

**Thomas Ryan, "International, Online, Action-Research Education: Gifts and Challenges,"  
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With support from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the Loyola Institute for Ministry (LIM) developed a project entitled "Catholic Sisters in Partnership for Sustainability" in which sisters from eleven congregations from Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and South Sudan took online courses for LIM's Certificate in Catholic Social Teaching. The coursework was informed by the themes of Catholic Social Teaching (CST), the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and LIM's method of practical theology that involves critical reflection on practice that leads to enhanced action. Students' critical reflection was informed by socio-cultural, systems, theological, and environmental perspectives and research. In light of this reflection, they delivered workshops and developed partnerships aimed at empowering others as agents of CST and the SDGs. In other words, they undertook action research in the service of the peace and justice commitments promoted by CST and the SDGs.

Students and instructors hailed from East Africa and North America and so formed an online international learning community. Cultural differences and technical difficulties presented challenges to the students and instructors. Yet, the international character of the learning community enabled by the online platform enhanced the achievement of learning objectives and heightened international understanding and collaboration.

This poster will present LIM's method of practical theology, what we learned from the gifts and challenges of an international online learning community, and proposals for more effective action research in such a setting.