The Prophetic Witness
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Apostolic Nuncio in Uganda, His Excellency Luigi Bianco (Centre) with members of the General Assembly of Major Superiors and Executive Committee, ahead of the Assembly at ARU, June 2022.

ARU Profile Cont.
By Sr. Specioza Kabahumuza - DST

B. Workshops: Spiritual Crowning Activity for both groups at USFCN:

Trainers of Trainers Course: For Formators for On-going Formation within communities of Congregations: (FoF). (Twelve Interspersed Weeks)

Purpose:
1) To train religious women and men to acquire skills of effective facilitation of formation processes in religious Congregations
2) To offer participants skills in group dynamics to familiarize them with their future work as they seek to help others at community level or those doing actual formation work.

3) To expose the Formators / facilitators to needed skills in assisting community leaders, religious in transitions, and the elderly members as they study courses to that effect:

Content of Courses:
1) Holistic Human Growth & Development:
2) Spirituality:
3) Consecrated Life:
4) Leadership:
5) The Social Teaching of the Church:

C. Training Members of Religious Congregations in Facilitating General Chapters (8 interspersed weeks)
The eight weeks course trains General Chapter Planners and Facilitators in knowledge and skills of conducting a fruitful and successful General chapter. Discernment is the underlying principle of the Step-by-Step instructions for the main stages of the General Chapter beginning with Chapter preparation. It gives the trainees guidance on various processes and dynamics and a range of resources to promote effective participation by all members of the Chapter.

F. African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC)
The ASEC Programme Offers: SLDI – Sisters Leadership Development Initiative and HESA: Higher Education for Sisters in Africa. The Programme is sponsored by Sisters in USA. Courses can change from time to time according to the assessment needs of ARU members.

1. SLDI: Sisters Leadership Development Initiative
a) Basic Computer Skills and Web-design
b) Administration and Finance courses (For this course members from the Computer groups choose an area of interest which they specialize in; either the area of Finance or Administration, but other members are also free to apply). The duration of each category of courses is determined by the USA sponsors. Certificates are awarded by Marywood University at the completion of each category of courses.

To be Continued...in the next Issue.
A new Mission - from Uganda to Lebanon

Poor Clare Sisters from Mbarara, Uganda, contribute to the Universal Church

Catholic Sisters from the Institute of Poor Clares from Mbarara, Uganda have joined the Monastery of Our Lady of Unity in Beirut (Lebanon) to give a fresh support to the native Institute.

By: The Poor Clare Sisters, Mbarara

Five Sisters volunteered to fly to Lebanon on April 21, 2022, following a call from Rome inviting them as requested by the French federation of poor Clares to which the Lebanese Monastery belong.

The sisters who accepted the mission to Lebanon include; Sr. M. Stella, Sr. M. Light, Sr. M. Anu- arite, Sr. M. Christiana, and Sr.M. Charity-Clare.

In Lebanon, the Poor Clare Sisters from Ugandan have rejuvenated the Monastery with Sr. Stella Twesigomwe now acting as the Abbess or Superior. They have dedicated themselves to holding public Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament twice a week and their own is done on daily basis, which is open to the entire general public.

The monastery is deeply rooted in the local Church and cherished by all the people around but the sisters had to live through the long civil war, political unrest, illnesses, economic difficulties among other challenges.

Some Sisters were obliged to return to their respective countries of origin while others returned to the Lord. This was a clear indicator for the closure of the monastery. However, six sisters were left in Lebanon; some of them aging and fragile, but very courageous and full of Faith.

Together with the Christian community, they ardently prayed to get some help from other Poor Clare communities. So, they welcomed the sisters from Uganda with open arms, saying: “... their coming is like a miracle, an answer to our long prayer.”

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Bishops of Maronite and Latin Rites visited the sisters and promised to help them. The friends of the Monastery also welcomed them with enthusiasm. The new Community is getting organized with Sister Stella as the appointed Abbess, her Vicaress is Sr. Natividad, from the Philippines, and Sr. M. Light as Councilor.

Continued to the next page...
Three continents and five nationalities are represented among the 11 Sisters: Lebanon, France, Philippines, Korea and Uganda! They have decided to live their special call to be a seed of unity and peace. Apart from the life of prayer which takes the largest part of the day, other activities include: house work, the gardens and administering a guest house that receives individuals and groups for retreats and recollections. There is also a workshop, equipped for making liturgical vestments and altar linens.

Sisters from Uganda are learning French, the official language of the community (fortunately some know it already), and Arabic which is the national language of Lebanon. Part of the Liturgy is celebrated in these languages in the Maronite Rite.

"We entrust this venture to your prayer," one of the Sisters in Uganda noted. However, their challenges include: many languages, cultural diversity and economic challenge among others. “Now if this is the will of God, He will accomplish his work.” The leader of the five Sisters said. May the light of St. Clare continue to shine in Lebanon for the glory of God and for the good of all His people, Amen.

By ARU Reporter

The Annual General Assembly of the Major Superiors that commenced from June 5-9, 2022, attracted participants from various Institutes across Uganda. The Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) Secretariat-Nsambya hosted the Assembly. The theme: “Growing Together in the Spirit of Synodality: a call to deeper communion, participation and Mission,” steered the team.

Child safeguarding was an important issue and before the assembly officially opened, a presentation was made by Fr. Frederick Tusingire, the Director of the Lay apostolate Department, Uganda Episcopal Conference (UEC), “…Children are at the heart of Jesus’ teaching. Jesus said “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them.” Mt 19:14. Children are dear to the Creator. Childrens’ welfare and safety are important concerns for the Church at large that is why it’s a serious concern of the Holy Father and of every Bishop.”

After a call by the Holy Father to protect children and even those who work with them against false or unfounded accusations, a document was drafted giving guidance in handling cases of abuse and accusations against alleged abusers in a procedurally correct manner. Fr. Tusingire disclosed that the Uganda Episcopal Conference (UEC) understand and acknowledge the importance of quick action and without being defensive to concerns about the safety of children. “While we are committed to preventing abuse, we recognize that the success of this policy depends on the willingness of people to bring to us concerns and our ability to respond firmly but sensitively,” the Bishops emphasized. They embarked on putting in place a policy for Child safeguarding.
The rights and dignity of children like any other person must be protected. Fr. Tusingire informed the house about the foundation of Child Safeguarding in the Catholic Church with its roots in the Sacred Scriptures, the Tradition and Teaching of the Church embedded in the Bible, Catechism of the Catholic Church, Vatican Council II documents, the Magisterium in general, the 1983 Code of Canon Law and Roman Catholic Church Social Teaching and Tradition. Other protocols and civil documents such as UN (UNCRC), African Charter, the Constitution of Uganda and Civil laws apply therein. The UEC Policy Guideline commits Catholic Bishops and Major Superiors to strengthen their policies, procedures, accountability, transparency and working environments free from sexual abuse, exploitation, and harassment within their organizations, churches and communities in which they operate. They should create and proactively assure that reporting mechanisms are in place and that all staff understand their responsibility to report inappropriate behaviors. Bishops and Major Superiors are urged to establish Child Safeguarding Committees to enhance administration and investigation in case allegation is made about the behavior of a member of staff at their or partner institutions.

“As consecrated people, whenever we fail to do what is expected of us, Jesus weeps.”

The Assembly commenced with Eucharistic Adoration animated by Fr. John Bosco Kamoga, C.C.Sp who led the participants to reflection and repentance. He invited members to reflect on their relationship with children, the underprivileged, the marginalized, the poor and those with special needs.

In her keynote address, Mother Maria Speranza Namusisi, IHMR, welcomed His Excellency Luigi Bianco, the Apostolic Nuncio to Uganda and thanked him for honoring ARU’s invitation to preside over the opening Eucharistic celebration and official opening of the assembly. She thanked the Nuncio for his guidance that helps in following the guidance of the Holy See and she reminded the conference about the composition/ membership of ARU as Institutes of Consecrated life and Societies of Apostolic life with juridical recognition of Diocesan and Pontifical Rights.

Mother Speranza said that in the spirit of Synodality, ARU invited those upcoming institutes (Associations or Pius Unions) to participate in some activities of the assembly that could help them to grow to the status of being recognized Religious Institutes. She introduced the new Superior - Mother Libera Mandawun, MSMMC, the new Superior General of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church (MSMMC) to the Nuncio and the members of the conference.

“As members of ARU, we are ready to be guided by the directives of the Holy See, to create communion among the Institutes, in collaboration with the UEC,” She concluded and invited His Excellency, Luigi Bianco to address the members and officially open the Assembly. Story continued to page 5...
The Apostolic Nuncio, His Excellency Archbishop Luigi Bianco thanked Mother Maria Speranza Namusisi, IHMR, the President of the Conference for inviting him and was happy to meet the superiors. He hailed Sr. Lydia Apili Bwor, LSMIG, for the good work at the Secretariat and congratulated those who had finished the General Chapters of their respective religious Institutes.

He was happy with the theme of the June 2022 Assembly and said that under the spirit of Synodality, members need to work together and that the theme is in line with what Pope Francis is calling upon them to do.

The church is a community of missionary disciples, an evangelizing community to go out to the world. He said that this was an invitation to go out and be together, work together and not in isolation of one another, quoting the Evangelii Gaudium (the Joy of the Gospel) No.24.

Child Safeguarding was also a major concern for His Excellency, Luigi Bianco, the Apostolic Nuncio to Uganda, who graced the Assembly. He lauded the conference for seriously addressing the issue of Child protection and child safeguarding. He encouraged them to read and understand the Code of Canon law in regard to child abuse and the new changes in Canon law to address very important issues and in this case child abuse.

“Building the Future with Migrants and Refugees.” This calls all to respond to the cry of the poor exemplified by refugees and migrants.

He urged the religious to leave their comfort zones and go out to the people of God.

“The people of God should be a first priority for that is why you exist as consecrated people – Go out to the people and help them to live the Good News of Jesus.” The Nuncio encouraged.

Meanwhile many more facilitators and resource persons shared available materials with the General Assembly, for instance, Fr. Ambrose Bwangatto, Dean at St. Mbagga Seminary, Ggaba took the assembly through an overview of the Synod on synodality while Br. Casio Aizire, FIC discussed Human resource development and succession plans. While program leaders presented activity and program reports to the Assembly.
By: ARU Reporter

Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN) in partnership with John Paul II Justice and Peace Center, Association of Religious in Uganda, (ARU)-JPIC, Uganda Episcopal Conference: Department of Lay Apostolate in collaboration with the Julius Nyerere Leadership Centre, (JNLC), Makerere University, conducted a four days Stakeholders’ workshop at John Paul II Justice & Peace Centre from April 27-30, 2022.

The workshop which was graced by Rev. Fr. Frederick Tusingire, Director, Lay Apostolate, UEC, as a key note speaker focused on various social issues affecting Uganda and humanity. He underscored the importance of advocacy and ascertained the challenges posed by COVID-19 on the education of teenage girls in Uganda.

Various critical issues concerning social justice like human trafficking, child labour, child abuse, child marriage, environmental degradation, poverty, corruption. Other social challenges in Uganda and Africa were discussed at length by Sisters Eucharia Madueke and Mary Lilly Driciru respectively. “Networking is a key aspect of carrying out proper advocacy in the community,” Sr. Eucharia stressed the importance of working as a group. She advised participants on how to come up with meaningful networks and how to make them successful in pursuit of their goals.

Sr. Eucharia also focused on the importance of developing a new mindset. She said that it is critical for Africans to engage in developing a new mindset, that can help solve the current and emerging contemporary issues in the society that calls for urgent attention.

She urged the participants and all partners to employ an all-round means of technology, faith and culture to support the cause for advocacy in order to build fair and just society.

Meanwhile, AFJN-Uganda Coordinator, Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru, took the participants through the history of AFJN advocacy in Uganda from 2018, when advocacy became practical and visible within the networks of Consecrated persons in Uganda.

She also gave a picture of contemporary social issues in Uganda by citing the fact that Uganda has been a battlefield of social challenges before, during and after her independence in 1962.

“The issue of contemporary social challenge spreads out as seen in the neighbourhoods of Uganda: Rwanda, DR Congo and S. Sudan as manifested by migration and influx of refugees. Social challenges bring about adverse effects in normal family setting: Distorted human development process in the family results in dysfunctional family and society at large. This adversely affects personal relationship with God and neighbour,” she continued.

Other social issues in Uganda include: Domestic violence, child labour, violence, addiction, torture, murder, human trafficking, corruption, land grabbing and the like.
A crossection of Participants during the workshop at JPIIJPC on education and decent work. Photo by ARU repoter.

In the same vein, Fr. Aniedi Okure, a facilitator, sensitized participants on the ways they can creatively engage in advocacy with methods that work perfectly in different settings depending on the community. He also informed the participants on the various strategies of advocacy they (participants) can use.

“Advocacy is a Christian Calling,” Fr. Aniedi Okure noted. He continued with the importance of Christians’ engagement in advocacy and why the Bible/ the Christian faith encourages Christians to engage in creating change in their communities through the power of advocacy.

To ensure active participation, the class was tasked in groups to discuss in depth other social evils facing Uganda and Africa and come up with lasting solutions to the challenges at hand as a way of assessing the success of the workshop.

A participatory platform; open mic was accorded where participants were free to share their opinions in regards to the issues discussed throughout the day. Mainly those concerning social justice, social evils, networking and advocacy and all that featured prominently.

Key media houses were invited to cover the launch of the nationwide research report which was the gist of the workshop.

The workshop culminated in writing an advocacy letter which was jointly developed to suit the required advocacy voice. The letters were addressed and taken to the selected line government ministries and agencies including the Parliament of Uganda. An interface was enabled after delivery of the letters.

The workshop was followed by a review meeting with selected duty bearers at John Paul II Justice and Peace Centre. The meeting majorly focused on discussing important highlights of the workshop, key challenges and achievements. The team also revisited the issues of human trafficking and its adverse impacts. The new AFJN Regional Co-ordinators were appointed with the hope of making a difference in serving the various regions of Uganda.

Remember...

“Networking is a key aspect of carrying out proper advocacy in the community,” Sr. Eucharia Mudueke.

The same meeting also forged a way forward regarding AFJN registration as an NGO in Uganda and key intervention areas to be addressed as soon as possible.

The workshop attracted participants from all parts of the country mainly head teachers, social workers and the youth. Members resolved to be committed and determined to practice what they have acquired when they return to their respective communities.

“We are happy to learn the importance of advocacy, networking, social issues in the community and how to intervene,” a member noted. The team was pleased with the advocacy letter addressed to line Government Ministries and believe it will have a huge impact in influencing policy in the country.

The team believes that the message reached the targeted audience and the local communities.

A Crossection of the Participants in a listening session during the workshop.
The said research report highlighted key areas like; the challenges posed by COVID-19 on the education of teenage girls as schools have opened; it established practical measures or policies by the government in addressing the challenges; it identified the gaps in the measures or policies by the government, and generated policy options in addressing the teenage girl's education and challenges caused by COVID-19 restrictions and other causes in Uganda.

Mr. Alfred Avuni making a presentation on the Impact of COVID-19 on teenage girls' education.

After presenting the findings and gist of the research, the participants were later engaged in a group discussion, and enhanced to review the content and research overview critically.

Having listened to the presentation, the participants, especially teachers were happy that their plight is being addressed to the whole nation through the advocacy. “Collective response to the fight against the negative impact of COVID-19 on teenage girls’ education is my strength, we are grateful to AFJN and partners for organizing such an important workshop. We have learnt a lot and we are ready to advocate for change in our various communities,” a participant remarked.

A stitch in time saves nine, Advocate now to save GENERATIONS.

Uganda Spiritual Formation Centre joins Laudato Si Movement

Uganda Spiritual Formation Centre Namugongo (USFCN) responds to Pope Francis’ appeal: Laudato Si; May 24, 2015 and Laudato Si Action Platform by organizing a four-day seminar for the participants from June 6 - 9, 2022 at the Spiritual Centre. Hence, advocacy and care for the earth, our common home becomes a concern for all.

The Facilitator of the program, Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru, MSMMC addressed and took the participants through the concept of Laudato Si, the ecological crisis, ecological mourning, ecological conversion and the web of life; where there is need to experience interconnect edness, inter relatedness and inter dependence with one’s surrounding. The 24 participants from 12 religious institutes resolved to join the team of advocates for creation and care for the common home and...

CALL to to mitigate the destructive environmental behaviour: “After the workshop we have discovered that, there is need to convert and cease from destruction of the natural environment and observe respect for the eco system. We shall advocate for afforestation, preservation of the wetlands, respect game reserves, discourage pollution and become agents of peace by promoting mutual communication with creation through eco spirituality like St. Francis, by implementing the plea of Pope Francis in Laudato Si,” the Class Coordinator, Br Carlos Lwanga, BSCL observed.

The participants in a prayer session during closing ceremony, at Namugongo Spiritual formation Centre.
A participant, Sr. Mary Daisy Nakanwagi, DST, was overwhelmed by the way humans are killing the earth: “There is need to listen to the cry of the earth because of being victimized, abandoned and maltreated by us the human beings. The thought about the imminent catastrophe like the floods and desertification cannot be ignored. Let alone the discovery of oil and gas in Hoima -Uganda has drastically adverse effects like displacement of people, exploitation of workers in the plant, pollution and heat emission making it the hottest pipeline in the world.”

In a concluding reflection, one of the participants; Sr. Christine Gabriela Achola, MSMMC, basing on Gen 1:24-2:4 noted that all that God made was very good. Creation is given its rightful place, with man who is made in the image and likeness of God lives in communion with God. Human relationship with creation is likened to the trinitarian communion as seen in the web of life. Unfortunately, man has abused his role by destroying the earth due to egoism. There is an urgent call to observe climatic justice through advocacy and Laudato Si Action Platform - LSAP using the principle of See, Judge and Act (SJA). The consecrated persons are challenged not to sit back but listen to God’s voice and contemplate creation so as to be touched by different realities and become prophetic voices today as portrayed by socio-economic inequalities, migration, famine and extreme climatic challenges.

The seminar was concluded with group prayer at the grotto of Our Lady, beginning with Divine Mercy, Recitation of the Rosary of our Lady of Sorrows, Biblical reflection and the final activity was planting of trees as a sign of contributing towards the rehabilitation of creation.
ARU Sister Led Youth Initiative Register Success

By Sr. Caroline Bacia

The Association of Religious in Uganda, (ARU), in partnership with Hilton Foundation has rolled out ARU Sister Led Youth Initiative (ASLYI), a project that started in March 2021 and now registering success despite the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic and other obstacles.

This project, among other objectives seeks to address the challenges of poverty, unemployment, school dropouts and the consequent youth vulnerability to human trafficking and other social challenges.

According to the implementers, Gulu Ecclesiastical Province qualified to render a pilot ground due to untold number of the vulnerable youth in the region after the Lord’s Resistant Army Rebels - LRA (Kony insurgency) in the northern Uganda. The project is piloted in the Ecclesiastical Province of Gulu, with the hope of rolling it out to the rest of the country in future.

ARU Sister Led Youth Initiative project recounts success in alleviating myriads of problems facing the youth as they transit from dependency to self-reliance. The youth who are trained in various skills are now implementing hands on skills like tailoring, cookery, sustainable agriculture, motor vehicle mechanics among others.

“The trained youth cannot become agents of change and desired persons unless the acquired skills are put into practice.” Sr. Bacia further noted. The pictorial illustrations and stories recount the entire tale of the students like:

Olia Bernard from Dokolo Parish, Lira Diocese does casual works of painting and construction works in town. He saved his earnings, constructed pigsty. He bought nine (9) weaners; he integrates his enterprise of pig production with poultry and vegetable farming. He has seedlings of passion fruits, green and red papaya and pawpaw for sale. Olia has become self-sustaining champion. He plans to expand his poultry with 100 hens. He is in control with managerial skills and methods and he appreciates ARU for the support. He has built a network of 28 youths.

Olia Bernard from Dokolo Parish, Lira Diocese and his poultry production unit. Courtesy photo from the field.

Rackara Justine William from Pabo, Gulu Archdiocese specialised in vegetable production before training at Adraa Agriculture College. He had skills of simple mechanics and repaired motorcyclces or bodabodas and got 8000 UGX. He bought OKRA seeds, planted 2 plots and later started selling 4 pieces at 500 UGX twice a week and in two months, he earned 700,000 UGX from sales of OKRA.
He intergrates his enterprise of vegetable production with sugar-cane growing, poultry production, rice growing and he is also employed to sell in supermarket. Justine is already a successful youth. He is very happy and appreciative to ARU for the empowerment. He plans to expand his enterprise like planting at least one acre of maize, soya beans and rice. He plans to train 30 other youths.

Another success story from Br. Konrad Vocational and Technical Institute, Lira. During interface with students on 16th/03/2022, the students who took mechanics as trade built confidence through the training. The program coordinator requested driving learners to take her and witnesses for a drive. As illustrated below: The youthful driver taking the sisters around the compound up to the main road and back under the supervision of a senior ARU driver William Investor.

"Every student appreciates the efforts ARU is making to empower the youth in the Country and they are praying for more blessings."

Rackara Justin William from Pabo, Gulu Archdiocese in his vegetable farm. Courtesy photo from the field.

Bishop Angelo Negri Vocational Training School, Lira also trains students in Tailoring, Garment Cutting and Design as well as salon and hairdressing. They composed a poem: “ARU, ARU caused fundamental change in us because we are being trained for self-sustainability...” Before this course, many of them were shy to speak English. Now all of them can speak, write and understand English of which they feel proud. “Thanks to ARU for being light in darkness,” they said.

"From Adraa Agriculture College, besides technical skills, the National Program Coordinator shares the Word of God: Lk: 4:18, Is: 61:1-2 announcing the Good News to the little ones-the Youth. Indicating 2021 as a year of favour to the youth from the Lord.

Better Late Than Never

Students who offer Tailoring, Garment Cutting, Design and salon and hair dressing, reciting a poem at Bishop Angelo Negri Vocational Training School. Courtesy photo from the field.

The youthful driver who has benefited from the initiative exhibits confidence in driving skills to the program coordinator. Courtesy photo from field.

Piggy farm

Poultry farm

Students from St. Theresia of Calcutta in Omoro district, Gulu Archdiocese. During the biodata capture. “Every student appreciates the efforts ARU is making to empower the youth in the Country and they are praying for more blessings.” Courtesy photo from the field.

Project team for farm inspection to ascertain the progress of the acquired skills. Courtesy photos for the field.
Major Superiors, Economy Generals Attain Capacity Building Skills

The Association of the Religious in Uganda (ARU) in partnership with LIFENET International (LN) organized a four days Capacity building training for the Major Superiors and Economy Generals and representatives at ARU Secretariat, Nsambya. The training, which kicked off on June 28, 2022 -July 1, 2022 was attended by many Major Superiors and Economy Generals from various, Institutes across Uganda.

The training tailored at improving the practices of Major Superiors and Economy Generals with better skills and knowledge as top leaders of various institutes. They attained skills on how a healthy organization should be, while considering among others; relevant skills of governance and organizational management for effective service, notwithstanding leadership skills, finance management, finance generation and management and financial reports to the governance body.

They (Major Superiors and Economy Generals) also managed to acquire skills in human resource management and its cycle, performance management, basic requirements and minimum standards and skills on internal controls in financial management, accounting systems, action plans; among other disciplines.

Sr. Ritah Christine Nakitende, LSOSF, and Vicaress of her Institute testified: “I have learnt a lot about financial management and related skills. Much as I am not a finance person, but as a leader, I needed to have such skills for self and in order to help those who may seek help in the same or similar field...

Topics like Human Resource, Leadership and Management were so enriching, I have a lot to share and implement when I go back to my community,” Sr. Nakitende revealed. ARU collaborated with LIFENET International on this training due to their varied and wide experience, love for the religious, being knowledgeable in their services and accessible, Sr. Nakitende added.
Pictorials of Major Events, April - June 2022

Group photo of the Members of General Assembly of the Major Superiors June, 2022 at the ARU Secretariat.

Some of the Executive Committee Members of ARU during the General Assembly of the Major Superiors.

Major Superiors and Economy Generals during capacity building training at ARU Secretariat.

H.E Luigi Bianco, the Apostolic Nuncio to Uganda celebrating Mass during the General Assembly.

Participants of Care for Mother Earth Seminar in Group Photo at Namugongo Spiritual Centre.

The Poor Clare Sisters in a group photo ahead of their journey to the new mission in Lebanon.

Participants of Teenage Advocates in group Photo after workshop.