



Special Report

THE 4TH GLOBAL INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH NETWORK SYMPOSIUM: 10TH-12TH JUNE 2025

THEME: “Consecrated Women in Africa Creating Global Impact Through Sustainable Development”

Executive Summary

The 4th Global Research Network Symposium, held at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) in Nairobi from June 10th to 12th, 2025, brought together over 500 participants from Africa and beyond. Organized by the CERRA-AFRICA Data Centre, the symposium convened representatives from a diverse array of research institutions—including those in Kenya, Cameroon, India, the United States, and Mexico—as well as global partners such as the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and members of Catholic Sisters’ congregations from multiple continents.

The event provided a significant forum to highlight the often underrecognized contributions of Catholic Sisters and consecrated women religious, both within the African context and internationally. Participants included scholars, practitioners, religious women, and Church leaders, facilitating multidisciplinary dialogue on the spiritual, social, and developmental roles of Sisters in shaping the Church and impacting society more broadly.

Despite a long history of engagement in evangelization, education, healthcare, social justice, and pastoral care, Catholic Sisters’ work has frequently been under documented within broader academic and global discussions. The symposium aimed to address this gap through data-

driven research, the sharing of lived experiences, and focused thematic sessions.

Structured around four core themes—Education, Formation, Care for the Elderly, and Ministries—the program examined how Sisters continue to serve as agents of change and leadership, both in faith-based and secular environments. Presentations and breakout sessions underscored the necessity for faith and research to inform one another, advocating for ministries grounded in both Gospel values and the realities of contemporary society.



A recurrent theme was the call for spiritual and vocational renewal, encouraging Sisters to revisit their foundational commitments and live as authentic witnesses to hope and healing. The symposium also emphasized the value of action research in aligning ministry efforts with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while maintaining that the ultimate measure of impact is rooted in presence and holiness.

Special attention was devoted to issues such as youth formation, intergenerational dialogue, and vocational promotion, highlighting the importance of preparing the next generation of consecrated women for evolving societal challenges. Institutional collaboration emerged as a key area, with Catholic universities like CUEA and Tangaza University reaffirming commitments to partnership in leadership training, research development, and lifelong formation.



Innovative practices were presented, including mobile eldercare teams, the use of digital tools in formation, and intercultural community living, all indicative of a dynamic and adaptive approach to religious life.

The symposium concluded with a Closing Mass celebrated by Archbishop Philip Anyolo, Archbishop of Nairobi Archdiocese in Kenya, commissioned participants to continue the mission of evangelization with renewed dedication.

From the 4 thematic areas:

Education: was recognized as a transformative tool for both personal and societal advancement. The symposium drew attention to initiatives such as the African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC), which since 2007 have supported the education of over 6,000 Sisters. The sessions explored how Sisters used education to alleviate poverty, promote gender equality, and build capacity in marginalized communities. Drawing on scholarship from Galguera (2015), UNESCO (2015), Roehlkepartain & Patel (2006), and Fredriksen & Kagia (2013), participants examined the links between formal education, spiritual development, and social change—emphasizing the significant role of Sisters in educational institutions and informal learning environments.

Formation: was discussed as a lifelong process of spiritual, intellectual, and emotional development. Referencing Pope John Paul II (1986) and Umeozor (2018), the symposium emphasized that formation was not merely preparatory but continuous, involving five key areas: human, intellectual, doctrinal, social, and spiritual. Presenters explored how formation nurtured a deep relationship with God, moral integrity, and interpersonal skills while equipping Sisters to respond effectively to societal and ecclesial challenges. Special focus was placed on

mentoring, ongoing formation, and the institutional frameworks that supported these efforts.

Care for the Elderly: Ageing populations within congregations presents complex challenges. The symposium addressed issues such as retirement planning, health care, and psychosocial support for elderly Sisters. Referencing recent policy responses like Kenya's Healthy Ageing Strategy (2022–2026) and South Africa's legal protections for older persons (2006), the sessions assessed current care practices and the gaps therein. A CERRA-Africa study revealed an imbalance in age distribution within many congregations, with older members outnumbering younger ones. Financial constraints, lack of adequate health infrastructure, and limited income-generation capacities among cloistered communities were also highlighted as pressing concerns.

Ministries: The final thematic area examined the wide scope of Sisters' ministries—from social work and pastoral care to governance, finance, and human resource management. Participants discussed the importance of professional development, accountability, and the integration of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence into ministry contexts. Discussions emphasized the evolving nature of collaboration in ministry, encouraging new models for shared leadership and mission-oriented partnerships across congregations and with lay collaborators.

In essence, the 4th Global Research Network Symposium served as both a recognition of the enduring legacy of Catholic Sisters and a forward-looking vision for their future roles. The event affirmed the position of consecrated women as vital leaders and agents of systemic transformation, whose ministries are characterized by the integration of contemplation and action, and whose work continues to contribute significantly to the Church and society.