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MIGRATION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The high-level dialogue of the General Assembly on International Migration and Development is to be held in September 2006 at the UN Headquarters, New York. This will offer opportunities to discuss the multidimensional aspects of international migration and, the opportunities and challenges that migration presents to countries of origin, destination and transit.

Migration is complex, with economic, social, political, cultural and religious dimensions. It brings benefits as well as challenges to the global community. It is closely linked to development and we tend to focus solely on its economic benefits. For example, total remittances from migrants reached \$80 billion, more valuable than export earnings of developing countries. But problems like brain drain, illegal trafficking of women and children, breakup of the family, loss of faith, resulting from migration are inadequately addressed. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), there are 175 million migrants (outside their home country). Some 46 million come from southern or developing countries and are now working in northern or developed countries. People do not migrate for financial reasons only; some seek to escape intolerable situations back home. These can be war, religious or ethnic persecution, gender abuse, or political repression. These people see migration as their way out and a chance to improve their lives.

Furthermore, women migrants are increasing. Approximately 80% of women in the work force in Arab countries are migrants! Women comprise more than half of low skilled work force. Dangers exist as a large number of women and children are sold across international borders. The perennial problem is illegal recruiters. Violence, even resulting in death of migrants, is on the rise.

However, there are migrants by choice; those who choose to reside abroad permanently. Increasingly, migration movements are not only southern to northern countries but also southern countries and northern to southern countries. In fact so much so, that there is a blurring of so-called sending and receiving nations.

Therefore, migration demands a unified global response. Until now, development and migration were separate issues in most northern countries. For example, most northern countries see migration only as a border problem and southern countries see migration in terms of remittances alone. These countries do not deal with the linkages among movements of people such as, money, resources and support. Consequently, migrants do not enjoy the same benefits as nationals. But, there is no sovereignty above that of Human Rights!

We appreciate the efforts of VIVAT members working with migration-related issues. In doing so, it must be recognized that migration is a multidimensional issue. We suggest the following: network with government agencies

and other NGOs in your locality, assisting law enforcing agencies to protect victims of human trafficking, supporting legislation that facilitates transfer of remittances rather than charging

excessive handling fees. Please send us reports/success stories of your activities with regard to migrants, victims of human trafficking, refugees, etc...

THE 44th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT FEBRUARY 7-17, 2006

The theme for the 44th Session of the Commission for Social Development is “Review of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)”. The Session will address the root and structural causes of poverty and their relationship to employment and social integration. This will provide an opportunity for governments to evaluate the multidimensional aspects of poverty highlighted at Copenhagen, and attainment of Millennium Development Goals.

Prior to the Commission, the Civil Society Forum will take place on February 7, 2006 at the UN Headquarters. VIVAT has been contributing to the preparation for this event as a member of NGO Committee for Social Development. VIVAT will participate in the Commission in this significant year. For more information visit:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/csd/csocd2006.htm>

THE 50th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN FEBRUARY 27-MARCH 10, 2006

The 50th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will be held at the UN Headquarters from February 27 to March 10, 2006. The theme for the Session is “Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking

into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work”. Also “Equal participation of women and men in the decision-making processes at all levels”. For more information on CSW, visit:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/>

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

VIVAT MEMBERS CELEBRATE UN INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

VIVAT members all over the world celebrated the UN International Day of Peace (IDP) 2005 in creative ways. The following are some of the reports sent by VIVAT members:

PHILIPPINES

Holy Spirit College, Manila, together with the staff of Advocacy and Gender Desk of the Socio-Pastoral Commission and Holy Spirit Social Center joined the Philippine Celebration of the IDP at Liwasang Aurora, Quezon City. It was an ecumenical celebration where people of different faiths and religions came together to express their longings and aspirations for peace

with the ringing of the “peace bell” followed by the opening of the “peace booths,” which showcased the products of indigenous peoples. The participants marched to nearby government offices to deliver personally their peace statement. Some of the VIVAT members went to the Land Reform Office to deliver the message of the peasants with regard to Land Reform. – **Ruby Abuso**

Divine Word College of Laoag observed the IDP by announcing it on the bulletin boards. Many students, faculty and other personnel

came and joined the special prayers held for peace. – **Jim Risse, SVD**

USA

Several VIVAT members in USA, held prayer services and fasted for peace. They distributed posters about IDP to different community centers in their neighborhood. – **Rose Therese Nolta, SSps**

ANTIGUA

VIVAT members had special prayer services and fasted on September 21. The theme for the St. John's School assembly was Peace. Peace was the topic for religion class on that day. They even made posters and placards on PEACE, which they distributed to community centers and put them out on the windshields of the car when they traveled on that day. They did this to help others to be aware of peace efforts. – **Marie Sheehy, SSps**

BRAZIL

"Why Violence, If We Can Live In Peace?" - a booklet of reflection for the *"Decade without Violence"* was distributed by the Province to VIVAT members in Brazil North to serve as a guide for IDP celebrations. - **Ferdinandus Doren Beki, SVD**

NETHERLANDS

In Nieuwegein, "Peace Meditations" were held on the theme *"We and the Others Together for the Future"*. Its aim is to promote peace and understanding among different cultures and religions. In The Hague, VIVAT members held prayer services for peace and included Portuguese, Indonesian, and Spanish languages to promote its multicultural reality. In Heverlee, peace prayers were held from the worldwide prayer book and a reflection on the ideas of Eugene Drewermann on *War and Peace*. A midday prayer service was held in Antwerp for peace in the world. - **Toon Van Bijnen, SVD**

In Venlo, a city in southeastern Netherlands, Mondial Platform and the local community of Venlo organized a "Week of Peace" from

September 17-25. On the last day, VIVAT members in large numbers joined the *March for Peace* in which the Muslim, Jewish and Christian Communities participated. The Peace march started in one of the gardens in the Center of the town and went into the place where the Peace Flame is burning. A child lighted a torch and this torch was then carried during the march. Later a cultural program was held in front of the City Hall. Since last year Venlo is one of 5 cities in the world where the Peace Flame is constantly burning. The Flame was brought here from the 5 continents by the members of "Life Foundation Organization".

- **Margret T. Driessen, SSps**

AUSTRALIA

Griffith University, Brisbane, multi-faith center celebrated IDP on September 21. VIVAT members participated in this event. Participants were given badges on which was written "peace" in different languages, and had multi-faith prayer service by Indigenous, Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Bahia and other inter-faith people. They also had multicultural music and dance. At the end, they wished each other peace in different languages. – **Mary Kujur, SSps**

"Social Justice Sunday" was also celebrated in Brisbane, on September 24. VIVAT members had a prayer service for World Peace on that day. – **Claire Cooke, SSps**

JAPAN

VIVAT members in Nagoya put two big signboards on the fence in front of their house which said *"Not Violence, but Dialogue; Not War, but Peace"*, "Pray for Peace all over the World". On September 21, they had a picture presentation, prayer service and peace procession with neighbors. In other VIVAT communities, special prayers were held on September 21 and 23. They reflected the effects of Hiroshima bombing, and prayed for world peace. - **Scholastica Ogasawara, SSps**

THE ASSOCIATION AMIGOS DE PALMÓPOLIS (ASSOAP)

The Association Amigos de Palmópolis (ASSOAP), situated in Vale do Jequetinhonha, Minas Gerais, Brazil, was founded in 1979 in order to assist landless people, families struggling for a livelihood and women and children living in difficult situations. The main aim of this project is to overcome poverty and defend human dignity, promote justice and peace, as well as fight against exploitation and corruption.

Some of the activities of this organization are: conduct training sessions in order to form leadership among landless farmers and women, help in the process of land distribution to the

landless families and make contracts for plantations.

The results are significant: poverty has been reduced in the locality; empowerment of women has led them to take on important roles in society; they have been able to set up a small factory for rice and mandioca/cassava; and have built a multi-purpose community hall. ASSOAP believes that poor people have inherent power in themselves to solve their problems. They need guidance in building and organizing themselves. Another need is a kindergarten for children. **As reported by Maria Ruth SSpS, e-mail dated October 27, 2005**

THE E-LEARNING PROJECT AT SMOKEY MOUNTAIN, MANILA

VIVAT members in partnership with the Polytechnic University of the Philippines' Open University (PUP) are working with the out-of-school youth. The e-learning project has helped more than 500 students in getting a diploma in computer secretarial and more than 500 in computer technology and automotive mechanics. Many of these students were from out-of-school youth. According to a PUP study, more than 73% of these students obtained employment. Within a five year period, the

Center will be able to reach one million out-of-school youth.

The e-learning program is closely connected to our e-trading program, through the Internet, seeking to link a million urban poor and a million farmers and fishermen. This is already being piloted in the Tondo area. **As reported by Ben Beltran, SVD, e-mail dated October 31, 2005**

UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE UN, NEW YORK

January 9-20, 2006 - Preparatory committee of the 2006 Conference to Review Progress made in the Implementation of the Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its aspects.

January 24-29, 2006 - Regional Social Forum: Caracas, Venezuela.

February 7-17, 2006 - The 44th Session of the Commission for Social Development.

February 27-March 10, 2006 - The 50th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

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