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## INDIGENOUS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

***“Indigenous youth inherit the responsibility to protect and preserve their traditional lands, resources and sacred sites upon which their cultural heritage and identity is based.” (Indigenous Youth Conference, April 2002, Baguio City, Philippines)***

*The survival of indigenous peoples across the globe has become an urgent issue. Indigenous peoples and their unique and precious cultures will not survive in this globalized world, unless they are fostered and nurtured. If not, all existing cultures and peoples lose something precious. Indigenous children and youth are our best hope in ensuring the survival, growth and prosperity of Indigenous Peoples. Hence, a collective effort of states, UN agencies and other people’s organizations must see to it that they are properly educated in their*

*indigenous languages, cultures and values with indigenous pedagogy as the basis of their learning. Globally, there are some 350 million indigenous people and about 180 million of them are children. For this reason, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has adopted “INDIGENOUS CHILDREN AND YOUTH” as the theme of the Second Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues held on May 12-23, 2003 at the UN Headquarters in New York. ([www.un.org/esa/socdev/pfii2.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/pfii2.htm))*

The first day of the Second Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was devoted to a high-level panel and dialogue on indigenous children and youth. The panels were Nina Pacari Vega, Foreign Minister of Ecuador, Jaap Doek, Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Ida Nicolaisen, a Permanent Forum member, Nils Kastberg (United Children’s Fund – UNICEF), Lee Swepston (the International Labor Organization – ILO), Jones Kyazze (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO), Jackie Simms (World Health Organization – WHO) and Elizabeth Garret, a representative of indigenous youth. Among others they have noted the following issues faced by indigenous children: racism, discrimination and marginalization. Nils Kastberg of UNICEF underlined that indigenous children and youth were marginalized in many of the protections afforded to others and were often hidden in statistics of national averages. He therefore asserted that the right to non-discrimination and other rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child must become a reality for the indigenous child. Jackie Simms, who represented the World Health Organization, further noted that indigenous children and indigenous communities were especially at risk because of a lack of community infrastructures and access to basic services, especially fresh water, sanitation and adequate housing. Speaking on behalf of the youth, Elizabeth Garret expressed concern over the fact that the United States of America and Somalia have not yet ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. She stressed that capacity building and the recognition of self-determination were strategies for addressing indigenous youth’s futures. (<http://www://ods-dds-un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N03/362/17/PDF/N0336217.pdf?OpenElement>)

**During the Second Session, the Permanent Forum was informed about atrocities being carried out against indigenous people who were being killed, mutilated and even eaten in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.**  
(<http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs/2003/maggabrf.doc.htm>)

**THE KIMBERLEY DECLARATION  
The Voice of Indigenous Peoples  
(An Excerpt)**

*International Indigenous Peoples Summit  
On Sustainable Development  
20-23 August 2002*

Today we reaffirm our relationship to Mother Earth and our responsibility to coming generations to uphold peace, equity and justice.

As peoples, we reaffirm our rights to self-determination and to own, control and manage our ancestral lands and territories, waters and other resources. Our lands and territories are at the core of our existence – we are the land and the land is us; we have a distinct spiritual and material relationship with our lands and territories and they are inextricably linked to our survival and to the preservation and further development of our knowledge systems and cultures, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem management.

We have the right to determine and establish priorities and strategies for our self-development and for the use of our lands, territories and other resources. We demand that free, prior and informed consent must be the principle of approving or rejecting any project or activity affecting our lands, territories and other resources.

We are the original peoples tied to the land by our umbilical cords and the dust of our

ancestors. Our special places are sacred and demand the highest respect.

The national, regional and international acceptance and recognition of Indigenous Peoples is central to the achievement of human and environmental sustainability. Our traditional knowledge systems must be respected, promoted and protected; our collective intellectual property rights must be guaranteed and ensured.

We are determined to ensure the equal participation of all Indigenous Peoples throughout the world in all aspects of planning for sustainable future with the inclusion of women, men, elders and youth.

Language is the voice of our ancestors from the beginning of time. It is part of the soul of our nations, our being and the pathway to the future. The preservation, securing and development of our languages are matters of extreme urgency (**As published by Tebtebba Foundation**).

In concluding the Second Session, the Permanent Forum approved nine sets of recommendations, seven draft decisions and urged United Nations Bodies to address matters related to trafficking and sexual exploitation of indigenous girls. They have recommended that governments and the United Nations bodies prepare specific policies and implement programmes for indigenous children and youth to promote their human rights, strengthen, recover and conserve their languages, promote their culture and education, reaffirm their traditional knowledge, and contribute to their self-esteem. The Forum also adopted its agenda for the Third Session in May 2004, which will focus on INDIGENOUS WOMEN, their status and participation at the national and international levels. ([www.Un.org/New/Press/docs/2003/hr4676.doc.htm](http://www.Un.org/New/Press/docs/2003/hr4676.doc.htm))

Peoples are named as priority group by many of our SVD and SSpS provinces and regions. And rightly so because Indigenous Peoples are still the most vulnerable in society, discriminated against and excluded from the basic cycles of life. VIVAT International believes that our commitment and endeavors for poverty eradication, the promotion of human rights, women and sustainable development urge us to speak with and on behalf of Indigenous Peoples across the globe, in particular, the ethnic communities we journey with.

## JOURNEYING WITH OUR PRIORITY GROUPS ON THE GROUND

### **Agro-Ecological School Among Mba'e Katu Indigenous SSpS-Paraguay**

This school for the Mba'e Katu Indigenous People started in March 2001 with 50 students coming from 10 communities of the Etnia Ava Guarani.

The project consists of cultivating coffee and fruits like pineapple, banana, citrus, etc. through the selective clearing method (cutting only some trees without burning). Despite all the difficulties in implementing this new method, the people were able to harvest half a hectare of fruits and coffee. The project is primarily a training ground for the students who are expected to help their respective communities towards poverty alleviation and sustainable development. Moreover, the project is also food and income generating and the method of farming used helps protect the microorganisms of the soil, to avoid soil erosion.

### **Ministry with Asylum Seekers SVD - Papua New Guinea**

The SVD are presently involved with asylum seekers and in the promotion of peace between Vanimo, Papua New Guinea (PNG) and West Papua (Indonesia). This project came about in April 2001 in response to the need of around 500 people who crossed the border in December 2000 seeking asylum from persecution by the Indonesian Military. As intended, the project has been able to ensure food and accommodation for the asylum seekers, to prevent their forced repatriation by the PNG government and to recommend 80% of them for refugee status.

**VIVAT International thanks Fresnida Carmen Castro, SSpS for her valuable contribution in the founding years of VIVAT International, New York.**

### **Community Socio-economic Development for the Oromo People SSpS - Ethiopia**

In response to the poverty situation of the Oromo people of Ethiopia, the SSpS Sisters started a socio-economic development project in October 2000. The target groups are women, men, children, families and communities.

The main challenge in carrying out the project lies in the empowerment of persons, families and communities to participate in the process of discovering their needs and in shaping their own development. This requires education for change in perspectives and behavior.

Among others, the project has facilitated the construction of three deep wells, trained 10 traditional birth attendants and 22 primary health workers, constructed model houses using local materials without destroying nature, raised the use of pit latrine and waste disposal from 0% to 28%, graduated 27 women and 62 men and promoted 480 school age children at the Non-formal Education Program, which is recognized by the government at the village level.

### **Integrated Community Development Among Fisher Folk SVD- Cebu, Philippines**

This project, coordinated by the SVD in Cebu, Philippines started in January 1999 in response to the situation of 200 fisher folk of Maghaway, Cebu, Philippines who are displaced by the implementation of the government's aggressive development plan in Metro Cebu.

The project has provided decent and affordable housing units with water and electricity to 193 former squatter families, livelihood projects to 30 families with 85% repayment of capital for revolving fund, an operational cooperative, a pre-school center in the relocation site and the putting up of a community health program.

## NEWS BITS

**April 29, 2003** Maria Consolacion Matnao, SSpS, who hails from the Philippines, joins VI Executive Team as Co-Chairperson. Her arrival at the VIVAT International Central Office in New York completes the VIVAT International Executive Team. While VIVAT International is awaiting its ECOSOC accreditation at the UN, Maria Consolacion will be sponsored by the Sisters of Charity. Sonia Hippler, on the other hand, will be sponsored by the Franciscans International.

**May 1, 2003** Larry Correa, SVD left for India for his home leave. He also took the opportunity to renew his visa to the United States. Larry, we wish you a blessed and joy-filled rest and encounter with your family and friends.

**May 12 – 23, 2003** Fresnida Carmen Castro, SSpS Sonia Hippler, SSpS and Maria Consolacion Matnao, SSpS represented VIVAT International in the Second Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. NGOs working at the United Nations considered the session as a model for UN conferences especially because of the rich diversity of its participants, who in their simplicity and

connectedness with the Earth and the whole of creation ushered in a richer and more interactive dialogue. The session was a beautiful concluding experience for Fresnida Carmen and an initiation in the UN system for Maria Consolacion and Sonia.

**June 1 – 2, 2003** Sonia Hippler, SSpS attended the Annual Meeting of the NGO Committee on UNICEF and Roundtable Discussion with UNICEF at the Church Center, UN Plaza. The programme included regional updates, lectures and roundtable discussions on the following topics: Girls' Education, Child Protection, Early Childhood Development, and HIV-AIDS. ([www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org))

**June 06, 2003** With a short prayer service celebrated with Maria Consolacion, SSpS and Sonia Hippler, SSpS at the VIVAT Central Office, New York, Fresnida Carmen Castro, SSpS bade good-bye from VINY. She left for Chicago, Illinois on June 13, 2003 and for the Philippines on June 23, 2003. THANK YOU AND GOOD BYE, CARMEN. May God bless you as you move on to your new mission appointment.

### July- August Major UN Events

**July 7 – 11, 2003** Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms: The Biennial Meeting of States on July 7 – 11, 2003 at the UN Headquarters will consider the implementation of the Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects at the national, regional and global levels. (<http://disarmament.un.org/>)

**July 21 – 25, 2003** Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Pre-Sessional Working Group, New York City, New York, USA (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch>)

**August 4 – 8, 2003** Assembly of States Parties of the International Criminal Court, Budget and Finance Committee, New York, NY, USA

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**Executive Team (VINY, VIVAT International in New York):**

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**Maria Consolacion Matnao SSpS (Co-chairperson) and Sonia Hippler SSpS (Member).**

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