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Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus Sr. Emmanuella Dakurah (holding camera), Sisters of Mary Immaculate Sr. Juliana Atuuna, Daughters of the Most Holy Trinity Sr. Patricia Akoto, and Sisters of Mary Immaculate Sr. Gloria Duongnaa practice using a camera at a training session May 9 at Santasi in Ghana's Kumasi Archdiocese. (Newswatchgh.com/Damian Avevor)



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In Ghana, women religious are pioneers in social intervention projects of the Catholic Church, but little is heard about them. The poor media publicity given to the activities of women religious congregations in Ghana has led to some sisters to be trained as communicators to tell and publish their own stories.

Twenty sisters from 10 women religious congregations gathered at the Centre for Spiritual Renewal at Santasi in the Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi from May 6-14 for the Media and Communication Training for Sister Communicators, a project organized by the Conference of Major Superiors of Religious Ghana, in collaboration with the Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church.

The Conference of Major Superiors of Religious Ghana consists of men and women leaders of the Ghanaian Catholic religious congregations. According to its website, the conference was established on Aug. 23, 2013, when Rome officially recognized the group as a body in the church in Ghana. Before that, separate conferences were held for men and women.

The project was funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, and according to Sr. Cecilia Afari of the Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church, who is the project coordinator, "This media training project is the brainchild of the Conference of Major Superiors of Religious Ghana to train women religious in media, communication and networking and to register a network of women communicators in Ghana."



Sister communicators in Ghana after the opening ceremony of a nine-day media and communications training at the Centre for Spiritual Renewal May 7 at Santasi in Ghana's Kumasi Archdiocese. (Newswatchgh.com/Damian Avevor)

For 35-year-old Sr. Gifty Anastasia Blewu of the Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church, an English tutor at Our Lady of Apostles Girls Senior High School at Ho in Ghana's Volta region, "This program is a dream come true for those of us who have journalistic abilities to become the voice of the voiceless out there."

The Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church administer schools and hospitals, a skills training center and a sewing department, and according to Blewu, "Many will come to appreciate what we do, and through that, we evangelize through the quality services we render."

She explained that her congregation is sometimes not attractive to young girls, but that this training would give her the exposure to match the demands of the contemporary world and be aware of the trending issues that she can address,

adding, "The youth, women and children will be our focus of evangelization."

"I feel empowered with new skills and knowledge to share our message with the world. I will begin to craft compelling stories and produce engaging content that will showcase my community's work and impact," said Sr. Francisca Yaa Konadu, a member of the Society of the Infant Jesus.

Konadu, an English teacher at St. Augustine's College in the Catholic Archdiocese of Cape Coast, added, "My social media presence has grown, and my message of love and service will resonate with a wider audience, and my congregation will be inspired by the newfound attention, and this will help my outreach efforts to flourish."



Sister communicators from Ghana practice at a training session at the Centre for Spiritual Renewal May 8 at Santasi, Kumasi, on how to use a cellphone to take better photos. (Newswatchgh.com/Damian Avevor)

At the opening of the training, Afari, the vicar general for the Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church, applauded the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation for funding the project and urged the participants: "Sisters, put your heart and soul into the training and reap its benefits." (The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation is a primary funder of Global Sisters Report.)

Sr. Theodora Adzayawo of the Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church, the conference's executive secretary, told the sisters at the opening of the training that the conference is looking forward to building vibrant sister communicators to help make the religious in Ghana more visible.

Adzayawo also encouraged the sister communicators to strive to tell the numerous untold positive stories of their congregations, saying, "It is the goal of the conference for our stories to be told well and by us."

She said the formation of this network of women religious in media and communication became necessary after an experience with sister communicators in East African countries during a 2022 Conrad N. Hilton Foundation convening Oct. 26-28 in Nairobi, Kenya.

She noted that because Ghana lacked religious women telling their own stories, the Conference of Major Superiors of Religious Ghana, under the then leadership of St. Louis Sr. Mercy Boateng, implored the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation to establish the conference in the West African country of Ghana.

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The idea came after the outgoing apostolic nuncio to Ghana, Archbishop Henryk Jagodzinski, told members of the religious superiors' conference in October 2022 that the church in Ghana needed to become more visible. He urged the men and women religious to take up the challenge.

"The Church needs to intensify its visibility by publicizing activities that are having positive impacts on Ghanaians," Jagodzinski said. His predecessor as nuncio, Archbishop Jean Marie Speich, made similar comments in 2014.

Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus Sr. Emmanuella Dakurah, a master of philosophy student in educational administration at the Catholic University of Ghana, said, "I

have gained communication skills that will empower me to be a more impactful storyteller, advocate and leader within my congregation, and through these skills, I am better equipped to engage with various stakeholders, share our mission and values authentically, and ultimately contribute to the growth and visibility of our congregation toward achieving the objectives of the Conference of Major Superiors of Religious Ghana."



Sr. Francisca Yaa Konadu of the Society of the Infant Jesus, Sr. Sylvie Lum Cho of the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary, Sr. Rebecca Asante of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Sr. Gifty Anastasia Blewu of the Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church practice with a video camera at a training session for sister communicators on May 9. (Newswatchgh.com/Damian Avevor)

Sr. Christina Tuoriyele Doggu, Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus Ghana provincial superior, told GSR from her Sowutuom-based provincial house in Accra that Sister Emmanuella was chosen to participate in the training because she is the provincial communications link person within the generalate communications department,

hence the training was to enhance her capabilities for the role.

"Sister Emmanuella also seems to have the interest and aptitude for photography and communications, and the province absolutely needs such talents to publicize the congregation and some of its activities," the superior added.

Sharing how the training would impact her life, Sr. Sylvie Lum Cho of the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary said, "From the knowledge and skills I gained from this training, I will become a better communicator, news reporter, photographer and videographer. All these and more will be very beneficial to my congregation, the Conference of Major Superiors Ghana and the local church, as I would be able to offer services with greater confidence."

Sisters of the Incarnate Word Sr. Esther Kutie believed the training helped her to acquire more knowledge and skills in writing news stories, understand how the camera works and use the camera effectively.

"This training has aroused my interest in the use of social media and liberated me from some fears associated with the use of social media and will also help me publish stories on religious events, which will serve as a means of making my congregation known to the world, and winning vocations into religious life," said the dispensing technology student at Sunyani Technical University.