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NEWSLETTER No. 66
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DEAR READERS,
WELCOME TO THE 66TH ONLINE ISSUE
OF VIVAT INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER!

2016! An important year for the United Nations- not only for Member States but also for the civil society around the world. This year officially marks the implementation of United Nations' 2030 Agenda for achieving of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Early 2106 was marked by the High level signing of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Paris Convention (COP 21) on Climate Change by Member States. Along with the two events, two other major events took place at the UN Head Quarters in Mid-February and March: the 54th Session of the Commission on Social Development (CSocD54) and the 60th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW60). Eradication of Poverty, Gender Equality, Human Trafficking, and Women's Rights, were some of the main concerns during CSocD54 and CSW60, some of which will be covered in this edition.

Meanwhile, this issue brings you some stories from South Sudan on Women's Role in Peace Building Process, from India on the activities and celebration of Women's Day; from; from Bosnia on Education; from Argentina; the Philippines on Sustainable Challenge, and from Kenya.

We thank Fr. Dario Bossi, MCCJ and his colleagues in Latin America for their continuing commitment and effort to engage in awareness building and defend indigenous people's rights and the rights of Mother Nature. Fr. Dario received a Letter of Appreciation and encouragement from Cardinal Peter Turkson, the President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in January 2016. Excerpts from this letter are included in this edition.

Thanks to the contributors on this edition and to those who made VIVAT vision and mission a concrete reality at the grass-roots level.

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The 60th UN Commission on the Status of Women

The sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW60) took place from March 13 to March 24, 2016 at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York City. This year, the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters of the U.S. Paraclete Province delegated Sr. Angelica Oyarzo Chavol, SSpS and Ms. Arantxa Martinez, both working at the Holy Spirit Life Learning Center in Chicago, Illinois, to attend CSW60.

The priority theme for discussion and action at CSW60 was “women’s empowerment and the link to sustainable development.” CSW60 also featured the first review of the agreed conclusions from CSW57 (2013), which focused on ending violence against women. In this article, Sr. Angelica and Ms. Arantxa share what they learned while attending official meetings, side events, and parallel events during CSW60.

When it comes to gender equality and women’s empowerment, we saw a lot of great work being done in various African countries. For example, we learned from different presentations about the efforts in South Africa and Zambia to eradicate female genital mutilation and child marriage by changing the culture. The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning (LGBTQ) that advocates for the equalized acceptance of LGBTQ persons in society is also getting stronger in Africa. While many governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are committed to promote gender equality, we realize that there is still much work to be done. For instance, on a side event on “Gender Equality and Global Call to Action on Equal Pay” (March 16), the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau stated that while

much progress has been achieved in Canada when it comes to gender equality, such as the first cabinet with equal number of men and women, violence against indigenous women continues in large numbers.

Human trafficking or modern day slavery of women and girls continues to be of great concern. We learned that human trafficking is the third



largest international criminal activity, after trafficking of drugs (#2) and trafficking of arms (#1). In the side event “The Connections Between Undocumented Immigration and Trafficking of Women” (March 14), one of the presenters talked about the surge of unaccompanied children from Central America arriving at the U.S. Border seeking refuge from poverty and violence in their home countries. In 2014, approximately 47,017 unaccompanied immigrant children made it to the U.S. As of March 2016, more than

24,000 accompanied immigrant children had crossed the U.S. - Mexico border. Many of the children who were released from detention were taken for exploitation; for example to work on farms throughout the U.S. under terrible conditions. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security had not done the proper screening and follow-up of those to whom the children were released. Fortunately, there are many efforts to empower children, especially girls. In October 2015 California lawmakers passed a bill to extend Medi-Cal coverage, the state’s Medicaid program, to undocumented children.

At the opening meeting of CSW60 (March 13), we were surprised to see more men than women giving the opening remarks and leading the discussion. As the event progressed, we were excited to learn about the current campaign, led by WomanSG, to elect a woman UN Secretary-General. In its 70th year, the UN has had eight male Secretaries-General, even though women represent half the world’s population. WomanSG produced a long list of highly qualified women for the position from all regions; there is much hope that the ninth UN Secretary-General will be a woman. More information about the agreed conclusions of CSW60 is available at www.unwomen.org.

*Written by: Arantxa Martinez, M.A.
& Sr. Angelica Oyarzo Chavol, SSpS*

FORCED LABOR, HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SLAVERY

One of the interesting topics during the 60th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW60), March 14-24, 2016, was the interrelated issues of forced labor, human trafficking and modern slavery. Both presentations at the UN main events and side events indicated how urgent it is to address these three issues together. Forced labor takes different forms, including debt bondage, trafficking and other forms of modern slavery. Women and girls are the most vulnerable. They are forced into prostitution, trapped into debt bondage, sweatshop or farm workers by illegal tactics and paid little or nothing. Live stories from the victims and survivors as well as scientific studies presented at the events at the UN CSW60 prove how urgent it is to address these three related issues.

International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates, almost 21 million people are victims of forced labor, 11.4 million women and girls and 9.5 million men and boys. Also, 19 million victims are exploited by individuals or enterprises and over 2 million by the state or rebel groups. Of those exploited by individuals or enterprises, 4.5 million are victims of forced sexual exploitation. Forced labor in the private economy generates US\$150 billion in illegal profits per-year. Meanwhile, domestic work, agriculture, construction, manufacturing and entertainment are among the sectors most concerned. Migrant workers and indigenous people are particularly vulnerable to forced labor (<http://www.ilo.org//global/top-ics/forced-labour/lang--cn/index.htm>).

As part of its concern and response to force-labor phenomenon, ILO released a “Check-points on Eliminating and Preventing Forced Labour” document. This checkpoint list is proposed to help someone to eliminate and prevent forced labor. There are 38 checkpoints in total, which are divided into 11 different categories. Each checkpoint includes also

best practices recommendations for taking actions. The 11 categories of the checkpoints are prison labor (3 checkpoints); freedom and termination of employment (4 checkpoints); violence, harassment and intimidation (1 checkpoint); coercion, debt bondage and bonded labor (7 checkpoints); disciplinary measures (1 checkpoint); compul-



Source: http://endslaverynow.org/media/3831/kay-chemush-slave-labor-2_0.jpg?anchor=center&mode=crop&width=486&height=255&rnd=13099667918000000

sory overtime (3 checkpoints); freedom of movement (2 checkpoints); skills development and training (2 checkpoints); recruitment and migration for employment (9 checkpoints); employment agencies and contracts (5 checkpoints); and worst forms of child labor (1 checkpoint) (For more details of the checkpoints, see http://www.ilo.org//wcm5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcom/---pub/documents/publication/wcms_456961.pdf).

There have been a number of cases which indicated that women and girls from Indonesia were the most vulnerable among the migrant workers to become victims of forced labor and human trafficking (<http://www.vivatinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/NL62-Eng-.pdf>).

Advocacy efforts have been taken to defend the rights of the victims and survivors; this is followed by empowerment programs which are aimed at assisting victims to raise their voices against perpetrators and also raising awareness of civil society elements of the seriousness and urgency of the problem. At the international level, VIVAT International has been working

together with other NGOs at the United Nations to combat human trafficking and forced labor through an NGO committee called NGO CSTIP - Non-Governmental Organizations Committee on Stop Trafficking in Persons. In collaboration with International Organization on Migration (IOM) and ILO, VIVAT International as a member organization of CSTIP often raised these issues during UN meetings. However, there is a need for more collaboration and coordination at local, national, regional and international levels to combat forced labor, human trafficking and modern slavery more effectively.

By Robert Mursel, SVD

The Philippines: The Sustainability Challenge

A STORY FROM VIVAT PHILIPPINES

The Philippine Sustainability Challenge (sustainabilityph.org) was tasked with raising SDG Global Flag # 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. This was the project of Project Everyone, as part of the vision of letting everyone on the planet know about the SDG's. The other 16 flags were raised in other parts of the world. Fr. Flavie Villanueva, SVD, is a member of the Council of Advocates of the PSC.

We raised Global Flag # 15 at the Marikina Watershed, Sitio Wawa, Bgy. San Raphael, Montalban, Rizal, in a bamboo planting event led by members of PSC, notably Mga Anak ni Inang Daigdig, volunteers from UBAS (Ugnayan ng Barangay at Simbahan), Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, officers and soldiers from the 2nd Infantry Division, AFP, and chieftains and Dumagats from the Montalban area.

Following is the list of the 15 prioritized goals by states in various parts of the world: North Korea prioritizes goal no.1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere; Nepal on goal no. 2: End hunger, achieve food security

and improved nutrition and promote sustainable culture; Russia on goal no. 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages; India on Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; Denmark on Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; Jordan on Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all; China on goal 7: Ensure access



to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all; South Africa on Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable

economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; Kenya on Goal no. 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation; Brazil on Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries; Australia on Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; Costa Rica on Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production matters; North pole countries on Goal no. 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; Spain on Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development; Uganda on Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Please help us achieve the SDG targets for Goal # 15 in the Sierra Madre mountain range first and then the rest of the country as part of our JPIC vision.

Fr. Benigno P. Beltran, SVD
Lead Coordinator
Philippine Sustainability Challenge

Argentina: Love the Poor and Your Environment!

ANIMATION PROGRAMMES OF VIVAT ARGENTINA

In the Jubilee Year of Mercy, we Christians are invited to live intensely the dimension of the sensibility of our heart to make us neighbors of our brothers and sisters who live through exclusion, poverty and marginalization.

Pope Francis, in his encyclical "Laudato Si" says it is prophetic to care for our "common home", our planet and its resources. This creation has been given to the custody of mankind, with the commitment of care and with commitment to leave her an inheritance to the future generations. The care of the planet is a commitment linked with justice. Therefore it cannot be approached as a distant initiative and respect of the consequences on the life of mankind, particularly of the poor.

Pope Francis further says, "There exist forms of pollution that daily affect people. The exposure to the atmospheric pollutants produces a wide

spectrum of effects on the health, especially of the poorest, causing a million premature deaths. They fall ill, for example, because of the inhalation of high levels of smoke that comes from the fuels that they use to cook or to heat. Added is the pollution that affects all, owed to transportation, to the smoke of industry, to the warehouses of substances that controllers of undergrowth contribute to the acidification of the soil and of the water; to the fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides, and agrotocites in general. The technology that, tied to the finance, tries to be the only solution of the problems, is in fact in the habit of being unable to see the mystery of the multiple relations that exist between the things, and therefore sometimes it solves a problem by creating others." (Laudato Si n° 20).

During May 2016, we invite VIVAT members

in Argentina to encourage parochial and educational initiatives linked to four axes of VIVAT's animation and priorities: women's rights, culture of peace, sustainable development and eradication of poverty. We implore that our commitment multiplies in local initiatives to bring awareness and activities in favor of environmental care and our community links to protect powerless and the poor. We invite them to prepare and design activities in our local places to multiply our commitment during this time.

By Victor Hirsch, SVD
VIVAT Argentina

BETWEEN ROME AND GRASSROOTS ACTIVIST

A LETTER OF APPRECIATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT FROM CARDINAL PETER TURKSON, THE PRESIDENT OF JP COMMISSION OF THE HOLY SEE TO FR. DARIO BOSSI, MCCJ

On January 26, 2016, Cardinal Peter Turkson, the President of Justice and Peace Commission of the Holy See wrote to Fr. Dario Bossi, MCJ, an environmental activist and one of the very active associate members of VIVAT International in Brazil “**to thank you** for your various contributions to our efforts: for your support and your prayers; for the testimonies and documents you have shared with my team; and for having facilitated contacts between the Pontifical Council and particular experts and community representatives. Finally, thank you for the valuable feedback to our 2014 working document *A new beginning for mining*. This feedback clearly demonstrated that the Catholic Church is actively interested, engaged and concerned about current forms of mining, as well as about future projects. The principal worries centre on equity, corruption, environment degradation, violence and criminality. Local communities always need particular attention.”

The Cardinal also wrote to Fr. Dario “**to encourage you** to persist in your engagement, despite the adverse circumstances which some of you have to face. Please, persevere in your daily service to local communities, while providing advocacy or training; in your dealings with public authorities or mining actors; or during occasional more visible and publicized events, some of them at the regional or international level. May the Encyclical letter *Laudato si'* and the *Message* which the Holy Father addressed on 17 July 2015 to our gathering be two useful sources of inspiration for you.”

The Cardinal also wished “**to inform you** that the Pontifical Council will continue its work on mining with

numerous stakeholders in 2016. We are studying how best to share with you a summary of the data gathered between 2013 and 2015. A selection of docu-



Photo: Peter Cardinal Turkson, President of Pontifical Justice and Peace Commission of the Holy See.

mentation and bibliographic information is already being proposed with this letter (you can request it to mining@justpeace.va). In addition, please note that our book *Land and Food* (LEV, 2015) includes some questions which were recently raised about mining. Moreover, we are studying possible avenues to intensify the work started by the Council and, in the light of subsidiarity, to apply it at the continental and eventually national levels.”

He concluded his letter by mentioning the recent *Message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace* of Pope Francis: “Indifference and lack of commitment constitute a grave dereliction of the duty whereby each of us must work in

accordance with our abilities and our role in society for the promotion of the common good(...).

There are many good reasons to believe

in humankind’s capacity to act together in solidarity and, on the basis of our interconnection and interdependence, to demonstrate concern for the more vulnerable of our brothers and sisters and for the protection of the common good. This attitude of mutual responsibility is rooted in our fundamental vocation to fraternity and a life in common.... As we

approach a new year, I would ask everyone to take stock of this reality, in order to overcome indifference and to win peace” (§ 4 and 2).

We thank Fr. Dario for his continuing commitment to and passion for humanity and mother nature, praying that more VIVAT members in the Latin American continent as well as in other parts of the world will join them. Let us remember Frs. Simon Suban Tukan, Vande Raring, Markus Tulu, Eman Embu and Otto Gusti Madung in Indonesia, Fr. Carolus Barla in East India and other VIVAT members who day and night work for their love of humanity and mother nature.

Bosnia: Voices for the Voiceless

STORIES FROM THE SISTERS OF THE ADORERS IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

How do Adorers of the Blood of Christ (ASC) live in Bosnia-Herzegovina, a country divided into two parts, with two governing bodies for three ethnic populations who live there? Two realities, three nations, each with a different religion! It is a real challenge.

The reality of this country raises questions that affect each one of us personally, because we belong to a third nation, Croatia. We see the problems of our people and, at the same time, are sent on mission to “be a sister” to everyone. In the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina, living as an Adorer and being near to everyone whom God places in our path, regardless of nation or faith, is difficult, but not impossible. This is confirmed by the Adorers who live and work in Glamoč.

When our people find themselves in that role of “third”, downtrodden and deprived of civil rights, how can we Adorers carry out our mission of “witnessing to God’s love and ministering that love to others, especially the poor, the oppressed, and the deprived” as we are called to do in our Constitution? (LC 3)

There are three of us here and each of us is challenged in her ministry: Sr. Simplicija teaches religion, often in mixed classes; that is, children from three different religions: Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim. All of these experiences are positive. In fact, the possibility to learn together, from one another, is a blessing for this local community. The children learn to appreciate diversity and to overcome prejudice and other obstacles to peaceful living together.

Sr. Aneta is a nurse and social worker. All the “misery” of the town knocks at the door of our house and of her heart asking for help: the elderly who live alone, the physically and mentally ill, victims of family violence ... and she finds ways to respond to every cry.



Sr. Martina shares: “I arrived in Glamoč in August 2000 and began to work in the ‘Butterflies’ public pre-school. The population here is mixed, made up of Croatians, Serbians, and Bosnians, who are in continual tension among each other. Thus, bringing children of three nations who just recently were fighting each other to the same pre-school is nearly impossible. The pre-school, which had initially opened before I arrived, had been closed because of a lack of competent personnel. I have now been living in Glamoč for thirteen years-- thirteen wonderful years filled with beautiful and difficult times during which I have succeeded in setting up a pre-school. The school is a public school, and most of the personnel are lay Croatians. That is, they belong to the Croatia group, the “third” nation whose people do not have access to basic human rights. Therefore, we face many problems. I will name only a few:

1. Since June 2008, the workers at the “Butterflies” pre-school in Glamoč have not been paid. Since that time I have been fighting on all fronts to obtain funds for them. There are four ASCs working in the school and we have not been paid either.
2. Another problem is that our religious garb “bothers” the town’s administration.
3. The town authorities (the mayor is member of a party of the Serbian nation) want to divide the children of the pre-school into ethnic groups and give each a separate playground.

That is unacceptable and we will not do it. How can the children learn toleration and living together if we do not allow them to have contact with each other, with those who are “different”?

Often the politicians in this town put the motto “divide and rule” into practice, but we have not wanted to follow that motto.

In the name of all those who find themselves in similar situations, I raise up my voice to speak against injustice.

Two years have passed, and we realize how we helped and encouraged one another. We got the strength to continue only through the commitment of the whole community to promote communion between people of different nations and religions, even if the politicians have their own interests and do not try to help the country’s development based upon reciprocal acceptance and respect of differences.”

The court process, through which Sr. Martina as director of the nursery school is trying to get salaries for the employees, has been going on for 3½ years, and is still ongoing. The three laywomen who are working with her have received a share, half of what they should have gotten. Sr. Martina still has not received anything, because the process is not concluded. However, she continues to fight, not for herself but for the people who have no voice. For her, it would be much easier to give in and go to work somewhere else, but would this be the solution?

Despite the many problems in our reality, we Adorers experience beautiful kindness and acceptance of others. Even if the politicians do not make any effort to promote dialogue and coexistence, indeed often the contrary, we sisters get many signs of support from the people, which they don’t reveal in public because of fear. Sometimes in front of our door we find small gifts (vegetables and fruits). This is for us a sign of recognition and encouragement in our commitment – to BE SISTERS FOR ALL.

By ASCs of Glamoč

The Future of Human Rights Defenders

A NOTE ON BERTA CACERES' DEATH

The death of the Honduran activist and human rights defender, Berta Cáceres, on Thursday morning, March 3rd, 2016, in Honduras, shocked the world. Berta Cáceres was shot to death by two gunmen who entered her home in Las Esperanza town at 01:00 am. No one claimed to be responsible for the killing, but many viewed it in relation to her work on defending the rights of indigenous Lenca people in Honduras. In 2011 Lenca people began to oppose the government's law that allowed a group of private companies to build dozens of hydroelectric dams along the Gualcarque River, which is the territory of the Lenca people. Berta put herself at the frontlines on this indigenous people's side and founded the Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) to strengthen the Lenca people's opposition to the government's project. Because of her passion for human rights and love of the environment, she won the Goldman Environmental Prize in 2015 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berta_C%C3%A1ceres).

Her continuing commitment to the advocacy work resulted in some violent actions by security forces and negative reactions by Honduran government. Berta often faced intimidation and harassments. Not only that. Since 2010 more than a hundred of the members of COPINH were killed. And it was not unexpected that Berta was murdered.

CSW60 AND BERTA CACERES

Berta's death struck most of the participants of the 60th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW60) in New York, March 14 and 24, 2016. As an expression of sympathy, condolences and solidarity, the participants, most of whom were women, organized rallies at the Permanent Mission of Honduras to the United Nations in New York and made



Photo: <http://www.nationofchange.org/news/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Berta-caceres-en-vida-5-770x470.jpg>

some statements condemning those who killed Berta and calling for the Honduran government to be responsible for the murder, or, at least, to investigate the case and put to trial those involved in or behind the killing.

Berta's death raised the question among the participants as well as the activists around the world who would be the next target. The death of many human rights activists and defenders recently signals the challenges and difficulties they face, especially when it comes to a decision to put themselves on the side of the marginalized and on the ones being left behind in the development process.

VIVAT MEMBERS AS HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In many parts of the world, VIVAT members in one way or another are human rights activists and defenders. As missionary priests, nuns, brothers and laity, they often offer their lives to defend the rights of the poor, marginalized, neglected, indigenous peoples and the oppressed. They act to address rights on behalf of individuals or groups.

In some places, VIVAT members are active in support of human rights as diverse as the rights to life, to food and water, to the highest attainable standard of health, to education, and to non-discrimination. They also address the rights of categories of persons, for example women's rights, children's rights, the rights of indigenous peoples, the rights of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the rights of minorities. In India we know Fr. Carolus Barla who has been working for many years to defend the rights of the indigenous peoples in East India;



Fr. Simon Suban Tukan in Manggarai; Indonesia; Fr. Ben Beltran in the Philippines; Fr. Dario Bossi and companions in South America and many others in South Sudan, Ethiopia, etc.

By Robert Mirsal, SVD

South Sudan: Women and Peace Building Process

Yei is the town in South Sudan where many internally displaced persons are fleeing because of internal conflict in the country. Generally, they find Yei peaceful. Many of them have experienced pain and loss of loved ones from violence and conflict in the past and in the recent months. This situation calls for healing, forgiveness and reconciliation so that



peace which needs to start from self will be realized. Said peace process will flow to the families, tribal communities and society as healing of broken relationships and forgiveness through a reconciliation process is very necessary in the war torn country South Sudan. In the signing of the peace agreement on August 2015, many hoped that real peace would be achieved; though many were also skeptical about it knowing that culture revenge is strong especially in those who were victims of violence, pain and loss of their loved ones.

On the other hand there are many groups desiring that genuine peace will happen in the entire country. One of these groups is Women's Group of Christ the King Church, Yei, South Sudan. The desire for lasting peace in the country is being challenged by the presence of internally displaced people, coming from other tribal groups, who have violent tendencies. Putting into action the desire of the members of the women's group for genuine peace, the group have a 3-day seminar on the concept and practicality of making peace real in their own situation.

So the group learned the process of developing knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed to bring about constructive behavior that enables children, youth and adults to minimize, and resolve conflict in a non-violent manner.

The group likewise learned the process of restoring broken relationship and transforming injustice around them through active peace processes- accepting and respecting other people coming to their community who are fleeing from conflict and violence.

Likewise, listening to their challenging stories and making them feel at home so that whatever pain and tendency to respond violently to what they experienced will be turned into positive action towards the other. The women group realized it is not an easy task but they are willing to go through it because their hearts' desire for genuine peace is stronger than what they are feeling. They have grouped themselves to start the process of peace building first in their own respective community. Indeed, little initiative from the women's hearts will bear the fruit they desired..PEACE....

*By Sr. Anna, MCJ
South Sudan*



India: Women's Day Observed

Uday Social Development society, a social work wing (JPIC Centres) of India Central (INC) celebrated International Women's Day this year in all its 6 units located at Khandwa, Jhabua, Indore and Bhopal district of Madhya Pradesh, India. Uday is working in 35 villages, 107 slums (a total of

The women are connected with one another through the medium of 160 Self Help Groups (SHGs) with 1500 women and further these SHGs are advanced to Federation of SHGs which is a big power. These federations are named in Hindi as **Vikas Munch** (meaning a forum for development and

challenges as we work such as lack of resources both human and financial, threats caused to women by some of the Local Self Governance (Panchayaths) and men. Yet it is very encouraging to see the women who were behind the purdha system, come out to voice to put a stop to the suppression of women. Therefore all the units decided to honour and recognize the contribution of these women to the country for development and harmony by celebrating International Women's Day. International Women's Day was celebrated in many places such as Sirpur Cluster (Khandwa district), on 6th March 2016 in which 250 women participated; Badi Dhamini Cluster (Jhabua district) –in which 100% of the population is indigenous and illiterate; Aulia Cluster (Khandwa district) (March 5th), in which 140 women from 10 villages participated; Dharampuri Cluster (Khandwa district) by 250 women from Dharampuri cluster; Bhopal Slums (March 3rd); Indore Domestic Worker Solidarity (Indore district), especially Kundan Nagar on 9th March and Niranjapur on 10th March in which total 125 domestic workers participated. In those two places Ms. Rekha Thakur and Ms. Rashmi Pandit, Advocates from High Court, encouraged and appreciated the domestic workers for their work. Meanwhile, Ms. Clara Damor from the crime branch and dealt on law and order, said that women face physical and mental exploitation which is also created by relatives and friends. But women, due to defaming, do not complain to anybody even to the police. She emphasized that many domestic workers are facing problem but untold and unheard. All the domestic workers were encouraged to make union of domestic workers stronger by inviting new members and working together.



45,342 persons) with women, children and youth working towards Women Empowerment, Integral Development of Children, Capacity building of Women through training, Availing Govt. scheme, Care & Protection of environment, Aiming at proper functioning of Government institutions such as Panchayaths, Govt. schools and ICDS Centres (Integrated Child Development Services). The programs in these units are coordinated by committed and competent sisters of INC and during 2015-2016—the sisters involved are Srs. Rosily Panjikaran, Nirmala Marandi, Rosina Joseph, Anna Tirkey, Roslin Pathiyotil and Jency T.O together with 24 trained staff and volunteers.

empowerment, by, for and with women) through which the women take the initiative to develop their villages and slums. The SHG have a small level of saving to sustain themselves economically by inter-loaning. But the SHGs are not limited to saving money: instead they are trained to be leaders and are empowered collectively to address the issues of their local places. There are many examples in which the women have addressed the issues affecting their own lives and of their family, villages and slums. The cases such as making the Panchayaths function as it should be, development issues, banning alcohol, fight against corruption and dismissing the appointed Panchayath Secretary and many more. There are also many

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& VIVAT Coordinator-INC*

Kenya: A Sign of Hope

A SHARING FROM VIVAT INTERNATIONAL KENYA

VIVAT International –Kenya already held three meetings to follow up its existence and presence in the region. The first meeting was on November 14, 2015 in SVD Kenya/Tanzania Provincial House, which was attended by Fr. Albert Fuchs, SVD, Fr. Eusebio Manangbao, SVD, Sr. Maria Jerly Renacia, SSpS, and Sr. Benigilda Ladia, SSpS. The agenda was the review and clarification of the Charter of VIVAT International Kenya.

The meeting ended with some decisions:

- It was decided that on the Monday meeting (16 November 2015) the Charter of VIVAT International Kenya needed to be reviewed so that the members would be made aware of it once again especially the areas of membership, organizational structure and finance.
- Sr. Benigilda would share with the group the workshop/seminar she attended in India regarding the Training on Advocacy and Lobbying of issues of Human Trafficking which was organized by VIVAT International. Then, she would facilitate the open discussion which could help in paving the way to identify VIVAT International - Kenya's focus on its advocacy and lobbying activities.

The preparation for the Monday meeting would be done by Sr. Maria Jerly with the support of the other members present.

The second meeting was on November 16, 2015 in SVD Common Formation Center, Langata, Nairobi, which was attended by Fr. Iyan Daquin, OMI, Sr. Ma. Jerly Renacia, SSpS, Sr. Benigilda Y. Ladia, SSpS, Fr. Eusebio Manangbao, SVD, Sr. Mary Musa, MSHR, Fr. Albert Fuchs, SVD, Fr. Joseph Kallanchira, SVD, and Sr. Delia Contreras del Toro, CMS.

There were three items for the meeting, namely Review of the Charter; Sharing of the VIVAT International organized

existing organized NGOs in Nairobi especially that of the Religious Congregations like Marist International, Franciscan International, the Jesuits, White Fathers and that of the Don Bosco/Salesians. The linkage will enable VIVAT International to collaborate with what already exists in order not to duplicate activities and JPIC issues and concerns being addressed.

- In order to accomplish this, VIVAT International will organize a one-day gathering/meeting with religious



Training/Seminar held in India; and Identification of the focus of activity of VIVAT International Kenya as National Branch.

Planning for 2016 VIVAT International – Kenya

In order to realize the full implementation of VIVAT International – Kenya, the group started the discussion on what will be the focus of VIVAT-Kenya for the coming year. Some of the suggestions: Human trafficking, ecology, refugees and child protection. There were different ideas raised by the group on each issue to link the advocacy and lobbying activities of the group with the

congregations mentioned above for sharing that will lead to further collaboration.

- But before calling for a meeting, there is a need for VIVAT International - Kenya to gather information on the focus of each NGO. A committee of four members was formed to do the task. The members of the committee are: Fr. Eusebio, SVD, Fr. Iyan Daquin, OMI, Sr. Mary, MSHR and one from Comboni Sisters which Sr. Delia will delegate. Fr. Eusebio, SVD will coordinate the committee.

By Srs. Benigilda Ladia, SSpS and Maria Jerly Renacia, SSpS

India: Step it up for Gender Equality

CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, 8th March 2016

Every year 8th March is a special day for all of us at Streevani, our friends and associates, especially for the members of Maharashtra Domestic Workers Union. For us the International Women's Day is all about celebration, reflection, advocacy, and action on issues that affect women's life, nationally and at a local level. This year too, around 1200 women gathered under the banner of Streevani to celebrate the International Women's day on 8th March 2016 with the theme "Step it up for Gender equality".

Dr. Bharati Yadav, a professor and orator, addressed the gathering on the topic of gender equality, calling on women to improve the status and standard of living, learning and doing. She asserted that the thinking about oneself should be changed; we need to appreciate ourselves, need to maintain certain standard, hygiene and a sense of style in the way we conduct ourselves especially at the workplaces. She spoke on the importance of personal appearance and how it can create an impact on each one's life personally and professionally. She spoke from her own life experience that she was married at a young age and thereafter she continued her studies in spite of all hardships and has reached the current position. Hence she emphasized that education is the most important tool to improve women's status and the status of our children and families.

Anant Malap from Shramik Sangatan, Mumbai spoke about the life of Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar and Mahatma Phule, and called on women to follow their footsteps. He called on women to continue fighting for women's rights and workers' rights through Union, to build solidarity and strength to pursue ones dream.

Other guests present were Mr. D.T. Patil Assistant Labour Commissioner, Pune, Ms. Raynah Braganza, Director of

Women's commission of Poona Diocese, Mr. Narayan Galande, a well-known Leader and Mr. Salab Khan, from LabourNet.

What is fundamentally beautiful about this celebration is the confidence and enthusiasm women display in putting on a cultural program and the show of strength and unity among women. The cultural items put up by women domestic workers depicted the current situation of women, the difficulties that they face, such as poverty, illiteracy and the complexities of farmers' life in the wake of many of them committing suicide due to huge debt that they incur when the crops fail. In the current situation of tolerance - intolerance debate in the country, the women put on a dance - drama depicting Patriotism and paying tribute to our National leaders who fought for freedom and equality. It was a rallying call both for reflection on lessons learned and to be learned, for accelerating momentum towards gender equality and the empowerment of every girl and woman.

The atmosphere resonated the echo of slogans that women raised in support of the union and for the rights, freedom



and violence free society where every woman and child can live without fear and with dignity.

Women looked gorgeous in their colorful attires, bringing out the free-spirited

UPCOMING EVENTS

29 March – 21 April: 15th Session of Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Venue: UNHQ Geneva

•4 – 6 April: World Summit on Information Society. Venue: UNHQ Geneva

•11 – 22 April: 24th Session of Committee on Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Venue: UNHQ Geneva

•9 – 20 May: 15th Session of UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Venue: UNHQ New York.

•23 – 27 May: UNODC: 25th Session of Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. Venue: UNHQ Vienna, Austria.

•30 May – 1 June: UN DPI/NGO Conference on Education for Global Citizenship. Venue: Gyeongju, South Korea.

•20 - 24 June: UNODC: 7th Session of Conference of State Parties to the UN Conventions against Corruption. Venue: Vienna, Austria.

nature of them; some of the self-help groups had dress code for their group members. It was a great time for Streevani and its associates, especially the Maharashtra Domestic workers Union to come together, celebrate our life with one another with dignity and respect for each other. At the end of the program, all of us joined in the friendship meal of vegetable biryani and sheera (a dessert). The impending school/college examination of their children kept some of the women away from this year's celebration.

*By Reena D'Souza SSPS
For Streevani Team*