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VIVAT INTERNATIONAL AND LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

There are 50 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the world today: 34 in Africa, 14 in Asia-Pacific, one in Middle-East, and one in Latin America and the Caribbean. Over half the population in LDCs lives on less than US\$1 a day, and 81% of the population lives on less than US\$2 a day. Reports indicate that 15% of children born in LDCs do not survive to their fifth birthday. Similarly, adult literacy is an average 49% for LDCs as compared to 81% in other developing countries. UN, together with NGOs, has been giving special importance to the development of these countries. VI newsletter issue number 13 has highlighted some of those initiatives, when speaking about the development of Africa.

VIVAT International (VI) members are working in nine LDCs: Angola, Benin, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Togo and Zambia in Africa; and Timor-Leste in Asia-Pacific

VI contribution to the process of development of LDCs can be seen mainly at two levels: national and international.

At the national level, for instance, in Ethiopia, VI members are actively involved in Health Care Programs, especially among people living with HIV/AIDS, lepers, mothers and children. The programs include family visits, education in health, sanitation and nutrition, immunization and free feeding for malnourished children. They are also engaged in the empowerment of the poor, especially women and children through literacy program, skills

training and assisting them in putting up small-scale income generating projects. In Madagascar, they are actively involved in organizing people, especially the youth, for the reforestation of the area to help prevent soil erosion. Many of them had joined the world wide Jubilee Campaign for Debt Cancellation and continue to demand the debt cancellation of these countries even today. They constantly send field reports of their activities to the executive team in New York and suggest concrete proposals to be fed into the UN system.

At the international level, VI is mainly collaborating with the UN and the NGO's network, Least Developed Countries' Watch (details on LDC Watch: on VI website>Poverty Eradication>LDC and Africa). This year's Economic and Social Council's (ECOSOC) Substantive Session at the UN in New York in June-July may be termed "the LDCs Session" as three of its four segments are going to focus on the challenges faced by the 50 LDCs and the implementation of Brussels Program. VI is taking great interest in the High-Level Segment with the theme "Resources mobilization and enabling environment for poverty eradication in the context of the implementation of the Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010." Details on this segment: <http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ecosoc/hl2004/index.htm>. VIVAT International's contribution and collaboration in the preparatory process could be summarized in the following manner:

- At the preparatory meetings, VI stressed mainly two issues: cancellation of debt of these countries, and greater and equal

opportunity to women in decision making processes that affect their lives, families and countries.

- VI contributed to the Survey Report: NGO/Civil Society and Poverty Eradication in Least Developed Countries, presented at the NGO/Civil Society Forum and Panel by NGO Section/OESCSC/DESA, in Preparation for ECOSOC High Level Segment: June, 28-30, 2004, UN, New York (Details of survey report: on VI website>Poverty eradication>LDC and Africa). On page 11 of that report, under the success stories, one can find VIVAT International's success story in Ethiopia. This will be one of the official documents to the ECOSOC Substantive Session in June-July 2004.
- **VI moderated the NGO/Civil Society Forum on March 18, 2004 at the UN, New York and took a leadership role in**

bringing out specific action- oriented recommendations to the High Level Segment. These too will be submitted to ECOSOC and will become an official document for consideration. You can find these recommendations and the link to the web cast of this section of the Forum on VI website>Poverty Eradication>LDC and Africa.

VI will strengthen its efforts to eradicate poverty, address people with HIV/AIDS, support sustainable development, and promote peace and harmony through peace education, especially in pre- and post-conflict situations at national levels. This will be carried out, as far as possible, in collaboration with other NGOs in general and member NGOs of LDC Watch in particular, in the countries they are working in, in an effort to build a stronger network to promote the cause of the LDCs at national and international levels.

12th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

As this newsletter is being written, the 12th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development is in progress at the UN Headquarters, New York. Information on this Session was made available in the previous issue of VI newsletter (no. 19). In general, the developed countries are stressing good governance as the most essential ingredient to solve water, sanitation and human settlements problems in

Home for the Homeless in Nagoya City, Japan

As part of the contribution to the 12th Session, Takeya Motoi, SVD, sent in a success story of the Project 'Sasashima Kyosei Kai' (Sasashima's Solidarity Organization) for and with the homeless in Nagoya City, Japan. Both SVD and SSpS members are involved in this project. The target people of this project are the poor, mentally depressed, unemployed and homeless living on the streets. The objective of the project is to make these

the developing world. On the other hand, the developing countries argue that they do not have the means to achieve many of the commitments made in this regard and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They are asking for more assistance from the developed world. Those interested in a good analysis and summary of this Session from NGOs point of view may visit: www.iisd.ca/csd/csd12.

people self-reliant and help them to gain their lost human dignity and self-respect. They are provided with food, clothes, housing and counseling. They are also helped to find proper jobs, and the ones who have families are helped to go back to their families. This project has also succeeded in getting the help of the local communities and motivating the local government to provide free medical care and temporary housing. **(Report received as attachment to e-mail on April 9, 2004).**

LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN SEMINAR, JUNE 1-4, 2004

The opportunity for VI members from Latin America and the Caribbean to participate in the

Latin American and Caribbean Seminar was revived on April 14 when VI central office received an

invitation from the Conference of NGOs (CONGO) to register its delegates to this Seminar. On April 15, the VI Central Office requested two members each from SSpS and SVD in Latin America and the Caribbean to participate in this Seminar. It will be

held in Santiago, Chile from June 1-4, 2004. VI had published details of this event on the front page of VI Newsletter number 16. On going information of this Seminar is on: www.lacongo.cl.

VI EXECUTIVE TEAM PARTICIPATED IN THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY OF SVD CHICAGO PROVINCE, USA

Lawrence Correa, SVD from VI Central Office, New York participated in the Regional Assembly of the SVD Chicago Province, USA, held from April 20-22, 2004 in Bordentown, New Jersey. During the Assembly, he acquainted the participants with the activities of VI and the possibilities of greater

collaboration between members and the Central Office. VI Executive Team will try to build on the interest created among the participants, especially in relation to some of the wonderful socio-economic development work done by SVD members, together with the affected people, in West Virginia, USA.

ACTIONS ON THE VI ISSUES OF FOCUS ON THE GROUND

JPIC Links, SVD Central Province, India

Albinus Kujur, SVD, JPIC Coordinator of SVD Central Province, India has brought out the first issue of 'JPIC Links', March 2004, Vol. 1. JPIC Links is a forum for SVD members of the Province

to share information of their JPIC activities, to learn from one another of the strategies to address common issues, to inspire one another and to encourage networking among members. **(From the hard copy of 'JPIC Links' received in March 2004)**

Caring for Street Children, Iquique, Chile

SVDs run several homes for the street children in Iquique, Chile. Summer vacation time is the worst as the poor parents send their children on the streets for begging. They add to the already big number of children found on the streets on a regular basis. The SVDs provide shelter to these children in the homes

maintained by them or find foster parents to take care of them. Besides giving them shelter, they conduct programs on the streets for the street children. Some of these children are from other countries, mainly from Peru and Bolivia. Others are from families affected by drugs, alcohol and violence. **(From the e-mail report of Paul Oden, SVD March 28, 2004)**

Teaching English to Adults for Better Job Opportunities, New Jersey, USA:

Jim Mullen, SVD is working as a voluntary teacher at the Haitian Ministry Center, run by the Catholic Diocese of Trenton, and also at the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen, run by local churches and funded by private contributions in New Jersey, USA. He says "I ... continue working with the poor and under-

privileged to help them better their lives through more education and so enable them to find good jobs. In the case of immigrants, helping them to read, write, and speak fluent English definitely improves their communication skills and qualifies them for better jobs." **(From the report of Jim Mullen, SVD April 2, 2004)**

Voice of Exile, the bi-monthly magazine published by the Association of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Poland is patronized by the SVDs in Poland. Mr. Simon Mol, the chief editor said, "I would like to thank the Divine Word Missionaries (SVDs) for the great work they have been doing and are doing in helping especially refugees in Poland. My success story is directly linked to the Divine

Word Missionaries in the sense that they continue to help this vulnerable group of individuals without any hope of getting anything in return." The goal of the magazine is to create a forum where issues affecting asylum seekers, refugees and migrants would be discussed openly and fairly with the objective to create the spirit of tolerance in the society, exchange knowledge between the migrant communities and

Poles and share cultural heritage. The first issue of the magazine appeared in January 2004. It is being distributed free of charge. (From the news sent by

Tadeusz Panek, SVD as an e-mail attachment on April 9, 2004)

VISHWAS, Madhya Pradesh, India

‘VISHWAS’, a project of SSpS members of the Central Province, India, about which VI Newsletter reported in its issue of November-December 2003, is making steady progress. The staff went through several training programs in the recent past in order to equip them to address the problem in a more efficient and effective way. They are in the process of forming self-help groups of people with

HIV/AIDS (PLWHAs) in order to hand over the responsibilities of running the program to the affected people. It is hoped that these self-help groups would be able to dialogue better with the Government for a more appropriate response from the Government and the NGOs. (From the report of **Jaisa Antony, SSpS as e-mail attachment, April 10, 2004)**

UPDATE ON VI ACCREDITATION TO ECOSOC

On April 16, 2004 NGO Section of Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) informed the VI Central Office that consideration of our application for accreditation to ECOSOC would take place during the 2004 Session of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations in New York, scheduled for May 10-28, 2004

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Since March 2004, the VI Executive Team has been corresponding with the members through the JPIC Coordinators on a regular basis. It is hoped that the correspondence is passed on to the members in the Province/Region. If any of the JPIC Coordinators is not getting the e-mails from our Central Office, kindly send us your name, your Province/Region and the e-mail address to our e-mail id: viny@vivatinternational.org. Also, when there is a change in the personnel, please let us know. Thank you.
- We are very happy to see that the members are sending news items, write-ups and reports of the actions in the field. We would encourage others to do the same. However, if it is an update or a repeat of a report already sent to the Central Office, please mention it in the accompanying e-mail and let us know what is new. Thank you.

**UPCOMING EVENTS/SESSIONS AT THE UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK
(other than the ones already mentioned in the previous issue)**

- Special High-Level Meeting of Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods Institutions, WTO and UNCTAD, UN, New York, April 26, 2004. VI will participate in this meeting on an ad-hoc accreditation basis. Details of the meeting: <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffd0404hilevelBWI.htm>
- Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Tracing Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, UN, New York, June 14-25, 2004. It is mainly to negotiate an international instrument to enable States (Countries) to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit small arms and light weapons. VI is participating in this process on an ad-hoc accreditation basis. Members will be given more information of our participation through the JPIC Coordinators. Details of OEWG: <http://disarmament2.un.org/cab/salw-oewg.html>

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