



# Special Report

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

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

## Faith in Action: Sr. Jane Wakahiu Calls for Transformative Leadership and Data-Informed Compassion in Faith-Based Development

In her keynote address, rich with faith, research, and lived experience, Sr. Jane Wakahiu, Associate Vice President, Program Operation and Head of Catholic Sisters, Conrad Hilton Foundation, explored the transformative role of Catholic Sisters, action research, and global collaboration in driving sustainable and faith-based development. Speaking with both warmth and authority, Sr. Jane intertwined data with deeply human stories, reminding the participants at the 4<sup>th</sup> Global International Network Symposium that, “the true measure of impact is not merely numerical but spiritual and transformative.”



Sr. Jane, who graduated with *summa cum laude* in 1998 from the host institution. She spoke with heartfelt gratitude for the formation that shaped her vocation and leadership; formation that blended faith, intellect, and service. “This university gave me more than a degree,” she said. “It nurtured a vision of hope and purpose that continues to guide my ministry.”

In her address, she spotlighted the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation’s long-standing commitment to supporting Catholic Sisters, emphasizing strategic investments in education, leadership, and socio-economic empowerment, especially in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. These initiatives, she explained, are not just philanthropic gestures but expressions of deep solidarity with women religious who work tirelessly at the margins.

Drawing from her global experience, Sr. Jane described hope as both “an anchor and a compass” in a world fraught with economic, social, and environmental challenges. “Hope,” she said, “is a dream that allows us to put our confidence in God... a secret optimism in times of challenge.”

She cautioned that while data and statistics are essential for accountability and growth, hope cannot be quantified — it must be lived and shared within communities of faith. “Hope is not rooted in numbers,” she added, “but in the solidarity of those who refuse to give up on one another.”

While acknowledging the importance of research and evidence-based strategies, Sr. Jane reminded participants that real transformation happens in people’s hearts and lives. Investments, she said, must go beyond outputs and outcomes; they should restore dignity, inspire vocations, and enable healing.

“Our presence is not only in doing,” she reflected, “but in transforming lives spiritually as well as physically.”

She championed action research as a moral and pastoral responsibility. “Until a few years ago,” she noted, “the Church often relied on feelings in decision-making. Now, data and research must lead the way.”

“Research should never remain in the realm of academia alone. Instead, it must

guide ethical, faith-based, and community-centered action, ensuring that every decision taken by Church institutions is grounded in truth, compassion, and accountability”.



In a moving tribute to women religious, Sr. Jane described Catholic Sisters as “spiritual leaders, advocates, and mentors” who

embody the Gospel mission of *Luke 4:18* — bringing good news to the poor, freedom to the oppressed, and healing to the brokenhearted.

Their ministries, from elder care to education and social empowerment, are living expressions of integral human development and contribute directly to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). “Hope, resilience, optimism, and faith,” she emphasized, “are not just spiritual virtues — they are tools for transformation.”

Drawing inspiration from Conrad N. Hilton’s philosophy, Sr. Jane recalled his deep respect and affection for Catholic Sisters. Quoting Hilton, she said, “People deserve to be loved and never to be left to wander alone in poverty and darkness.”

This spiritual kinship between the Foundation and the Sisters continues to fuel global efforts in education, healthcare, and community

### Powerful Quotes

“Hope, resilience, optimism, and faith are not just spiritual virtues — they are tools for transformation.”

“Charity is a supreme virtue and great channel through which the mercy of God is passed onto humankind.” – Conrad Hilton

“Let’s not wait for decline to hit before we act. Let us read the signs now and shape the future with informed courage.”

“Our presence is not only in doing, but we need to be transforming lives spiritually as well as physically.”

“When you meet another person deeply, when you look into their eyes with compassion — like Christ did — you are never the same again.”

development — efforts rooted in love and sustained by faith.

### Strategic Pathways for the Future

Looking ahead, Sr. Jane outlined a set of strategic actions to strengthen the work of Catholic Sisters worldwide:

- Expanding and funding action research addressing both socio-economic and spiritual challenges.
- Training Sisters in applied research through scholarships and partnerships with institutions such as CUEA and CARA.
- Supporting leadership and vocational development, especially in fragile contexts.
- Building inter-congregational networks to enhance collaboration and reduce costs.
- Monitoring demographic shifts in religious life to inform formation and elder care.
- Leveraging technology and AI for data collection and program monitoring.
- Aligning ministries with the SDGs to enhance visibility and global relevance.

“Let your research lead to action, let your faith lead to courage, and let your ministries serve both the soul and society.” she added, “No one dreams alone.”

