work at the intersection of all three. For instance, the aging of Catholic sisters in the global north and shortage of new members has forced young sisters to take on leadership positions before they are ready to do so. Training these sisters could help them better use the resources available to them. The Labouré Society, which helps aspirants pay off their debt so they can join a congregation, appears to be a "membership" grant. Instead of simply giving aspirants money, the organization teaches them how to tell their stories and raise the funds needed to pay off their debt. The grant, therefore, both clears a major barrier to religious life and strengthens young sisters' leadership skills and their ability to utilize resources.

## Catholic Sisters and Human Development

Catholic sisters work to advance human development in some of the most impoverished and marginalized communities around the world. In particular, they are an integral part of many health care systems. According to a 2014/15 survey conducted by the African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC), 30 percent of the sisters serve in social service-related ministries, including HIV/AIDS programs, nursing, and women's development centers. The congregations surveyed own 118 health care centers and 35 hospitals.

It is essential, therefore, that sisters have the resources and clinical skills to do their work, as well as the advocacy and leadership training to ensure that they have a voice in local health policy and budget decisions. Two recent grants illustrate how meeting the sisters' needs also addresses larger societal problems.

In Haiti, an average of 88 of 1,000 children will die before reaching their fifth birthday. In 2015, the Sisters Initiative gave Medicines for Humanity a grant to implement a three-year, comprehensive training program for the Little Sisters of St. Therese of the Child Jesus (Medicines for Humanity's primary partner in Haiti) and eight other congregations in Haiti that work in the health care sector.

Sisters will be trained in medical practices and program management. The project will help the sisters implement a midwife program, utilize an integrated approach for managing and preventing childhood illness, improve clinic management and implement a nutrition program for severe cases.

Medicines for Humanity decided to work with religious sisters in Haiti because they are an intrinsic part of their local communities and will be there long after many non-governmental organizations leave.

The Sisters Initiative also funded a Georgetown University's Institute of Reproductive Health program, which aims to build strategic and cross-sector collaboration with government agencies and Catholic organizations in Ghana. By building networks with public and private stakeholders, sisters will be able to tap into government resources to strengthen their health care delivery systems in communities where access to health care is limited. The Institute of Reproductive Health's grant explicitly recognizes how integral Catholic sisters are in the Ghanaian health care system.

Networking grantees, sisters, the Catholic Church and religious conferences is a key feature of the evolving Sisters Initiative strategy. This project engages five congregations of sisters, ASEC, the Ghanaian Conference of Religious, National Catholic Health Service, the health office of Ghana's Catholic Bishop's Conference and the Christian Health Association of Ghana. One of its goals is to create a sustainable and scalable model of cross-sector collaboration that could be adapted and used in other settings by Sisters Initiative grantees.

Both by investing in individual sisters' skills and building networks, the Sisters Initiative supports the ability of Catholic sisters to amplify the funding impact across several of the Foundations' priority areas.



## The Portfolio

The Foundation has funded grants to partner organizations totaling more than \$55 million from January 2012 through June 2015.<sup>3</sup> As previously stated, the portfolio in this time period included 38 grantee partners, with 48 grants. The majority of current grantees conduct work in the United States and Africa. The Sisters Initiative portfolio has also expanded its geographic reach to include grantees that work in the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe and Asia (figure 5).

Prior to 2012, the Sisters Initiative only made a handful of exploratory grants. Grantmaking geared up dramatically in 2012 as data from the early grants (e.g., ASEC) began to show promise and initial findings from the landscape analysis demonstrated that sisters needed support in the areas of membership, leadership and resources in order to continue their critical human development work. The average grant amount for the Sisters Initiative priority area in 2011 was \$208,000. In 2012, it was \$1.9 million. With the launch of the strategy in 2013, the number of grants made jumped from 4 to 15, though the average grant amount stayed roughly the same. By 2014, the program area made more grants than any preceding year. Comparisons made within the Hilton Foundation found that over the last two years the Sisters Initiative has become one of the Foundation's largest priority areas.<sup>4</sup>

The portfolio has grown in the last year and a half. In the period between January 2014 and June 2015, the sisters initiative was the third largest grantmaking area behind substance abuse and safe water. The sisters initiative made the most grants in this period, with a total of 29 grants (Figure 6).

Most of these grants are early in their lifecycles and cut across the three capacity areas that frame the Sisters Initiative's strategic framework. For ease of analysis and mapping the grants against the strategy, CRCC has found it helpful to group the grantees into five different categories.

fig. 5

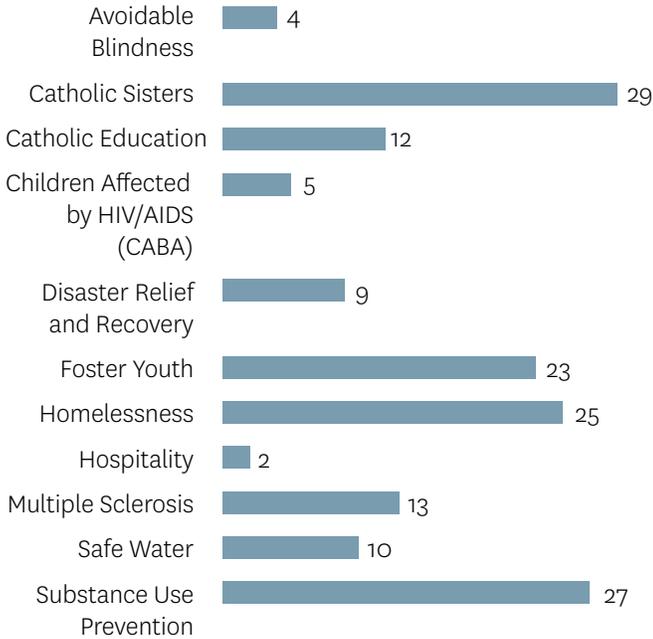
## Grantees by Region

<b>AFRICA</b>	African Sisters Education Collaborative Association of Consecrated Women of East and Central Africa Catholic Relief Services DePaul University/Tangaza College Georgetown University Institute of Reproductive Health Hilton Fund for Sisters Zambia Association of Sisterhoods
<b>NORTH AMERICA</b>	Anderson Robbins Research Catholic Church Extension Society of USA Catholic Theological Union/Giving Voice Catholic Volunteer Network Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate Communicators for Women Religious Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious Duquesne University Fundors and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities Indiana University Labouré Society Leadership Conference of Women Religious Loyola Institute for Ministry Ministry Leadership Center National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO)-UCSSB National Religious Vocation Conference A Nun's Life Ministry Religious Sisters of Mercy Sisters of Charity Support Our Aging Religious! St. Catherine's University/National Catholic Sisters Week United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
<b>EUROPE</b>	Durham University
<b>ASIA</b>	Catholic Health Association of India Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, Santa Clara University
<b>CARRIBEAN/ LATIN AMERICA</b>	Catholic Volunteer Network Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose Medicines for Humanity
<b>GLOBAL</b>	Holy See Institute for Global Engagement National Catholic Reporter/Global Sisters Report Unione Internazionale delle Superiore Generali University of Southern California U.S. Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph

fig. 6

JANUARY 2014 – JUNE 2015

## Number of Approved Grants per Strategic/Priority Area



\* Comparison conducted prior to Conrad N. Hilton Foundation rebranding. Health includes Multiple Sclerosis and avoidable blindness.

## Grant Categories

**AWARENESS** (external and internal): Many of the grantees promote awareness of the work of sisters both among the general public and among sisters themselves. The clearest example is the Sisters Initiative’s grant to the National Catholic Reporter to produce the sister-focused news site, Global Sisters Report. This also includes grants to the Communicators for Women Religious, A Nun’s Life Ministry and National Catholic Sisters Week. Awareness among the general public promotes the idea of vocations to religious life and creates support for sisters among the laity. Awareness among sisters cultivates networks and creates an understanding of the challenges and opportunities that sisters share across geographic, generational and cultural boundaries.

**FINANCES:** Sisters around the world face financial challenges as they try to balance the basic needs of their congregations and the resource gaps in their mission work. The Sisters Initiative funds a range of grantees to address these challenges. Some focus on student debt and admission to congregations (e.g., Labouré Society, National Fund for Religious Vocations). Others focus on financial planning for the future of congregations and religious retirement liabilities (e.g., National Religious Retirement Office). These finance-focused grants recognize that in order for sisters to thrive, they need to have resources to support themselves over the course of their lifetime.

**EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:** The cornerstone of the Sisters Initiative’s grantmaking strategy are grants that ensure sisters have the professional skills and educational qualifications to do their mission work as well as foster leadership potential. The African Sisters Educational Collaborative, the DePaul University/Tangaza College partnership and the Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose’s SLDI program are examples of the education and training grants currently in the Sisters Initiative portfolio.

**STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT:** Grants that assist organizations in their strategic development and growth are part of the Sisters Initiative’s grantmaking strategy to foster small organizations with great potential (e.g., Giving Voice, Labouré Society, A Nun’s Life Ministry). These grants also support more mature organizations in taking the next step to increase the scale of their operations and impact (e.g., ASEC) beyond their current operations.

**RESEARCH/FIELD-BUILDING:** The Sisters Initiative funds key academic research institutions, including Anderson Robbins Research, and the University of Southern California. These grants support research on women’s religious vocations and the key factors underlying the vitality of congregations. These grants provide valuable contextual and evaluative data on the current social landscape of Catholic sisters and the Foundation’s role in supporting a vital and growing global sisterhood.



## *Indicators of Success*

The Sisters Initiative has set indicators of success for membership, leadership and resources in both the global north and south (figure 1). In the south, the Sisters Initiative aims to increase the number of sisters with postsecondary credentials, the percentage of sisters with leadership training in leadership positions and the number of congregations engaging in effective financial planning. In the north, the Sisters Initiative aims to increase the number of women who enter religious life, the number of qualified leaders under 60 years of age and the percentage of congregations that are more than 60 percent funded in retirement liability.

During the first year of the MEL, CRCC established data benchmarks (figure 7) to track whether Sisters Initiative grants are making progress towards these indicators of success over the 4-year period of the MEL. These baseline numbers reflect work by different Sisters Initiative grantees including the ASEC, CARA and the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO). As other grants mature (e.g., Giving Voice/Catholic Theological Union, DePaul University/Tangaza College), their outcomes will help inform strategy indicators, such as increasing the number of leaders under 60 in the global north and increasing the number of congregations in the global south that are engaged in effective financial planning.

The Sisters Initiative has made excellent progress in providing sisters with postsecondary credentials in the global south. Two factors are behind this measure:

- 1) Long-term grant investment in ASEC (supported since 2007); and
- 2) Robust monitoring and evaluation plans built into each of the grants that allow the Foundation to track the progress of the Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI) and Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA) programs

Strong progress has been made on other indicators, including funding of retirement liabilities in the global north and the number of sisters assuming leadership positions in the global south. It is still too early to determine progress

fig. 7

## 2015 Report Card: Indicators of Success

	Global South	Global North
<b>MEMBERSHIP</b>	Excellent SLDI: Phases 1–3: 1805 sisters received certificates SLDI: Phase 4: 1360 sisters projected to receive certificates HESA: Phase 1: 186 sisters enrolled in universities, 11 sisters received diplomas, 1 received a certificate	In Progress 114 women religious professed final vows in 2014 (CARA)
<b>LEADERSHIP</b>	Good 274 SLDI alumni completed survey: 41.6 percent received a promotion 50.4 percent were asked to participate in other leadership activities outside of their ministries	In Progress Data to come from ongoing grants
<b>RESOURCES</b>	In Progress Secondary impact from SLDI measured through leadership promotion and new grants awarded through acquired grant proposal skills	In Progress Participating congregations that have adequately funded retirement assets 2009: 218/455 (48 percent) 2014: 169/419 (40 percent) (NRRO)

on the number of women who enter religious life in the United States but data on final professions available on an annual basis through CARA will allow CRCC to track progress over the next several years.

### MEMBERSHIP

GLOBAL SOUTH INDICATOR OF SUCCESS:

**Increase number of sisters with postsecondary credentials**

#### Excellent

Through phase 3 of SLDI (2007–2014), 1,805 sisters have received leadership certificates. Through the first phase of HESA (2013–2014), 11 sisters have received graduate diplomas (Leadership and Resource Management) and 1 has received a graduate certificate (Leadership and Resource Management). The HESA numbers are still low because it takes 4 years to earn a degree.

GLOBAL NORTH INDICATOR OF SUCCESS:

**Increase number of women who enter religious life**

#### In Progress

In 2014, CARA’s baseline data tells us that 114 sisters took final vows.<sup>5</sup> With the Foundation’s support, CARA will track this number over the next several years to see if there is a positive trend in the number of women who enter religious life and take their final vows six to nine years later. It is hard to compare this number to other regions since data usually captures the total membership of congregations or the annual number of entrants per year but not the numbers of novices, postulants and sisters who took their final profession of vows.

## LEADERSHIP

GLOBAL SOUTH INDICATOR OF SUCCESS:

### **Higher percentage of sisters with leadership training assume leadership positions**

#### *Good*

In 2015, SLDI surveyed its alumni and mentees.<sup>6</sup> It heard back from 274 alumni. As a result of being a participant in the SLDI workshops:

- 41.6 percent (114) alumni received a promotion;
- 25.2 percent (69) changed the type of work they did within their ministries;
- 50.4 percent (138) were asked to participate in other leadership activities outside of their ministries.

SLDI had responses from 95 mentees, and 58.9 percent (56) had accepted a promotion.

*“Since my graduation in 2009, I have been made a project coordinator, then a regional superior and a project supervisor.”*

*“I changed the work I was doing as an administrator of a primary school, and I have now become a student in the HESA program in Tangaza taking Diploma in Leadership and Resource Management.”*

GLOBAL NORTH INDICATOR OF SUCCESS:

### **Increase number of qualified leaders under 60**

#### *In Progress*

It is still too early to determine progress on this indicator since the Foundation awarded a grant to Giving Voice/ Catholic Theological Union at Chicago in September 2014 to support key programs and build the capacity of Giving Voice, a peer-led organization that supports young sisters.

## RESOURCES

GLOBAL SOUTH INDICATOR OF SUCCESS:

### **More congregations engage in effective financial planning**

#### *In Progress*

SLDI measures its secondary impact in new grants awarded through acquired grant proposal skills.

- To date, SLDI alumni have secured a total of \$8,256,232 in funding;
- 205 SLDI participants (30 percent) have been awarded funding (grants, donations and in-kind funds or services).

GLOBAL NORTH INDICATOR OF SUCCESS:

### **Higher percentage of congregations are more than 60 percent funded in retirement liability**

#### *In Progress*

The National Religious Retirement Office, a grantee of the Hilton Foundation, documented that in 2009, 218 of 455 participating women’s religious institutes (48 percent) had adequately funded retirement assets. In 2014, these numbers were 169 of 419 (40 percent). In response, the National Religious Retirement Office was awarded a three-year grant by the Hilton Foundation in January 2014. The 2015 data will be compared to the baseline data in the next technical report.

## CONCLUSION

It is still too early to determine the overall success of the Sisters Initiative strategy based on these metrics. Early pre-strategy investment in ASEC, which started in 2007, has paid dividends in building the membership and leadership capacities of sisters in Africa. The relationship with ASEC also attests to the Sister Initiative’s commitment to capacity-building.

## INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AWARENESS

# The Role of Global Sisters Report

Global Sisters Report (GSR) is a companion website to the *National Catholic Reporter* (NCR), a 51-year-old, highly respected Catholic newspaper with more than 35,000 subscribers. The Foundation funded GSR for a three-year period in an effort to increase the vitality of congregations of sisters by amplifying their voices and expanding awareness of their work around the world. The GSR website ([GlobalSistersReport.org](http://GlobalSistersReport.org)) was launched in April 2014 and over the last year has become a catalyst in publicizing the views and ministries of sisters from 40 countries to readers in more than 162 countries.

The two key objectives of the GSR grant—to increase the number of people who are aware of and understand sisters' work, and to enhance communications skills among sisters—were rooted in the Sisters Initiative strategy. GSR has become a cornerstone of the Sisters Initiative by raising awareness of sisters among lay audiences—including those discerning religious life—as well as sisters themselves. This internal awareness has sparked transnational connections and has contributed to a growing global consciousness among sisters.

GSR leverages its connection with NCR in order to report on key events in the church, such as the Apostolic Visitation, the Family Synod and the Year of Consecrated Life. It also reports on global issues, including the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, the environment, refugees and the voice of Pope Francis in the global dialogue on peace and conflict. NCR distributes GSR stories through Facebook, Twitter, the NCR newspaper and its website. GSR now provides content to Huffington Post, Catholic News Service and Religion News Service, thus expanding its reach to a variety of audiences.

The expertise and connections of its staff—most notably its International Liaison, Sr. Joyce Meyer, PBVM and its U.S. Liaison, Sr. Jan Cebula, OSF—further its work and outreach. The two sisters have proven to be invaluable gateways into communities of sisters around the world. The depth and breadth of stories that GSR has produced over the last year are testimony to their work in gaining the trust of sisters and providing mentorship and support to new sister writers.

Another key achievement for GSR is the Horizons column, which features the stories and voices of young sisters. Based on interviews with sisters and other grantees, this column has provided fertile ground for intergenerational discussions between sisters and has raised awareness about the existence of young sisters and the vital missions they serve across the world.





## The Challenges Confronting Sisters Globally



In order to evaluate the Catholic Sisters Initiative’s strategy, CRCC has established a foundational understanding of the challenges facing religious institutions broadly and Catholic sisters specifically. This section outlines our findings on trends in religion globally, in the United States and in Africa, as well as the implications for the Sisters Initiative’s strategy.

### GLOBAL TRENDS

#### *The Numbers*

There has been a remarkable global shift of Catholics from the global north to the global south over the last century (figure 8).<sup>7</sup> Whereas 65 percent of the world’s Catholics could be found in Europe in 1910, by 2010, Europe only accounted for 24 percent of the world’s Catholics.

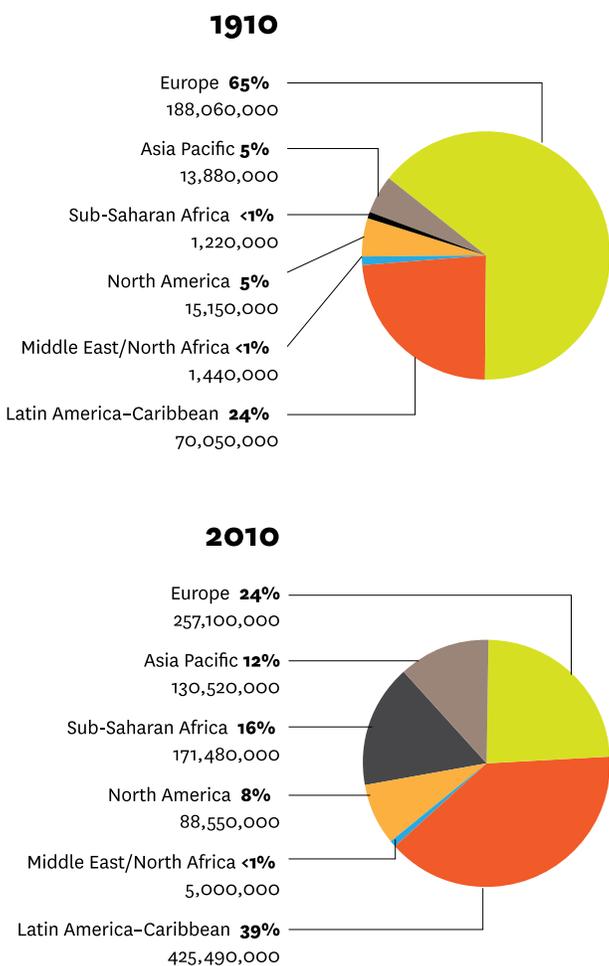
Latin America now has the largest Catholic population, accounting for 39 percent of all Catholics, despite the strong pull of Pentecostal and evangelical churches there. Though 84 percent of Latin American adults were raised Catholic, only 69 percent currently identify as Catholic. Nearly 20 percent of adults in Latin America identify as Protestant and 8 percent as unaffiliated.<sup>8</sup>

The Catholic population in Asia and Africa is growing rapidly. Sub-Saharan Africa had less than 1 percent of the world’s Catholics in 1910, and it now has 16 percent.

By 2050, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life predicts that 4 out of 10 Christians (both Catholic and Protestant) will live in sub-Saharan Africa. The overall share of Christians will remain at 31.4 percent globally, while Muslims will see a dramatic rise to nearly 30 percent of the world’s population, according to the Pew report. Although the number of people who are not affiliated with a religion continues to rise in the United States, Pew expects the proportion of the unaffiliated to drop globally, due to their low fertility rates compared to religious populations.<sup>9</sup>

This shift in Catholic and religious populations from the global north to the global south reflects various factors. Decreasing fertility rates, shifting sociocultural norms and a loss of membership are causing a decline in the number of people affiliated with the Catholic Church in the global north.<sup>10</sup> North America's small gains in its portion of worldwide Catholics reflect immigration patterns. Steady streams of Catholic immigrants from Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia follow earlier waves of European immigration in the 19th and 20th centuries.

*fig. 8*  
**Regional Distribution of Catholics**

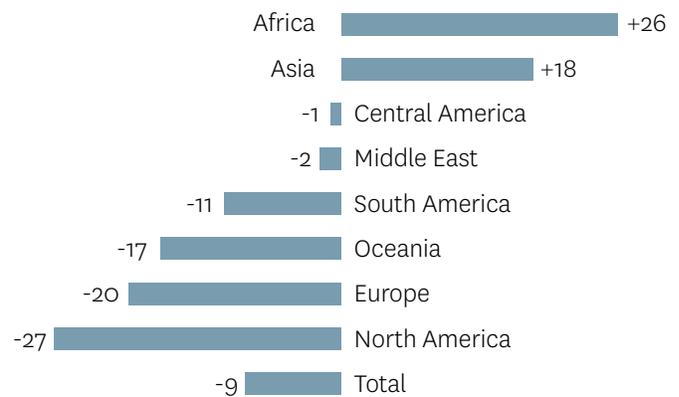


The changing face of the global Catholic Church also is reflected in the regional numbers of Catholic sisters today. The membership numbers of Catholic sisters are growing in Africa and Asia, while there are large declines in United States, Europe and Australia (figure 9). In 1965 there were more than 179,954 sisters in the United States, and by 2014 that number dropped to 49,883, a decline of more than 72 percent.<sup>11</sup>

Latin America is showing smaller, but still significant declines as well. The rising number of people leaving the church and the declining total fertility rate may lead to a greater decline in Catholic sisters in this region in the coming decades.

*fig. 9*  
**A Changing Landscape**

Percent change in population of sisters 2001–2010:



Rapid growth and rapid decline are creating a global imbalance.

## Analysis

The Catholic population follows the general trend of religion declining in the global north and rising in the global south. Many social theorists make the claim that in the last four decades or so, fundamental changes have altered the macro-structure of society on a global scale.

CRCC's global research has consistently found that these social changes have led to the transformation from a local to a global religious marketplace. They have already had a great impact on religious life in the United States, but they will also affect Catholic sisters in the global south.

Three macro-level social changes since 1970 explain what is happening with religious institutions globally:<sup>12</sup>

**GLOBALIZATION:** Advances in transportation and communications technologies have accelerated the integration of social processes and systems (economic, political, cultural) across national boundaries. The exposure to multiple cultures and worldviews through immigration and a globalized social media environment has created an increase in religious pluralism. Increasingly, people are able to explore and choose their own religious orientation. As a result, religious groups must compete harder to recruit and retain each subsequent generation, making the religious economy much more unstable and competitive.



**THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION:** The advance of digital technologies, most notably the computer and the Internet, has transformed the dissemination and communication of information. This has expanded and democratized access to knowledge and information. People are now active creators of media, as well as curators of what they consume. Consequently, believers increasingly expect to be active participants in religious activities rather than passive consumers of religious information. They want not only choice, but also ownership over the religious “product.” They are less likely to be a satisfied “consumer” of the sermons or activities of their local congregation when the live-streamed activities of more interesting speakers or more spectacular events around the world are easily available.



**THE RISE OF NETWORKS AND THE DECLINE OF BUREAUCRACIES:**

Organizational theorists have documented a shift from large-scale hierarchical formal organizations toward informal social systems organized by networks of small-scale actors. Advances in information technology make networked forms of organization viable on a global scale. In the realm of religion, this trend results in the declining loyalty to institutions and denominational brands. Religious believers can “pick and choose” religious content from multiple sources, dividing their loyalty. One may attend a denominational congregation for a particular reason and also may be influenced by a live-streamed celebrity preacher or a religious conference. Instant media access and the 24/7 news cycle also have made the flaws and scandals of large-scale institutions more visible. Thus, a religious scandal that takes place in a large religious institution, such as the Catholic Church, may create more cynicism toward religious “bureaucracies.”

These trends present both challenges and opportunities for the Sisters Initiative’s goal of “building a vital and growing global sisterhood.” Congregations of women religious are increasingly diverse and global. Catholic sisters also can connect with potential aspirants and supporters using digital media. One young sister told CRCC, “I used the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR) website to connect with communities because I trusted CMSWR as a source and the website was easy to use.” Women discerning religious life have more than 818 religious communities to choose from in the U.S.<sup>13</sup> The Internet, phone apps (e.g. Discern It!), and podcasts are a few modern ways that digital media assist women to identify the religious community that best matches their calling. On the other hand, sisters belong to the largest religious institution in the world, and their vows preclude a “pick and choose” approach to religion.

The challenges facing the Catholic Church and women religious are not unique and almost all other religious traditions are facing similar questions. CRCC’s research has shown that religious groups with the best chance of survival over the long term are those that can take advantage of these global shifts as they think about how they act in the world, not only in terms of their particular religious tradition, but also how they might make organizational changes to address these new realities.

# TRENDS in the UNITED STATES

## *History of Catholic sisters in the U.S.*

The history of Catholic sisters in the United States dates back to 1727. The Ursuline sisters came from France to minister in the areas of health and education to the poor and marginalized of New Orleans.<sup>14</sup> After the American Revolution more American dioceses began to request the missionary services of French, Irish, Belgian and German congregations. International and American-founded congregations (e.g., Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph) established strong health, education and social service systems to support the wave of Catholic immigrants in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The last large cohort of young women joining congregations occurred after World War II and lasted until the late 1960s after the reforms initiated in the church by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). It should be noted that this period is now considered an unusually high period in membership and that historically the number of sisters was much lower. In 1900 there were approximately 50,000 sisters in the United States and this number peaked at 180,000 in 1965.<sup>15</sup>

Vatican II provided a new framework of theological principles that inspired some religious communities to change their governing principles, affecting every aspect of sisters' lives. The church asked orders to reconsider how they were fulfilling their founder's charism and allowed for more flexibility so that congregations could meet the needs of active ministries. Many congregations had the option of wearing contemporary dress and were given permission to restructure their living arrangements in order to connect with the communities they were serving.

These transformations in religious communities, coupled with the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, resulted in profound changes—both positive and negative—within and between communities of sisters. Some sisters left their communities and formed or joined other communities. Many left religious life altogether. Around 25 percent of religious communities felt that the changes under Vatican II had been

too drastic.<sup>16</sup> In 1971, a group of sisters broke away from the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), which represents most orders in the United States, and formed the Consortium Perfectae Caritatis, which eventually became the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR).<sup>17</sup> Pope John Paul II approved CMSWR as a leadership conference in 1995.

Today many religious communities in the United States face a very different vocational landscape than their forbearers did half a century ago. Only 9 percent of religious sisters today are younger than 60.<sup>18</sup> Catholic women now have many career options. In the church, women can have families and work in lay positions at the diocesan and parish levels and in Catholic organizations (e.g., Catholic Daughters of America).

In *New Generations of Catholic Sisters: The Challenge of Diversity* (2014), Mary Gautier, Mary Johnson and Patricia Wittberg paint the picture of the contemporary religious vocation landscape and the 1,200 postulants, novices and sisters in the formation programs of congregations in the United States today. Many congregations have merged provinces or have drastically scaled back their apostolic missions because of the lack of sisters. Still, congregations attract a “small but steady stream” of women to religious life.<sup>19</sup> They range from recent high school graduates to women over 40 who may have felt an earlier call to religious life but pursued a career instead. CMSWR congregations tend to attract younger women while LCWR congregations attract women over 40.<sup>20</sup>

The contemporary religious vocation landscape in the United States has become entangled in the traditional versus progressive politics of the post-Vatican II U.S. Church. Many believe only more “traditional” CMSWR congregations are attracting women to religious life today. In fact, an almost equal percentage of LCWR (32 percent) and CMSWR (27 percent) congregations have no one in formation.<sup>21</sup> The retention rate for new sisters in both LCWR and CMSWR congregations is 50 percent. As the authors of *New Generations of Catholic Sisters* point out, only an analysis “devoted of both ideology and fatalism” will serve to enlighten the church about the current challenges and opportunities facing women's religious congregations in the United States.”

## Analysis

Young women entering religious life would seem to defy the narrative that religion in the U.S. is in decline. CRCC's research, along with information from the Pew Research Center and other research centers, support the idea that religion is not dying, but that affiliation is changing. These changes provide context for the work of Sisters Initiative grantees.

The decline in both religious affiliation and religious practice in the United States is very real. According to the Pew Research Center, the proportion of Americans who claim no religious affiliation increased from 16 percent in 2007 to 23 percent in 2014. These include people who claim they have no religion in particular, or are agnostic or atheist.<sup>22</sup>

Other research shows that attendance at religious services has been declining for decades, noticeably in Catholic churches.<sup>23</sup> CRCC analyzed data from the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR). Current data on 23-28 year-olds shows that whether they claim a religious identity or not, 52 percent never attend religious services and are otherwise uninvolved in a religious group. Among those who identify as Catholic, 36 percent never attend Mass, and only a quarter attend Mass frequently—two or three times a month or more.<sup>24</sup>

Christian Smith of Notre Dame has analyzed the NSYR data on Catholic young adults and found that 16 percent of young adult Catholics are “engaged Catholics.”<sup>25</sup> Generally, their faith and the church mean a lot to them, but they may go to Mass irregularly or not accept all of the church's teachings. Only a portion of committed young Catholics are devotionally serious traditionalists—those who might be attracted to conservative strands of religious life. Most young people who grew up Catholic have either left the church or are “sporadic Catholics.”

On the other hand, religiously unaffiliated Americans are not necessarily completely secular or atheists. Forty percent of those with “no religion in particular” say that religion is “very” or “somewhat” important in their lives.<sup>26</sup>

## ***“If Jesus can call fishermen, why can't he call lifeguards?”***

— a sister and former lifeguard on her discernment process

From the CRCC's vantage point, the current disarray in American religious identity and participation is less a story of people “losing their religion” than one of dissatisfaction with the institutional options available to them. The phenomenon of the religious “nones” represents the larger reality that increasing numbers of Americans are disenchanting, disengaged and disinterested in large institutions in general, whether political, financial, governmental or religious.

The decline of Catholics is unlikely to reverse. Younger generations may be marginally interested in the “smells and bells” of church, but they are allergic to the large-scale institutions that demand not only a spiritual allegiance but also a financial commitment.

CRCC's research finds that the corporate, megachurch-dominated models of organizing Evangelical Christian religious and spiritual activity are starting to be replaced by smaller, more locally oriented church communities. Even nonreligious young people are looking for intimacy and personal connections, deep spiritual experiences, service to others and the opportunity to create their own community.

Through interviews with aspirant and sisters, social media analysis, discussions with grantees and reviews of current literature, CRCC has found that women discerning religious life are interested in communal living, shared prayer life, a spiritual charism that they connect to an apostolic ministry and a living vitality, often described as joy. One aspirant to the Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity, a medical artist by training, described a deep artistic connection to her community because art and music were such an integral part of their apostolic ministry and daily prayer life.

In the context of declining religious affiliation and practice, Catholic religious life appeals to a smaller pool of prospective aspirants. In attempting to attract more young women to religious life in the United States, the Foundation and Catholic sisters will have to overcome distrust of institutions and present religious life as fulfilling young women's desire for service, spirituality and community.

## TRENDS in AFRICA

### *The History of Sisters in Africa*

Catholic sisters have been present in Africa since the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny landed on the shores of Senegal in 1822 and established a mission in present-day Gambia.<sup>27</sup> Sisters since that time have faced significant health, resource and cultural barriers in their mission work.

Sisters' mission work on the frontlines of the church's evangelization of Africa was rooted in the colonization and enculturation of the continent. They established hospitals, schools, farms and orphanages and became the backbone of African social welfare and educational systems in the 19th and 20th centuries (figure 10).

The spiritual witness that sisters provided in their work and religious practice attracted and inspired young indigenous women. These early missionaries did not have religious vocations and formation in mind for African women. Even the 1926 papal directive *Rerum Ecclesiae*, which endorsed the development of local clergy and religious orders, did not engender much movement for establishing novitiates across Africa. It was not until the 1960s and 1970s, with the advent of Vatican II and the independence of African countries, that the majority of formation houses were established on the continent.

Young African women faced a double challenge in pursuing religious life. First, orders were not eager to welcome indigenous sisters. Then, their own families and cultures viewed women's roles solely in terms of motherhood, preserving the family lineage, providing bride price and passing along cultural norms and traditions to the next generation.

Sociologist Casey Clevenger and others have documented the difficult obstacles young women continue to face to fulfill their vocational calls today.<sup>28</sup> Some young women are entirely cut off from their families when they enter formation houses. Once young African women enter formation houses they also face an uphill battle to acquire the necessary skills and education to become teachers, nurses, agricultural extension workers and bookkeepers.

*fig. 10*

## Missionary Sisters

Missionary sisters with women and children in Congo (1920–1940)



Despite the challenges faced by young African women seeking religious life, the number of African sisters has increased dramatically over the last 50 years. A survey conducted by African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC) in 2014–2015 documented more than 42,950 Catholic sisters and 4,298 women in formation houses in ten countries, and these numbers are growing.<sup>29</sup> The situation has come full circle as African sisters are now being asked to support “reverse mission” work to countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and Ireland to bolster the work of congregations and dioceses who are losing women power as their native congregations decrease in size.

### *Analysis*

African congregations are vital and growing. Sisters have educated many of the presidents, corporate leaders and influential people throughout the continent of Africa. They also run and staff many of the best hospitals and clinics. And they advocate for human rights as they serve children with disabilities and work in many of Africa's slum areas.

Nevertheless, they face several significant challenges to their vitality. There is an increased demand for leadership and technical expertise in their mission work in African countries and abroad. And the swelling numbers of aspirants wanting to enter formation houses strain resources. In short, they face the opposite challenge of their global north counterparts. Congregations are flooded with more aspirants than they can handle, and they struggle to educate young women who are entering their ranks fresh from secondary school.

Education and leadership skills are key to running the day-to-day mission work of congregations, from financial planning and bookkeeping to fundraising, teaching, counseling and nursing. Local governments are increasing the requirements for teachers, principals, nurses and other occupations that sisters hold. Congregations need to have the resources to respond to these evolving requirements.

Beyond educational and leadership skills, young sisters and those in the novitiate must have a solid spiritual and theological foundation as they develop and respond to the spiritual and emotional demands of their work. This requires congregations to have a strong formation process before and after final vows.

Finally, it must be kept in mind that the socioeconomic and cultural trends that have driven the downturn in religious vocations in the global north may have a similar impact on African women joining religious communities in the coming years. Today, family size in Africa is often large, educational options for women are limited and women often marry young. These contextual factors may make the call to religious life attractive—especially when this call is matched with genuine spiritual motivations and a congregational charism that serves disenfranchised people. As countries in the global south evolve economically, it is possible that the number of women committing themselves to a religious vocation may change, as is occurring currently in Zambia. With economic development, the fertility rate typically decreases and women gain greater options for higher education and careers outside the home or convent. These trends are on the rise in African countries, and they may also explain the decline of sisters in South America.

## CONCLUSION

The realities of demographic changes in the global north and south present unique challenges as well as opportunities to the Sisters Initiative. On one hand, it justifies putting substantial resources into Africa and Asia, seizing the moment when congregations of sisters are often brimming over with potential recruits who, after appropriate training, can address many of the challenges facing developing countries. On the other hand, the United States and Europe are at transitional points in their religious ecologies, with many lines being blurred and significant numbers of young people choosing to opt out of religious affiliation altogether. In this latter context, it is very important to target young women who are idealistic and are motivated by their spiritual quest for purpose and meaning. It is these twin challenges that set the context for the next section of this report.



# IV.

## Gaps, Opportunities and Strategic Recommendations



The data from the Catholic Sisters Initiative suggest that the strategy, which is only two years old, is on target in meeting the needs of sisters around the globe and supporting their work in advancing human development.

As the MEL partner, one of CRCC's essential roles has been to provide strategic consultation and insight to the Sisters Initiative team. CRCC has found several areas in which the Sisters Initiative can improve its efforts to build a vital and growing global sisterhood. These insights build upon CRCC's knowledge of trends within religious institutions and global religion, the analysis of the Sisters Initiative's current activities and interviews with more than 244 sisters, novices, aspirants and area experts.



***If people do not see sisters, they are less likely to become or support a sister.***

The visibility of sisters among key stakeholder audiences— young women, Catholic families, the church hierarchy, non-Catholics and fellow sisters—is essential both to the vitality of congregations and their ministries. Religious congregations need visibility in order to attract members, sustain sisters and build a base of support for their ministries.

Based on interviews with aspirants across the United States and Africa, CRCC has found that awareness comes from more than just large numbers of sisters or outward signs of religious life, such as a full habit. Rather, the visibility of sisters is intimately tied to their vitality, their connectedness in their communities and their ability to tell the stories of their vocation and the impact of their apostolic work.

In our interviews with aspirants in Africa, many of them referenced sisters whom they admired in their primary and secondary schools, as well as sisters serving in their local parishes. These sisters were role models that they wanted to emulate in their own lives of service to their community and the world. In contrast, it is difficult to find sisters who are teaching in parochial schools in the United States. And the fact that the average age of a sister in the U.S. is over 70 may not inspire the same idealism as it once did, especially if a young woman sees her responsibility as dealing with retired and aging sisters. Several young sisters over the last year shared their frustrations with the time it took to get permission from congregations and leaders to update congregational webpages and connect sisters to larger audiences through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and podcasts.

The lack of information about religious life also undermines the awareness of sisters. Obtaining congregational membership numbers, including women in initial formation for congregations in the United States and across Africa, is a challenge. Although the Holy See provides overall numbers per country for women religious in its annual Statistical Yearbook of the Church, there is no disaggregated data comparable to its numbers for diocesan clergy and bishops and there is no understanding of the methods used to obtain this data.

**OPPORTUNITY**

***Elevate awareness as a central part of the Sisters Initiative's strategy.***

The membership, leadership and resource areas may not adequately capture the importance of awareness. Awareness is currently under the Sisters Initiative's strategy for increasing members in the global north. CRCC has concluded that awareness undergirds membership, leadership and access to resources. Awareness also should include both external visibility of Catholic sisters and internal awareness among sisters. If you build visibility, you build a foundation for networks, capacity and vitality in congregations.

Increasing visibility in the age of social media and instant connectivity means sharing stories that connect key stakeholders to sisters and the important work they do in their ministries around the world. Congregations also must become more technologically savvy in order to share their stories and work with young women and other critical audiences.

Finally, the Foundation might consider funding the Holy See in collaboration with a demographic census partner and local associations of religious to conduct a pilot census of women religious in one country in Africa (e.g., Kenya). This census would aim to capture the totality of religious women at all stages of formation. This type of census could then be replicated across the globe, creating reliable statistics on women religious and a more in-depth understanding of the current demographics of the global sisterhood.

***If the Catholic Church hierarchy does not demonstrate that it values the work of sisters, then sisters will not flourish.***

Sisters and other key informants identified the Catholic Church hierarchy as one of the biggest obstacles to the vitality and growth of sisters today.

Diocesan vocation offices often focus their resources on supporting vocations to the diocesan priesthood and not women's vocations to religious life. Few sisters work in these offices. Many parishes have no links to religious communities. CRCC has found instances of active discouragement of vocations, with parish priests refusing to allow young aspirants to fundraise for their vocation.

Favoritism among the Catholic hierarchy for certain “more faithful” congregations over other congregations reduces sisters' visibility and access to resources for crucial ministries. Sisters may not have a “seat at the table” regarding important diocesan issues (e.g., educational institutes, social welfare issues).

In both Africa and the U.S., sisters express fear that local dioceses will seize congregational property and resources in the name of the church. In Africa, there is often a substantial disparity between the wages paid to sisters who are working in diocese offices and lay employees. And in the U.S., some sisters fear investigations by bishops and local priests into perceived wrongdoings, which blunts their creative and prophetic ministries.

Since his investiture, Pope Francis has changed the tone of the church and its dialogue with sisters around the globe. The conciliatory end of the apostolic visitation of women religious in the United States and the launch of the Year of Consecrated Life helped sooth some sisters' fears. His Ignatian emphasis on reform, pastoral ministry, simplicity and humility aligns directly with the different spiritual charisms and work of women religious around the world. Yet more needs to be done to change the culture of the church and its attitude toward women religious at the diocesan and parish levels.

**OPPORTUNITY**

***Leverage the Sisters Initiative's influence within the church hierarchy to create more visible and tangible support for sisters.***

CRCC believes that the Foundation is uniquely positioned to influence the cultural power brokers of the church because it funds grantees across the perceived progressive-conservative ideological spectrum in the U.S. Catholic Church and includes the Holy See as one of its grantees. The Foundation is also connected to important Catholic funders through Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities (FADICA) and is seen by these funders as being at the forefront of fostering a strong and vital global sisterhood.

The church hierarchy can play a key role in fostering vocations in the United States and building the capacity of congregations across Africa. The Sisters Initiative could help ensure that church resources are available for vocation ministry offices and connecting vocation officers with vocation ministers across congregations. Diocesan priests need to be educated about vocation ministry and fostering discernment through their parish activities (e.g., youth clubs, religious education, schools, visits by representatives from different congregations during Mass). Programs could involve the laity and lay Catholic organizations in vocation activities (e.g., lay orders from different congregations).

This raises the question of where change happens in the church. The Sisters Initiative will have to identify what might motivate a parish priest or diocesan bishop to recognize the work of sisters and to be more inclusive of religious orders when it comes to vocational ministry.

***If sisters do not have networks of support for themselves, they may face burnout or dropout.***

Sisters need to be supported throughout their lives beyond the initial formation phase. Spiritual, emotional, physical and financial support are all key factors in building strong and vital communities of women religious. Many interviewees in Africa shared that they struggle with limited resources and a need to balance their spiritual lives and mission work. For example, one sister who was attending an SLDI event apologized for being a day late to the meeting. At her rural medical clinic in Tanzania, she was faced with the dilemma of saving the life of a pregnant woman who had a serious infection or experiencing the renewal of being with other sisters. In her rural community, there was only one other sister assisting her, and there were no government clinics. Quite literally, the lives of community residents depended on her, and she was exhausted.

Sisters in the United States brought up concerns about health insurance, community finances, psychological well-being, professional development and a secure retirement. Within the U.S. context, these issues are not to be minimized, although perhaps they pale in comparison with the challenges faced by many sisters in Africa.

It is especially important that young sisters develop networks between themselves, other congregations, the church hierarchy, the greater Catholic community and funders to maximize resources and build long-term sustainability into their communities and apostolic missions.

**OPPORTUNITY**

***Adapt a “lifetime formation” approach and foster supportive networks of sisters.***

CRCC recommends that the Foundation adopt a “lifetime formation” approach in its grantmaking to expand their support for sisters in the years between their final vows and retirement through ongoing formation (figure 11). Currently the portfolio has grants that increase awareness about religious life and create an enabling environment to attract women to religious communities; reduce barriers to admission (e.g., student debt); develop leaders in congregations; and address retirement liabilities in congregations. These grants are doing a good job responding to these needs, but there are significant gaps that also need to be addressed in order to build upon the current grant activities and magnify the impact of the Sisters Initiative strategy.

In order to nurture Catholic sisters throughout their lifetimes, the Foundation could foster networks of support for Catholic sisters. In particular, over the past year the CRCC team has observed through its interviews with sisters, field site visits and social media analysis that there are growing connections and budding ideas between young sisters. In the United States these connections frequently transcend the cultural and ideological battles among religious in the immediate aftermath of the Vatican II Council and are an optimistic sign about the vitality of women religious and their communities in the future.<sup>30</sup> CRCC recommends that the Foundation carefully navigate these waters in order to allow such developments to flourish.

There are a number of ways to foster networks:

- Target more funding to organizations like Giving Voice that advocate for the needs of younger sisters and help younger sisters adapt and thrive as religious communities evolve over the next several decades;
- Create bridges between young sisters in CMSWR and LCWR congregations and help these sisters find common ground through their ministries, spiritual life and love of Eucharistic adoration;
- Provide more higher education opportunities to sisters in Africa and the United States to enable them to meet the needs of their ministries and increasing educational requirements of local governments for teaching, nursing and agricultural extension work;
- Identify potential grantee partners who could develop health and well being programs for sisters (e.g., St. Luke Institute) adapted to their needs and local context to ensure their physical and mental well-being over their lifetimes;
- Develop a small opportunity fund for young sisters to explore ideas about spiritual formation, health, well-being and leadership development. An incubator fund would allow organic movements to be born from budding networks of women religious, across demographic, geographic, LCWR and CMSWR lines.

Fostering these networks will help ensure strong and vital congregations for the future.

*fig. 11*

## The Membership Challenge



***If Catholic sisters do not listen to the cultural sensibilities of different generations and populations, the global sisterhood suffers.***

As the global sisterhood changes and becomes a reflection of the diversity of the worldwide Catholic Church, congregations face challenges around building an inclusive culture. The differences within congregations span both generations and cultural backgrounds. In Africa the wave of young women joining congregations come from different cultural backgrounds, often speak different languages and are more connected to their home communities via mobile phones and the Internet than older generations of sisters. In the United States, young women entering congregations often feel isolated by generational and cultural differences as they go through formation without peers and have few sisters who can relate to their experiences.<sup>31</sup>

CRCC's finding is supported by data from CARA's surveys, Durham University's vitality study, and the *New Generations of Catholic Sisters: The Challenge of Diversity* study. One young sister in *New Generations of Catholic Sisters* stated that: "I'm one of the younger ones, so we don't have a collective voice. In other words, I'm usually outnumbered."

Sisters from the global south also face a unique cultural challenge when they are requested to do "reverse mission" work in dioceses of the global north that are facing shortages in pastoral ministry, education and health-care staff. Although the majority of their experiences have been positive, sisters have also documented disturbing cases of neglect, racism and marginalization.<sup>32</sup>

**OPPORTUNITY**

***Incorporate a more nuanced view of geographic and cultural similarities and differences into the Sisters Initiative strategy.***

CRCC has repeatedly found similarities in the challenges that women religious face across geographic boundaries and differences within these boundaries. In addition to the common struggles discussed throughout this report, the church in the United States contains many different cultures. The predominant European immigrant culture of Catholicism found in the Midwest and Northeast, for instance, has shifted to a more diverse Catholic culture (including Hispanic and Asian Catholics in particular) focused in the southern, south-western and western United States. The Sisters Initiative's strategy would benefit from a more nuanced and developed view of geographic differences and similarities between congregations of women religious.

In particular, CRCC recommends that the Foundation continue to build upon its work in connecting sisters across generational and cultural divides through its grants. The Sisters of St. Joseph Federation grant funded in 2015, for instance, is developing and piloting a program to help congregations cultivate more welcoming and hospitable environments for new sisters and candidates to religious life from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Over the next three years, CRCC will partner with the Foundation to identify partners and regional needs around these issues.

## **Recommendations for the Sisters Initiative Strategy**

In the first year of the MEL, CRCC has found that the social landscape of sisters around the world is rapidly changing. Sisters and priests from former colonized countries are going to serve in countries that originally sent missionaries to convert them in “reverse mission work.” Sisters need professional development to increase their skill level. The spread of generations and cultures within congregations causes conflict. Congregational resources are strained across the lifespan of sisters—from educational debt of aspirants and retirement costs in the United States to the limited funding for formation of aspirants in Africa. Tensions between congregations and the church hierarchy hamper sisters’ work.

These transnational trends form a complex picture and challenge to the Foundation to evolve its current strategy to reflect these changes and needs. To summarize the gaps and opportunities from the first evaluation year, CRCC’s initial recommendations for an updated Catholic Sisters Initiative Strategy include:

- An emphasis on increasing visibility and awareness;
- An effort to increase support for sisters in the church hierarchy;
- A lifetime formation approach;
- A more nuanced view of geographic and cultural similarities and differences;
- A stronger focus on developing networks.

This last point transcends many of these gaps and opportunities. Catholic sisters’ ministries would be enhanced if sisters had stronger connections both within the church and outside the church. The Sisters Initiative can help build networks between sisters, congregations, leadership councils and the ecclesiastical institutions of the church and other funders.

CRCC also observed an opportunity for the Hilton Foundation to better utilize its FADICA network. After a review of publicly available data sources through the Foundation Center, it seems as though there is a lack of overlap between various funders in the Catholic world. The Hilton Foundation could take the lead in the philanthropic world by creating awareness of the work of women religious. By doing so, the Sisters Initiative can help women religious and their congregations connect with public and private funders. Moreover, the Foundation can influence other funders’ giving strategies to further support a vital and growing global sisterhood.

Outside of the Catholic funding sphere, there is an opportunity for the Foundation to highlight the role of sisters in advancing the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations. Sisters are the vanguard for projects addressing poverty, health, education, clean water and peace. They play an important role in achieving the Foundation’s commitment to human development. The Foundation’s connections with United Nations’ agencies, national governments and international non-governmental agencies (NGOs) could be used to feature and support the work of sisters in advancing human development around the globe.





# V.

## Recommendations for Grantmaking and Operations



In addition to providing big picture consultation, CRCC provided technical assistance to many of the grantees and evaluated the Sisters Initiative's capacity and relationships with their grantees. This experience allows CRCC to make a number of initial recommendations to the Sisters Initiative team on how to improve its operations. These recommendations include the adoption of best practices in grant application and reporting and in communications efforts.

### ***Create a culture of learning and documentation***

Part of the CRCC's MEL process has been to review all grant applications, approvals and grantee reports received by the Foundation. The grant application makes use of the language of objectives and outcomes, but the use of the application often leads to confusion. CRCC has observed that many of the grantees do not submit applications in a uniform format that feeds into the reporting categories in the progress report template. This disconnect can result in receiving progress reports that do not provide information that is useful to measuring the impact, effectiveness and success of a grant.

The annual reporting schedule does not allow the Foundation to remain aware of grantees' progress and their need for assistance with challenges over the implementation of their projects. Nor does the Sisters Initiative team have the capacity to visit and work with all of the grantees to improve the implementation of their projects.

In order to create a culture of learning and documentation, CRCC recommends that grant application forms, processes, approvals and reporting mechanisms be revised and improved for a more streamlined grant management process. These revisions should focus on ensuring that critical information about programmatic outcomes and outputs are uniformly captured and conveyed to both the grantee and the Foundation. CRCC also recommends that the Sisters Initiative adjust its practices and capacity to be able to respond to the information learned from the grant management process. The Sisters Initiative's process must also align with the Foundation's processes, which are currently being reviewed. This is a moment for the Sister's Initiative to provide input into the Foundation's revisions.

## Grant Management Best Practices

Here are CRCC's recommendations for revisions to the application and reporting process:

- The Sisters Initiative team should develop an application form that fits its needs, including:
  - Stricter requirements for describing measurement and evaluation in programming;
  - A structured portion to the application that would necessitate delineating program outputs, outcomes and timelines; and
  - A section on supporting increased capacity.
- The submission of both applications and reports should be moved online.
- Once grants are funded, the award letter should detail each project's approved objectives, outcomes and outputs, as well as the approved timelines and reporting schedule.
- A uniform quarterly or semi-annual reporting schedule should be developed for all Sisters Initiative grantees regardless of grant amounts.
- Reporting should be standardized to ensure that
  - It is received and reviewed in a timely fashion;
  - The appropriate data is captured and discussed; and
  - The Foundation can be responsive to needs and changes among its grantees during a grant cycle.

CRCC also recommends that the Sisters Initiative team provide greater support to grantees. Building the global sisterhood means building the partner organizations. These changes necessitate changes in the Sisters Initiative team's patterns of work and their capacity:

- The Sisters Initiative should provide documented expectations up-front for grantees and progress reports should use a template form that has approved objectives and timelines that feed into a database. Reports should be received quarterly from all grantees and more in-depth progress reports should be received and reviewed on an annual basis.
- Allow for more time in its funding to develop grants and robust monitoring and evaluation plans with potential grantees.
- Conduct interviews and site visits in order to access what is an optimal and manageable grant amount for each grantee.
- Work with grantees on a realistic monitoring and evaluation plan that helps to answer key questions from the Sisters Initiative strategy as well as track programmatic progress for the grantee.
- Increase internal team capacity to develop strong relationships with grantees:
  - Allow for greater discretionary use of travel funds, so that program officers can visit field sites during the project (e.g., mid-project evaluation visit);
  - Hire additional Foundation staff (e.g., monitoring and evaluation officer) to assist in grant development.

## ***Communicating the Sisters Initiative's vision and accomplishments***

Awareness of Catholic sisters has emerged as a significant issue in the first year of the MEL evaluation. Likewise, the Sisters Initiative faces both internal and external communications challenges. The Sisters Initiative is one of 11 priority areas within the Hilton Foundation and in the past few years it has become one of the Foundation's top priorities in terms of funding and grants. Externally, the Hilton Foundation shies away from attention for its work.

As this report has noted, the Sisters Initiative's efforts to support the global sisterhood amplifies the impact of their human development work. At the same time, the results of capacity-building work are often difficult to quantify or demonstrate to audiences, whether within the Foundation or to the outside public.

### **Internal Communications**

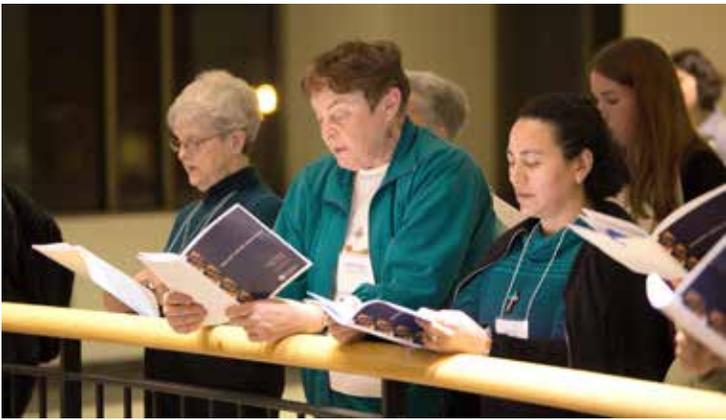
In order to "translate" and demystify the Sisters Initiative's work and its connection to the work being supported by other departments in the Foundation, CRCC recommends that the Sisters Initiative team:

- Develop a lunchtime workshop with CRCC for colleagues from other priority areas;
- Invite colleagues to relevant presentations and functions; and
- Develop videos and case studies from fieldwork visits to illustrate the cross-sectional nature of the Sisters Initiative's work and its importance to advancing human development.

### **External Communications**

In order to communicate the purpose and findings of the Sisters Initiative, CRCC recommends the team:

- Develop a communications strategy around the initiative that is tailored for both Catholic and non-Catholic audiences;
- Develop an external one-page communications brief on the Catholic Sisters Initiative;
- Develop a more extensive communication brief about the Catholic Sisters Initiative and the grantees in the current portfolio to be distributed directly to all congregations of women religious in the United States and in other regions;
- Develop more connections with funders outside the Catholic universe with a focus on areas that support health care and education; and
- Use FADICA as a communications mechanism regarding the work of all foundations in this area, and communicate their work and what they fund to congregations and leadership conferences around the world.



# VI.

## Path Forward



### *Overview of MEL Year II*

Building on its foundational MEL year, CRCC will co-host with the Foundation the first annual convening of grantees for the Sisters Initiative portfolio in November 2015. This convening will give CRCC and the Foundation the opportunity to gather and network grantees, give grantees a better idea of where they fit into the overall Sisters Initiative portfolio and receive feedback on the evolving Sisters Initiative strategy from people working on the frontlines to build a strong and vital global sisterhood. CRCC views this convening as the beginning of a process around developing communities of learning and practice among grantees and their beneficiaries.

CRCC's work-plan for 2015-2016 includes ongoing data collection, interviews and field site visits. These activities will help us build case studies around best practices in grant development, management and evaluation. With this knowledge, CRCC will assist the Foundation as it revamps its grant management and monitoring and evaluation practices. A subsample of global health grants (e.g., Medicines for Humanity, Georgetown University's Institute of Reproductive Health and the Catholic Health Association of India) will be used to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the Sisters Initiative work with other priority funding areas across the Foundation. CRCC will also spend more time in the field with the African Sisters Education Collaborative and other grantees measuring the long-term impact of their programs on the financial management and viability of congregations.

CRCC will continue to build upon its learnings and share these insights and recommendations with the Foundation and grantees as the MEL progresses. As a research center based at the University of Southern California, CRCC is positioned to connect the Foundation and partners with a wide variety of experts and resources and should be seen as a resource center for technical expertise and connections for faith-based nonprofits and funders.

Finally, CRCC deeply appreciates the important work sisters do to support human development in some of the most marginalized and impoverished communities from East Los Angeles to Port au Prince. Understanding the best ways to nurture a vital and growing global sisterhood through the MEL will assist the Foundation in leveraging its resources and influence to continue to “give aid to... the sisters, who devote their love and life’s work for the good of mankind.”



## Glossary of Terms

**Active order** – Catholic sisters who have more direct interaction with the world than contemplative orders. In addition to prayer, active orders may devote some of their “work” time to external apostolates (teaching, preaching, soup kitchens, missions, youth retreats, media apostolates, etc.) rather than to self-supportive ends (gardening, bee farming, candle making, etc.).<sup>33</sup>

**Apostolate** – A religious or evangelistic activity or work.<sup>34</sup>

**Aspirant** – A woman preparing for entrance to religious life formation.<sup>35</sup>

**CICLSAL** (*Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life*) – The Vatican congregation that is responsible for the institutes of consecrated life (orders and religious congregations, both of men and of women, secular institutes) and societies of apostolic life regarding their government, discipline, studies, goods, rights and privileges.<sup>36</sup>

**CMSWR** (*Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious*) – An association of major superiors (superiors general or provincial superiors) of religious institutes for women in the United States of America. It is one of two leadership conferences approved by the Vatican for women religious in the United States. Established on 12 June 1992 with provisional approval by the Holy See’s Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, it obtained definitive approval on 26 October 1995 under the pontificate of Pope John Paul II.<sup>37</sup>

**Charism** – 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.<sup>38</sup>

**Congregation** – A religious society in which members, according to proper law, pronounce public vows, either perpetual or temporary (which are to be renewed when the period of time has elapsed) and lead a life of brothers or sisters in common.<sup>39</sup>

**Contemplative order** – Women called to the contemplative life in monasteries where they pray, work and live in community. The daily schedule in contemplative monasteries is centered on the Eucharist (the Mass) and on the Liturgy of the Hours (the official public prayer of the church) prayed in community at regular intervals during the day and night. Each day there is also time set aside for personal prayer, meditation, spiritual reading and study. To support this focus the “cloister” is important. Contemplative religious do not leave their monasteries except for required education or necessary appointments or external visits.<sup>40</sup>

**Diocese** – A diocese is a geographical area under the administration of a bishop. Each diocese is divided into local parishes.<sup>41</sup>

**Formation** – Once a candidate chooses to apply to a community and is accepted, he or she typically begins a formation process starting with postulancy or candidacy, in which the person is introduced to the communal life, ministries and mission of the community. Following postulancy comes the novitiate, where a person is formally admitted to a religious institute. The novitiate is an extended time of prayer, study and spirituality, which usually lasts for at least one year. After the novitiate, the novice is admitted to temporary vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. This period of temporary commitment allows for further discernment before he or she makes perpetual profession of vows within a given religious institute.<sup>42</sup>

**Postulant** – The first formal stage of becoming a consecrated religious is called a postulant. The postulancy stage usually takes six months to a year.<sup>43</sup>

**Novice** – A woman in the second formal stage of becoming a consecrated religious is called a novice. This stage of the novitiate usually takes one to two years.<sup>44</sup>

**LCWR (Leadership Conference of Women Religious)** – The association of the leaders of congregations of Catholic women religious in the United States. Founded in 1956, the conference includes more than 1,500 members, encompassing approximately 80 percent of the 57,000 women religious in the United States as of 2015.<sup>45</sup>

**Nun** – A woman who belongs to a religious order and who has taken the vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and enclosure.<sup>46</sup>

**Order** – A lineage of communities and organizations of people who live in some way set apart from society in accordance with their specific religious devotion, usually characterized by the principles of its founder’s religious practice. There are both international and diocesan orders.<sup>47</sup>

**Religious community** – The founder of a religious community brings together a group of men or women who share the same charism and are dedicated to the same mission in the church. These are religious communities of priests and brothers and communities of sisters. The apostolates of the communities vary according to their mission. Those dedicated primarily to prayer are contemplative communities; those who combine prayer with apostolic ministries are called active communities.<sup>48</sup>

**Sister** – A woman who belongs to a religious order and who has taken the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.<sup>49</sup>

**Vocational discernment** – The process in which men or women in the Catholic Church discern, or recognize, their vocation in the Church.<sup>50</sup>

## Notes and References

- 1 CRCC has researched religious life more broadly by reviewing key church documents including *Rerum Ecclesiae, Perfectae Caritatis, Gaudium et Spes* and *Lumen Gentium*; reading the histories of women religious around the world; and examining the different spiritual traditions and practices of religious orders (e.g., Benedictine, Dominican, Franciscan).
- 2 Some grants predate the Sisters Initiative strategy, which began in February 2013.
- 3 Numbers in this report reflect funding to only the Catholic Sisters Initiative, not Catholic Education.
- 4 CRCC used publicly available information from the Hilton Foundation website. The overall portfolio budgets are based on numbers reported on the website (<http://www.hiltonfoundation.org/grant-making>) for grants made in 2014. The in-depth analysis was made using the Hilton Foundation's Recent Grants page, which details grants made since 2010. The analysis was done using information regarding all grants made in 2014 and 2015 reported on the website. The staff numbers were also gleaned from the Hilton Foundation website. Operating budget for funded organizations was gleaned from publicly available annual reports and/or financial statements and reports found online on the organization's webpage. The portfolios were divided based on priority area as well as funding sector. Priority areas were segmented based on geographic zone. For the purposes of this analysis, the Sisters Initiative was not included in the domestic and international categories.
- 5 From: *New Sisters and Brothers Professing Perpetual Vows in Religious Life: The Profession Class of 2014*. Note that this is the number reported by major superiors who responded to CARA's survey and may not capture the total number of final professions.
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- 15 Johnson, Wittberg, & Gautier, p. 17.
- 16 McGuinness, p. 172.
- 17 McGuinness, p. 173.
- 18 Johnson, Wittberg, & Gautier, p. 18.
- 19 Nassif, R., Myers, B., & Mahoney, K. (2013, February 15). *Catholic Sisters Foundation Strategy*. Retrieved August 15, 2015.
- 20 Johnson, Wittberg, & Gautier, p. 22.
- 21 Johnson, Wittberg, & Gautier, p. 20.
- 22 *America's Changing Religious Landscape*. (2015, May 11). Retrieved September 18, 2015, from <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>
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# Appendices

## Organizations by Grant Category

### **AWARENESS**

Catholic Volunteer Network  
Communicators for Women Religious  
Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious  
Georgetown University, Institute of Reproductive Health  
Holy See  
National Catholic Reporter/Global Sisters Report  
A Nun's Life Ministry  
St. Catherine's University/National Catholic Sisters Week

### **EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP**

African Sisters Education Collaborative  
Association of Consecrated Women of East and Central Africa  
Catholic Relief Services  
Catholic Theological Union/Giving Voice  
Catholic Volunteer Network  
DePaul University/Tangaza College  
Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose  
Hilton Fund for Sisters  
Indiana University  
Institute for Global Engagement  
Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley — Santa Clara University  
Labouré Society  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
Loyola Institute for Ministry  
Medicines for Humanity  
Ministry Leadership Center  
Religious Sisters of Mercy  
Sisters of Charity  
U.S. Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph

### **FINANCES**

Labouré Society  
National Religious Vocation Conference  
National Religious Retirement Office-USCCB  
Support Our Aging Religious!

### **RESEARCH/FIELD BUILDING**

Anderson Robbins Research  
Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate  
Duquesne University  
Durham University  
Fundors and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities  
University of Southern California

### **STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT**

African Sisters Education Collaborative  
Catholic Theological Union/Giving Voice  
Communicators for Women Religious  
Labouré Society  
Unione Internazionale delle Superiore Generali  
Zambia Association of Sisterhoods

## Key Informants

**Marisa Alicea**

DePaul University

**Abena Apea**

DePaul University

**Sr. Janice Bader, CPPS**

National Religious Retirement Office

**Br. Paul Bednarczyk, CSC**

National Religious Vocation Conference

**Timothy Bilodeau**

Medicines for Humanity

**Ms. Brigid Blake**

Chestnut Hill College

**Joseph Boland**

Catholic Extension

**Sr. Deborah Borneman, SSCM**

National Religious Vocation Conference

**Fr. Kevin Burke, SJ**

Jesuit School of Theology, Santa Clara University

**Sr. Simone Campbell, SSS**

Sisters of Social Service

**Sr. Maria Cimperman, RSCJ**

Center for the Study of Consecrated Life

**Casey Clevenger**

Sociologist, Brandeis University

**Sr. Julia D.E. Prinz, VDMF**

Jesuit School of Theology, Santa Clara University

**John Flanagan**

The Labouré Society

**Thomas Fox**

National Catholic Reporter

**Sr. Susan Francois, CSJP**

Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace

**Fr. Thomas Gaunt, SJ**

Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate

**John Gehring**

Faith in Public Life

**Julie Gilberto-Brady**

Communicators for Women Religious

**Tamara Gillies, postulant**

Verbum Dei

**Sr. Regina Marie Gorman, OCD**

Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious

**Andrew Harston**

Durham University

**Molly Hazelton**

National Catholic Sisters Week

**Fr. James Heft, SM**

Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies at USC

**Sharon Hirsh**

Rosemont College

**Sr. Mary Howard, SCTJM**

Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary

**Sr. Mary Johnson, SNDdeN**

Trinity College, Washington, DC

**Alexia Kelley**

Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities

**Sr. Karen Kennelly, CSJ**

Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet

**Patrick Kenney**

The Labouré Society

**Sr. Sue Khoo, VDMF**

Verbum Dei

**Sr. Maxine Kollasch, IHM**

A Nun's Life Ministry

**Laryn Kovalik, aspirant**

Verbum Dei

**Jessica Kritz**

Georgetown University

**Carol Lackie**

Catholic Volunteer Network

**Cy Laurent**

The Labouré Society

**Fr. Hank Lemoncelli, OMI**

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life

**Jim Lindsay**

Catholic Volunteer Network

**Kathleen Mahoney**

GHR Foundation

**Sr. Ana Margarita, SCTJM**

Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary

**Elizabeth McCabe**

Ministry Leadership Center

**Sr. Joyce Meyer, PBVM**

Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

**Sr. Rosalia Meza, VDMF**

Verbum Dei

**Sr. Kathryn Miller, SSJ**

Chestnut Hill College

**Rosalie Mirenda**

Neumann University

**Sr. Griselda Martinez Morales, SSJ**

Sisters of St. Joseph

**Sr. Patricia Murray, IBVM**

International Union of Superiors General

**Sr. Stephania Newell, FSGM**

Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious

**Key Informants, *continued***

**Mary Lou Nolan**

Global Sisters Report

**Sr. Lisa Olivieri, SSJ**

Chestnut Hill College

**Susan Oxley**

Communicators for Women Religious

**Sr. Reina Perea, OP**

Dominican Sisters Of Mission San Jose (CA)

**Jo Piazza**

Author

**Kathryn Racine**

Ministry Leadership Center

**Abbie Reese**

Artist

**Jennifer Robbins**

Anderson Robbins Research

**Thomas Ryan**

Loyola Institute for Ministry,  
Loyola University New Orleans

**Nathan Schneider**

Journalist

**Sr. Katarina Schuth, OSF**

Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity

**Sr. Marcia Sichel, SHCJ**

Conrad N. Hilton Fund for Sisters

**Sr. Gemma Simmonds, CJ**

Heythrop College, University of London

**Sr. Mary Soher, OP**

National Catholic Sisters Week

**Sr. Joan Marie Steadman, CSC**

Leadership Conference of Women  
Religious

**Martha Tapias Mansfield**

Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies  
at USC

**Sr. Marie Bernadette Thompson**

Council of Major Superiors  
of Women Religious

**Sr. Priscilla Torres, OP**

Giving Voice

**Sr. Deborah Troillett, RSM**

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

**Julie L. Turley**

Catholic Extension

**Sr. Carol Jean Vale, SSJ**

Chestnut Hill College

**Sr. Julie Vieira, IHM**

A Nun's Life Ministry

**Sr. Jane Wakahiu, LSOSF**

African Sisters Education Collaborative

**Fr. John Wall**

Catholic Extension

**Sr. Patricia Wittberg, SC**

Indiana University

## Conferences, Events and Trips

**07.09.2014 – 07.24.14**

ASEC field site visit to Ghana, Uganda and  
Kenya

**10.02.14**

Communicators for Women Religious, Long  
Beach, CA

**10.23.14**

If Nuns Ruled the World book event,  
USC Caruso Catholic Center

**11.06.14 – 11.09.14**

National Religious Vocation Conference,  
Chicago, IL

**01.11.15 – 01.23.15**

ASEC field site visit to Kenya, Tanzania and  
Zambia

**03.07.15 – 03.09.15**

2nd Annual National Catholic Sisters Week,  
St. Paul, MN

**05.07.15 – 05.09.15**

The Nun in the World Symposium,  
London, UK

**06.09.15 – 06.12.16**

The Labouré Society Bootcamp, St. Paul, MN

**08.05.15**

Verbum Dei, Long Beach, CA

**08.14.15 – 08.17.15**

Silver anniversary celebration of the  
founding of the Servants of the Pierced  
Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Miami, FL

# Timeline

## 02.06.14

Initial meeting with the Catholic Sisters Initiative team

## 04.01.14

Grant awarded

## 04.14 – 09.14

- Meetings with Sister Rosemarie Nassif, Brad Meyers and Kara Lemma about MEL strategy, grantees and key informants
- Analyzing documents from grantees, the Foundation and CARA
- Developing bibliography/literature review and interviewee profiles
- Additional meetings with the Sisters Initiative team on web production
- Developing a grantee matrix, interview list and categorization of grants

## 08.05.14

Interim report submitted

## 09.01.14

Tarra McNally, research officer, hired by CRCC

## 09.14 – 02.15

- Ongoing meetings with the Sisters Initiative team on existing and new grantees
- Providing technical consultation to the Sisters Initiative team on their board meeting presentation
- Beginning of discussions with the Sisters Initiative team on developing strategy version 2.0
- Initiation of grantee convening plans
- Conducting interviews with key informants
- Developing master measurement and evaluation spreadsheet
- Reviewing FADICA study of studies draft
- Contracting Margi Denton for graphic design support

## 2.23.14

Megan Sweas, communications specialist, hired by CRCC

## 3.3.15

Hilton Foundation Board meeting

## 3.15 – 6.15

- Reviewing Anderson Robbins focus group videos
- Interviewing key informants
- Analyzing Foundation's grants management processes and implementation strategy
- Providing measurement and technical support to grantees

## 5.6.15

CRCC website launched

## 6.29.15

Interim report submitted

## 7.15 – 11.15

- Convening planning and logistics
- Contracting Daniela Hinsch for video editing
- Meetings on measurement and evaluation with Tobin Belzer
- Drafting first annual technical report to the Foundation
- Reviewing findings from The Religious Life Vitality Project
- Contracting Tobin Belzer for measurement and evaluation technical assistance
- Writing blog posts; video production

## 8.25.15

Hilton Foundation Board meeting

## 11.4-11.7.15

Convening of Grantees

**48** consultation activities with the Catholic Sisters Initiative Team

**68** data collection events

**244** interviews

## Publications

Please visit: <http://crcc.usc.edu/topic/nuns-and-women-religious/>

*A Pragmatist's View of Religion*, February 4, 2015

*Pope Francis Has Spoken on Climate Change – Here's What Catholic Sisters Are Doing About It*, June 18, 2015

With Religious Affiliation on the Decline, What Should Happen to Hallowed Buildings? *Washington Post* Acts of Faith blog, July 16, 2015

Katy Perry's Not the Only One Who Wants to Live in a Convent Zocalo Public Square, *TIME* Ideas, July 22, 2015

Pope Francis Loves Nuns, But Can the Divide Between Sisters and Vatican Be Healed? *Religion Dispatches*, September 16, 2015

Is the Pope's Concern for Immigration Just a "Numbers Game"? *Religion Dispatches*, September 24, 2015

Young Catholics drawn to Pope Francis. Church life and dogma? Not so much Religion News Service, *Washington Post*, St. Louis Post Dispatch, September 24, 2015

Student loan debt and advocates for vocations (in production)

Can the Catholic Church be creative? (in production)

Young Congregations on both ends of the spectrum (in production)

History of Catholic sisters in Africa – photo slideshow (in production)

## Videos

Catholic Sisters Lead the Way in Africa

College-bound Sisters

Financial Literacy Training for African Religious Leaders

Educating the Educators (in production)

**CRCC TEAM**

Hebah Farrag

Richard Flory

Brie Loskota

Tarra McNally

Donald E. Miller

Megan Sweas

**CONSULTANTS**

Tobin Belzer, evaluator

Margi Denton, graphic designer

Daniela Hinsch, video editor

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