

Historical background of AWRIM

In June, 1961, the Major Superiors (both men and women religious) of the teaching congregations convened, discussed and agreed on a number of issues concerning the Catholic Spirit in Catholic Schools. They suggested appointing chaplains, establishing Catholic action groups and retreats in Teachers' Training Colleges and Secondary schools.

Bishop Joseph Fady was present at this gathering and he addressed them saying, 'It is important to develop the confidence in the lay collaborators and how the religious could help the school going boys and girls, how to conduct themselves and yourselves well.'

On 8th July 1961, there was a meeting of Textbook Commissions, where members from the nine religious' congregations of men and women in Malawi (Marist Brothers, Montfort Fathers, MSOLA Sisters, MIC Sisters, Brothers of the Immaculate Conception, SBVM Sisters, Sisters of Charity of Ottawa (Grey Nuns) Daughters of Wisdom and Teresian Sisters), discussed as to who will do what in the writing of different books. They formed committees such as History Committee, Teacher's Aid Committee and Vernacular Committee.

The chairperson was Brother Andrew of Marist Brothers. It was at this meeting that one member suggested to have an Association of Religious Congregations. Members' response was to leave alone the Religious Teaching Congregations meeting, and the Association could be formed later in future.

In 1964 Bishop Jobidon of the diocese of Mzuzu encouraged the religious women to form an association which would answer the call of Pope Pius XII in his letter of December 1957 where he was calling the religious to work with other countries to resolve the common issues and work with the Holy See.

On 1st August, 1966, Bishop Jobidon met the Major Superiors and highlighted some issues which ECM was expecting the religious to do.

What does the church, following Vatican 11 expect from Missionaries?

1. To live religious life to the full
2. To be cultivated in prayer and sacrifice
3. To be special witnesses of Christ
4. To fully participate in Pastoral programs of Dioceses

What do the Bishops expect in particular?

- 1) Cooperation between the congregations by exchange visits, working together as faithful instruments of God, exchanging views and ideas.
- 2) Cooperation with the Church Hierarchy and local clergy
- 3) Paternalism – treat local Sisters, priests, brothers in good faith.

It was the same year 1966. Bishop Jobidon formed the Association which was called the Association of the Religious Institutes in Malawi (ARIMA) and it was for both men and women religious. It was registered by the Holy See. It was formed as a support network for religious men and women in Malawi. The Major Superiors drafted a constitution and named the Association and the statutes of what they were expected to do as follows:

1. That the Association will be called ARIMA
2. Mutual Collaboration and cooperation between congregations
3. Sharing views and experiences according to the signs of times
4. Support networking of religious Women in Malawi
5. Coordinated efforts in formation programs for Malawian Sisters

In 1990s ARIMA was renamed the Association of Women Religious in the Institutes of Malawi (AWRIM) after the male counterparts opted for their own union which they named Association of men in Religious Institutes of Malawi (AMRIM).

AWRIM is an independent body under the Episcopal Conference of Malawi, ECM. It also falls under the Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa- ACWECA. Currently there are 45 congregations, five of which are locally founded and two are cloistered. The rest are International Missionary congregations.

The Executive Board of the Association meets three times a year, particularly in January, June and November or December. In January, the Board where preparation of the Plenary is done, the financial report of the previous year and the budget for the current year is presented as well as other reports.

Each year the Major Superiors of all congregations in Malawi convene for 5 days for a Plenary to share, pray and deliberate together on certain issues of importance. During the first 2 days of the plenary the Superiors engage other people to give then input on certain chosen topics. This is followed by reports from various programmes, ACWECA and Diocesan Steering committees. The Bishop Chair for the Religious men and women is normally present as the guest of honour. The constitutions stipulates that the Nuncio of Malawi and Zambia should be invited on such meetings. The vision, mission statement and core values of AWRIM are as follows.

Vision

An association of Consecrated Women, living and working as a family of God, committed to holistic formation of its members and witnessing the Gospel Values.

Mission statement

To unite, coordinate and empower the congregations and Sisters to live fully their prophetic role through religious, spiritual, intellectual, human and organization development, formation and growth.

Core values

Core values are fundamental principles and beliefs that AWRIM views as being of central importance. Core values will dictate the behavior, personal relationships, decision making and work processes and can help AWRIM understand the difference between right and wrong. These core values and beliefs are grounded on Gospel Values and Catholic Social Teaching (CST) listed below:

a) Commitment and Determination

AWRIM commits itself to periodic and on-going formation for both old and new members in order to constantly remain dedicated and transformed as disciples of Jesus Christ.

AWRIM is determined to ensure that there is better collaboration of various congregations in order to encourage sharing and supporting of new and empowering initiatives for the benefit of all.

b) Community Life

Consecrated women living together, sharing joys, challenges and resources as a family of God where we attain the strength to achieve our apostolate and discipleship.

c) Prayerful Life

All Sisters commit themselves to prayerful life that empowers them to go out to proclaim and live the Gospel.

d) Respect for the Dignity of the Human person

“Love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12). Love is the core value of the Christian life. As missionary disciples of Jesus Christ, all AWRIM members have been invited to live the love of God in their community, Church and society.

The dignity of the human person is a fundamental value. This is because the human being is God’s creation. “So, God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27). This dignity of every human being is what is at the foundation of human rights and corresponding responsibilities.

e) Solidarity and team spirit

The principle of solidarity comes from the very notion of society in its commitment to the common good. AWRIM believes that they belong to one human family and as such have mutual obligations to promote the development of all people across the world.

f) Preferential Option for the Poor

A Preferential Option for the Poor is a commitment by AWRIM and Congregations at every level to engage actively in a struggle to overcome the social injustices that affect our world. Therefore, in every AWRIM project, a considerable concern must be given to the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable.

g) Honesty and integrity

This is a commitment to being transparent, accountable, honest, and trustworthy and of moral integrity in all AWRIM activities. This entails protecting the interests of AWRIM and to maintaining its integrity in carrying out pastoral duties and programmes. This may demand carrying out duties in an efficient, effective and non-discriminatory manner.

h) Stewardship and integrity of creation

Our commitment to the common good requires responsible stewardship of the earth and its resources. True stewardship calls us to examine how we use and share the goods of the earth, what we pass on to future generations, and how we live in harmony with God's creation. By our work, we are co-creators in the continuing development of the earth. This core value is guided by Papal document on Care for Environment, *Laudato Si*.

1. FOUR STRATEGIC GOALS IDENTIFIED TO ASSIST AWRIM ACHIEVE ITS VISION AND MISSION THE NEXT FIVE YEARS (2020 to 2025)

- i. Spiritual Formation :** Consecrated Women to be transformed into missionary disciples and prophetic voice of Jesus Christ and stewards of God's creation
- ii. Socio – economic improvement:** AWRIM to contribute towards the improvement of the socio-economic status of Sisters, Church members, marginalized people and the society at large
- iii. Strengthened governance:** AWRIM to have improved and strengthened governance and management capacity, policies, structures and systems at all levels.
- iv. Sustainability and self-reliant:** AWRIM to be sustainable and self-reliant at all levels

2. AWRIM Structure

The highest authority on the Organogram is the ECM Bishop Chairman for the religious, followed by the Plenary Assembly of Major Superiors, the Executive Board, Secretary General, the Deputy Secretary General in that order. The Board of Trustees is an arm which works hand in hand with the Plenary Assembly of Major Superiors and the Executive board. Below the Secretary General are 1. The Head of Capacity Building and Spiritual Programmes 2. Head of Social programmes. Resource mobilization and communication 3. Head of Finance and Administration Services.

Below the Head of Capacity Building and Spiritual Programmes are various programmes like: Formation and sabbatical programmes; AACSS; Skill enhancement Courses and ASEC program.

Below the Head of Social Programmes are various programmes like: SCORE ECD; Anti-Human trafficking program and MEAL activities

Below the Head of Finance and Administration Serves are: Accountancy and Procurement activities .

ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMMES AT AWRIM

1. Spiritual and religious formation, Pastoral, (Head of Capacity Building and Spiritual Programmes)

- Organizing on-going spiritual and religious formation sessions, retreats and recollections at diocesan, regional, national levels.
- Promoting joint activities among congregations e.g. visits to prisons, elderly, retreats, recollections, day of consecrated life
- Facilitating access to donors for congregations and acting as a grantor
- A voice for all sister congregations at diocesan, national and international levels
- Promoting coordination and networking among sister congregations as a way of promoting positive relationships, unity of diversity, spiritual growth and sharing of experiences

2. Social development (Head of Social Programmes)

- Sister congregation positively contribute to education, early childhood development, nutrition, health and other social development sectors through various programmes and projects like: SCORE-ECD, ASEC; LAUDATO SI; AACSS, ANTI HUMAN TRAFFICKING PROGRAM, BHAKITA PROGRAMME among others
- Running health facilities and schools
- AWRIM members conduct outreach programs for vulnerable people e.g. orphans and vulnerable children, street kids, persons with disabilities and the elderly
- Cordial and mutual relationship with key stakeholders within and outside Malawi e.g. ECM, CRS. Government, PMS, ACWECA and UISG
- Formulation of Advocacy and Communication and Resource Mobilisation

3. Finance Investment and Administration (Head of Finance and Administration)

- Capacity building and empowerment of congregations and sisters through capacity building sessions, education scholarships and upgrading courses
- Production of various policies e.g. Human Resource and Financial Manuals
- Formulation of various resource mobilization strategies for programs and sustainability
- Mobilization of funds to run AWRIM secretariat through guest house, computer laboratory and land
- Managing financial resources from Donors and within AWRIM

Please see the Organogram in Strategic planning document page 24. or the Constitution

THE PROGRAMMES WHICH ARE CURRENTLY RUNNING AT AWRIM ARE:

1. On- going formation

AWRIM focus on spiritual and religious formation in order to deepen and strengthen the spiritual life and transform sisters into missionary disciples of Jesus Christ and stewards of God's creation. AWRIM organizes workshops and sessions on particular topic for different groups of sisters including formandeas especially the second year novices.

2. All Africa Conference Sister to Sister (AACSS)

All-Africa Conference Sister to Sister (AACSS) program aims at building capacity of women religious to enable them effectively address HIV/AIDS pandemic, other emerging Chronicles, disasters, and their impact on families, community life and society. The program is funded by Sisters of Mercy All-Africa Conference Sister to Sister, an organization that supports workshops, degree programs in counselling, faith development and biblical studies based in the United States. The All-Africa Conference Sister to Sister (AACSS) is an organization that began in 2002 and is dedicated to the empowerment of African Religious Women through education. The conference has trained thousands of African women religious in six sub-Sahara countries with skills to deal with the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa. AACSS has also offered counselling degrees to more than 125 African women religious. During the 2015 international conference in Malawi. Religious sisters in Malawi came up with an action plan, which included Chronical conditions, counselling, human development, sexuality and stress management just to mention few.

Strengthen Capacity of women Religious in Early Child Development (SCORE ECD)

The main goal is to build the capacity of Catholic Sisters to better provide early childhood development (ECD) services to children. SCORE ECD has improved skills of sisters in planning, budgeting, resource mobilization, networking, monitoring and evaluation and reporting. We are currently in SCORE ECD phase III that started December 2021. Seven congregations implement this project. They are Mary Consoler of the Afflicted (MCA), Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary (SBVM), and Sisters of Our Lady (SOL) Presentation of the Virgin Mary (PVM), Sisters of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Sisters of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus and Sisters of the Holy Rosary. The goal for SCORE ECD III is, to strengthen National Associations and Congregations of Catholic Sisters (NACCS) to address organizational capacity and sustainability challenges.

3. African Sister Education Collaborative. (ASEC)

African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC) facilitates access to education for women religious in Africa that leads to enhancement and expansion of the education, health, economic, social, environmental, and spiritual services they provide and impact communities and society they serve. To advance these efforts, ASEC provides educational opportunities for women religious in Africa so that they may further develop their talents and potential, build their education credentials, and enhance the leadership and ministerial roles they assume at all level of society. Under ASEC there are three programs. Sister Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI), Higher Education for

Sisters in Africa HESA and a Two years Scholarship program to help Sisters upgrade their secondary certificate or get a training with a certificate or diploma for two years.

4. Catholic Care for Children Malawi (CCCM)

The Catholic Care for Children is a sister-led, charism-driven movement that ensures that children grow up in safe, loving families. Through the International Union of Superiors General in Rome, national associations of religious women, and other appropriate groups, CCCI is building capacity to express a charism of care for children in today's world, to reduce recourse to institutional care, and to encourage family- and community-based care for children

5. The Bakhita Partnership for Education (BPE)

The Bakhita Partnership for Education (BPE) is a partnership of the Jesuit Religious Order in Africa and the associations of Catholic sisterhoods in Kenya, Uganda and Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania. (AOSK, ARU, ZAS, TCAS and AWRIM). Through the BPE, the sisters and the Jesuits will leverage their long experience in education to offer and advocate for holistic education and formation and suggest policy responses to the crisis of education in Africa. The proposal is prompted by the unique availability of technical expertise and experience in education of the partnering Catholic Church institutions, the Jesuit Religious Order and the Associations of Catholic Sisters in targeted countries of Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Tanzania and Malawi (AOSK, ARU, ZAS, TICAS and AWRIM).

NEW NETWORKS

AWRIM has four networks which are being implemented with a number of congregations. These networks includes;

a. Anti – Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a complex and dynamic global phenomenon involving the trade of human beings for exploitation. This global problem affects Malawi as a source, transit, and destination country. The coordinator for this network is Sr. **Teresa Nkunika**, the network of Seven Congregations in Malawi, include;

- I. 1.The Sisters of the Holy Rosary,
- II. 2.Terezian Sisters,
- III. 3.Carmelite Sisters
- IV. 4.Sisters of devine providence
- V. Poverelle Sisters
- VI. Religious Sisters of Charity
- VII. Canosian Sisters

The project focuses on establishing an institutional framework for effective regulation, coordination, and support of trafficking victims. Its objectives include prevention, victim care, and fostering partnerships to combat human trafficking in Malawi. They are in these dioceses;

- ✓ The archdiocese of Blantyre
- ✓ The archdiocese of Lilongwe
- ✓ Mzuzu diocese
- ✓ Karonga diocese
- ✓ Dedza diocese
- ✓ Mangochi diocese

b. Elderly Care

It is formed to train sisters on how to take care of the elderly sisters and also to sensitize sisters on how to grow old gracefully. The coordinator of this network is sr. **Georgina sapangwa**. This Network Comprises of 18 Congregations, these includes;

- I. Congregation of Mother Carmel
- II. Sisters of the Holy Rosary
- III. Missionary Sisters of Immaculate Conception
- IV. Sisters of The Holy Family of Boardeaux
- V. Presentation Sisters
- VI. Mary Consoler of the Afflicted
- VII. Daughters of Wisdom
- VIII. Sacramentine Sisters
- IX. Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- X. Sisters of Charity of Ottawa
- XI. Sisters of Divine Providence
- XII. Sisters of Our Lady of Amersfoort
- XIII. Holy Spirit Sisters
- XIV. Teresian Sisters
- XV. Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa
- XVI. Carmelite Missionaries
- XVII. Missionary Sisters of St Francis of Asisi
- XVIII. Sisters of our lady

This network is in these dioceses;

- ✓ The archdiocese of Blantyre
- ✓ The archdiocese of Lilongwe
- ✓ Zomba diocese
- ✓ Mangochi diocese

- ✓ Mzuzu diocese
- ✓ Karonga diocese
- ✓ Dedza diocese
- ✓ Chikwawa diocese

c. Health Care

This network is formed to sensitize sisters on communicable and non-communicable diseases. They will be several session on the same, the congregations that form this network includes;

- I. Daughters of Wisdom
- II. Servants of the Blessed Mary
- III. Teresian Sisters
- IV. Poverelle Sisters
- V. Sisters of the Holy Rosary
- VI. Sisters of Our Lady
- VII. Benedictine Sisters
- VIII. Medical Mission Sisters

The coordinator of the project is **Sr. Teresa Mulenga**. This network is implemented in the following dioceses;

- ✓ The archdiocese of Blantyre
- ✓ The archdiocese of Lilongwe
- ✓ Zomba diocese
- ✓ Mangochi diocese
- ✓ Karonga diocese
- ✓ Dedza diocese
- ✓ Chikwawa diocese

d. Sister Lead Youth Initiatives

Goal and /or Purpose

Enhanced vocational skills development for the underprivileged youth through strengthened Vocational Skills Training initiatives of Religious Sisters in Malawi for greater impact and sustainability.

This is implemented by eight congregations namely;

- I. Sisters of the Holy Rosary (Rumphu)
- II. Missionary Sisters of Immaculate Conception (Mzimba)
- III. Sisters of The Holy Family of Boardeaux Benga - Nkhotakota,
- IV. Our Lady of Mercy - Domasi - Zomba
- V. Religious sisters of Charity – Konzalendo- Nthyolo
- VI. Congregation of Mother Carmel - Mponela – Dowa
- VII. Carmelite Missionaries (CM) Kapiri – Mchinji
- VIII. Medical Missionaries of Mary (MMM) from Kasina – Dedza

The Project is Implemented by AWRIM through the Sisters who run Vocational Skills institutions which are situated in the following dioceses;

- ✓ The archdiocese of Blantyre
- ✓ The archdiocese of Lilongwe
- ✓ Zomba diocese
- ✓ Dedza diocese
- ✓ Mzuzu diocese