

Apostolates & Ministries



Watawa wa Taa





Apostolates & Ministries

What works was your Congregation founded to do, and how have those works evolved over time?

All Congregations have adapted over time to address poverty, social justice, and changing community needs.

Ministries have become more integrated and holistic, often combining education, health care, and pastoral care, as Sisters meet the faithful where they are and serve God's people wherever and however they are most needed.

Sisters reported that their Congregations' initial missions fall under several categories:

Education

- Initial Missions:
 - Focused on primary and secondary education, particularly of children, young adults, and the girl child, and aimed at empowerment of the poor
- Evolution:
 - Expanded to adult education, skills training, and education for marginalized communities
 - Holistic education integrating spiritual and life skills
 - Education of women to ensure financial independence and leadership in families

Evangelization & Catechesis

- Initial Missions:
 - Catechism and faith formation, often through schools and parishes
- Evolution:
 - Broadened to liturgical coordination, spiritual retreats, and adult catechesis

Health care

- Initial Missions:
 - Often added later in response to emerging community needs
- Evolution:
 - Establishment of clinics, hospitals, and outreach services, including mental health and traditional medicine
 - Health care provided as a work of mercy and pastoral care to the sick and suffering
 - Integrated into pastoral and social justice efforts



Social Work & Welfare

- Initial Missions:
 - Care for orphans, poor, abandoned children, and marginalized women
- Evolution:
 - Developed rehabilitation programs for street children, abused women, and stranded people
 - Started orphanages, soup kitchens, shelters, and homes for the elderly
 - Engaged in counseling, prison outreach, and social justice advocacy, including anti-human trafficking

Pastoral Ministry

- Initial Missions:
 - Often integrated within education and health care as visitation and spiritual consolation
- Evolution:
 - Direct pastoral ministry including working with the poor, prisoners, and broken families
 - Shift from institutional roles to presence-based ministry, community development, and spiritual support

Women & Youth Empowerment

- Initial Missions:
 - Education and catechesis focused on uplifting women and girls
- Evolution:
 - Programs for income generation, skills training, and leadership development
 - Support for mental health, entrepreneurship, and vocational rehabilitation for youths

Farming & Sustainability

- Introduced Later
 - Crop and livestock farming used to fund and sustain ministries and rehabilitation projects
 - Encouraged as part of self-reliance and social development



What guides the process of discerning new apostolates and ministries, and who is involved in that process?

Discernment of new apostolates is a spiritually grounded, community-engaged, and strategically guided process, involving leadership, consultation, planning documents, and contextual analysis. Although leadership plays a decisive role, there's an **increasing trend toward inclusive and participatory discernment**, especially in response to contemporary needs.

Sisters reported a variety of methods for discerning new apostolates and ministries:

Spiritual and Charismatic Foundations

- Prayer, discernment, and guidance by the Holy Spirit are central across all regions.
- Ministries must align with the Congregation's charism and spiritual mission.

Use of Congregational Structures and Documents

- Constitutions, manuals, strategic plans, and practical norms guide discernment.
- Congregational chapters (general, provincial, regional) are formal forums for discussing and approving new ministries.
- Leadership bodies (general council, provincial superiors) play a critical decision-making role.

Broad Participation in Discernment

- In many regions, discernment includes consultation with the whole Congregation, ensuring community-based participation.
- Sisters can propose new apostolates based on their experiences or observed needs.

Needs Assessment and Feasibility Studies

- Feasibility studies, including site visits, are conducted before launching new ministries.
- Assessments consider personnel availability, sustainability, and security.
- Professional input and local consultations are often included in evaluations.

Collaboration and External Input

- Requests from bishops, dioceses, or laypeople are considered, especially if aligned with the Congregation's charism.
- Memoranda of Understanding or contracts are drawn up when engaging in partnerships with diocesan or parish authorities.

Responsiveness to Context and Signs of the Times

- Ministries are discerned based on emerging needs, such as mental health, vulnerable groups, social justice, or shifts in Church and government structures.
- Evaluation of existing ministries is done to decide whether they remain relevant or need adjustment.

Leadership and Centralized Decision-Making

- While community input is valued, final decisions often rest with leadership councils or the general council.
- Some Congregations are moving toward more inclusive, participatory models of discernment.

Is there a need in the Church and/or society that you feel needs the intervention of your Congregation or religious women?

There is a strong, shared sense that religious women are urgently needed to respond to **spiritual, emotional, and socio-economic needs** in Church and society. Empowering Sisters through education, expanding their roles, and encouraging collaborative ministry are essential for impactful service. Priorities include:

Mental Health & Trauma Support

- Counseling and mental health services for individuals, families, and traumatized communities
- Support for traumatized religious women

Youth Formation and Empowerment

- Skills development and mentorship
- Digital literacy programs
- Faith and moral education

Support for Vulnerable and Marginalized Populations

- Orphans, street children, and prisoners
- Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)
- Migrants and substance abuse victims
- Elderly accused of witchcraft
- Victims of child abuse
- Women facing gender-based violence



Education and Formation of Women Religious

Sisters report:

- Delayed or denied educational opportunities
- Need for affiliation of religious formation with academic institutions
- Empowerment of Sisters to take on leadership roles
- Call for a code of conduct to preserve the integrity of religious life



Women in the Church

Sisters express an urgent need for:

- Greater visibility, voice, and leadership of women religious in the Church
- Inclusion of women religious in decision-making processes, especially in light of the Synod on Synodality

Justice, Peace, and Advocacy

Sisters identify a need for involvement in:

- Human trafficking prevention
- Legal advocacy and good governance efforts
- Social justice issues such as poverty, education, and trauma recovery

Collaboration and Sustainability

Sisters see a need for:

- Inter-congregational and interfaith collaboration
- Partnerships with dioceses and local communities
- Development of unused land for farming and self-sustainability

Evangelization and Pastoral Ministry

Sisters call on one another to:

- Be a prayerful and visible presence in society
- Visit homes and marginalized individuals to rekindle faith and Church connection
- Re-engage in missionary and pastoral roles, as some have shifted to office work

Faith Formation and Catechesis

- There is an urgent need to revive catechism through schools and evangelization.

Church Reform and Structural Needs

Sisters express concern about:

- The increasing number of congregations, with suggestions for mergers
- Shortage of personnel in the Church
- Lack of pastoral schools and training centers
- Need for administrative support in dioceses

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The Church needs us.
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Watawa wa Taa Consecrated Women of Light

Watawa wa Taa can be loosely translated as “Consecrated Women of Light” in Kiswahili. The name was chosen as an ode to the remarkable presence and works of women religious in Africa.

Whether as members of international, missionary or local Congregations, holding pontifical or diocesan status, African Catholic Sisters can be found at the forefront of society, working for sustained and systemic change in the areas of health care, education, social work, pastoral care, agriculture, and many more.

Watawa wa Taa acts as an incubator of ideas, thoughts, and inspirations of African Catholic Sisters from around the continent as they reflect on this shared and unique way of life and together seeking the Holy Spirit’s invitation as to how to move forward together.



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