



## ALL-AFRICA CONFERENCE SISTER TO SISTER (AACSS)

*A network in six sub-Saharan countries that supports educational and training programs for women religious who are caregivers to those experiencing extreme poverty and the twin crises of HIV/AIDS and Covid-19.*

### NEWS AND MISSION STORIES FROM THE FIELD

#### From the Executive Director

Dear partner in AAC:SS,

Our Board’s recent focus on leadership development and technology has produced a very hopeful—and ambitious—strategic plan for the next two years.

The first goal is to have in-country leaders develop programs that reflect local needs. A key component of this approach is the inclusion of Secretaries General from religious orders. In this way, their members will be informed and have the opportunity to express their needs for more training and spiritual direction.

Our second goal is to use technology as creatively as possible to share information among women religious who are on the frontlines of healthcare in the sub-Saharan. Right now a technology pilot project is under way in Malawi under the direction Sister Eneless Chimbali, SBVM, our new Senior Program Officer. I know you will enjoy reading her comments in a conversation she had recently with her counterpart in the U.S., Sister Betty Scanlon, RSM.

Finally, some truly gratifying news: The Hilton Fund for Sisters has awarded AAC:SS a \$30,000 grant to support our Sisters in Africa with their ongoing Covid-19 relief efforts. This generous grant will support public awareness campaigns that spread positive information about the vaccine, encouraging people to be vaccinated as supplies become available. We are grateful to the Hilton Fund for Sisters for supporting this important initiative.

As we begin this new phase for the Sister-to-Sister movement, please feel free to reach me anytime with comments. As always, we are grateful for your prayers

and support. God bless you for joining us in this important mission. I wish you and your loved ones a safe and happy fall.

In thanksgiving for your generous support,

Rosemary Jeffries, RSM

#### New Leaders Respond to Goals Set by Sisters in Member Countries

**Sister Eneless Chimbali**, a member of the Congregation of the Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary, recently accepted the position of Sister-to-Sister’s Senior Program Officer based in Malawi. Her counterpart in the U.S. is **Sister Betty Scanlon**, a Sister of Mercy in Philadelphia who previously served in Africa for many years.

In a recent conversation, the two Sisters brought their near-term vision for AAC:SS to light based on the goals and needs identified by Sisters in member countries.

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S. Eneless Chimbali, SVBM  
Malawi



S. Betty Scanlon, RSM  
USA



**"What we must reinforce is that Sisters enjoy tremendous trust wherever they serve."**

### **Our New Leaders Imagine the Future**

**Sister Eneless:** I am very grateful for this opportunity to serve our Sisters. I have three main goals in my new position. The first is to assure every Sister that we recognize the challenges and stress of their lives, and we are here to listen and to help them. My second goal is to spread the word about Sister to Sister so that more women religious will come to know us and benefit from the programs we offer. My third goal is to help local leaders create action plans for their members—plans that reflect their own needs and priorities.

**Sister Betty:** I am here to support you, Sister Eneless. Right now I believe Sister to Sister is going through a paradigm shift. We are very focused on leadership development—a crucial aspect of your plan for growth. Identifying Sisters who can lead us into the future and providing them with the resources they need will be our joint goal—whether that's offering more training, technology, educational materials, or needs yet to be identified. We invite the Sisters to express their concerns because that is where we will direct our efforts.

**Sister Eneless:** You have identified a big challenge for our Sisters—and that's access to dependable Internet. Most of our Sisters have a computer and a cell phone. That is how we communicate with one another. But networks are not always available. Depending on which country a Sister is serving in, airtime can be spotty. That frustrates her ability to share information—and even to pray with other Sisters. Service is also very expensive in Africa. We need to work on country-by-country solutions to this problem. I am already in conversation with a few providers to see what is possible. And I am at work on our technology pilot project in Malawi. What we

learn here will be applied throughout our member countries.

**Sister Betty:** I join a Zoom conference at least once a month with Sister leaders in each of our six countries. Yes, they are aware of the limitations of today's technology—but also its potential. They are determined to stay focused on their mission, which now includes addressing the pandemic as well as the lingering impact of HIV/AIDS. The population is suffering from both—but so are our Sisters. Some have lost family members themselves, and some are psychologically affected by the pandemic. Making sure that every Sister has a basic understanding of Covid is a brand new line of education for us. So we have to identify gaps we can fill with resources and training—and spiritual support, too.

**Sister Eneless:** That will be very important. Sometimes our Sisters tell me they feel empty or that they have nothing to offer. I believe this is just a response to the overwhelming needs they see in their ministries. What we must reinforce is that Sisters enjoy tremendous trust wherever they serve. People often come to us for help first because they know us and believe in us. As you say, the delivery of healthcare and counseling services has become more complicated. My goal is to give our Sisters the resources they need to

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**"Better access to technology...more educational resources...and supportive programs for Sisters dealing with the current crises in healthcare: HIV/AIDS and Covid-19. These are just some of the issues that our new leadership is addressing--on both sides of the Atlantic."**



**"When we invest in the ministry of one Sister, she will ease the suffering of thousands of people for 20 or 30 years."**

serve as highly skilled caregivers—and a way to grow as women religious. Having a workable action plan in each country will provide our Sister leaders with an important management tool. When outcomes are successful, they can be shared with other Sister leaders.

**Sister Betty:** Absolutely. What makes our model unique is impact. When we invest in the ministry of one Sister, she will ease the suffering of thousands of people for 20 or 30 years. She will also share her expertise and knowledge with other Sisters who in turn will do the same thing. That's the great value of Sister to Sister.

**Sister Eneless:** Yes, and one other point: I believe our programs need to focus on integrating spirituality and charism with mission. In the past we tended to treat each one as separate. I want to help our Sisters see all three as a single, integrated expression of who we are as women religious.

**Sister Betty:** Agreed. And something I want to emphasize... The Sisters we support belong to indigenous religious communities that were born in sub-Saharan Africa. They may have few resources of their own. But they are still making a huge impact in the life of our Church and the mission of Sister to Sister. When donors support our work, they are also supporting communities of women religious who are dedicated to serving the Gospel, usually under very difficult conditions.

**Sister Eneless:** I thank our donors everyday in prayer for accompanying our Sisters on this journey. Donors to Sister to Sister make it possible for us to serve thousands of people, many of them living in remote areas. With their prayers and support, I know we will deal with the heavy crisis of Covid.

**Sister Betty:** I have always been surprised by the activity of God in all my ministries, but I probably

shouldn't be. That is how God works. I am overwhelmed by the support of our donors in the U.S. and also in the six countries of the sub-Saharan where Sister to Sister serves. I see God's work in the leaders who are emerging and in their passion for our mission. I probably speak for both of us when I say I am grateful.

**Sister Eneless:** Yes. For both of us and for all the women religious of All-Africa Conference: Sister to Sister, we say thank you and God bless.



Rosemary Jeffries, RSM  
Executive Director

**YOUR GIFT BUILDS SISTERHOOD**

Your support for the work of All-Africa Conference: Sister to Sister will empower more women religious in the sub-Saharan to alleviate the conditions of extreme poverty while building an international Sisterhood based on the compassion of Our Lord.

For details on giving and underwriting opportunities, please contact Rosemary Jeffries, RSM, or go to [www.allafrica-sistertosister.org](http://www.allafrica-sistertosister.org).

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