**THE 45TH COMMISSION ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

In one of the panels the following was discussed: Innovations in employment creation, such as concrete labor market policies to create employment and improve well being and employability, as well as good practices in ensuring decent work, particularly for women, youth and the elderly. The panelists stressed that the need to ensure working conditions and processes in small and informal enterprises became part of a much wider framework of economic growth, social stability and recognition of social protection as many people especially women and girls working on their own are often isolated in unsafe surroundings, merely surviving and nothing more. In the general debate the speakers stressed the need for Governments to make policy choices to promote full employment and decent work for all.

The three main aspects that the Commission looked into were: Trends in Youth Employment; Follow up to the Copenhagen Declaration and Program for Action; and review of the Madrid International Plan of Action. H.E. Mehdi Danesh Yazdi (Iran) commented that “Social Development is not merely a desirable option...it is a necessity.”

Participants of the forty-fifth session of the Commission for Social Development, called on governments to draw on the untapped potential of overlooked social groups, as a way to help close the gap between intentions and actions, and to move towards equitable societies with equal rights and equal opportunities for all.

VIVAT Contribution: Bernard Espiritu, Greta Fernandes, Brian McLauchlin and Stefanie Jenkins, actively participated in the Commission. VIVAT made a written intervention on the theme “Decent Work and Employment”, made a presentation at the side event on “Promoting Decent Work for Families”, the search for effective practices, and made an oral intervention jointly with ATD Fourth World.

VIVAT Interventions are uplinked to: www.vivatinternational.org

**CORPORATIONS**

Mick Siegel, SVD who works in Japan was in the panel discussion that was organized by VIVAT International during the World Social Forum in Nairobi. He spoke about *A Constructive Role for Corporations in Sustainable Development: Some Strategies for Making it Happen*. Mick unfolded facts about Corporations in today’s world and identified a direction on how Religious Congregation can help to make corporations accountable in the development of people.

“Catholic religious constitute a remarkable network around the world. There is probably no other group of people that has an equivalent combination of presence in every conceivable situation in the world, a high level of education, and a global network. Catholic religious work with the poorest of the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed, and at the same time they have presence in situations that enable them to make their voices heard among the rich and the powerful as well. Their potential to speak for the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized is probably unequaled. Further, in the last few decades, many Catholic religious have developed both expertise and networks that make such representation more possible.”
ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE ----
WSF 2007
“People’s struggles, People’s Alternatives”

In January 20-25 2007 the African peace activists, social movements, and coalition groups from all over the African continent converge in Nairobi to welcome the people of similar mind and heart from Asia-Pacific, Latin America, the Caribbean, North America, and Europe. According to some reports, the WSF 2007 gathered nearly 60,000 participants. They all came to the 7th World Social Forum (WSF) to keep alive their dedication that “Another World is Possible” underlining “The African Experience”.

The WSF first convened in 2001 in the city of Porto Alegre in South Brazil to stand in opposition to the World Economic Forum (WEF) that happens about the same time in the resort town of Davos, Switzerland. The WEF brings together business and political leaders from around the globe; the WSF draws together mainly civil society representatives and the local peace activists from the grassroots, academia and civil societies.

In Nairobi, the WSF opened with an ecumenical gathering chanting the praises of God and expressing the yearnings of the people of Africa. Bishop Desmond Tutu delivered the key reflection. He underlined that the war on terror will never be won “as long as there are dehumanizing poverty, disease and ignorance.”

In a metaphor he said, "God weeps and says: ‘Who will help me so we can have a different kind of world, one in which the rich know they have been given much so they can share and help others?’" A creation that was very good has "turned into a nightmare". He then emphasized that it is a fundamental law of our being to be bound to one another; and the only way we can regain our dreams, instead of living the nightmare, is working together, all united as one. "Not even the only superpower can be totally self-sufficient; it needs other nations."

Muslim leaders and other Christian Churches’ leaders also joined Bishop Tutu in leading hundreds of WSF participants in a peaceful rally in Uhuru Park, close to the City Centre, which welcomed speakers from all walks of life. The subsequent four days were characterized by organized workshops, panel discussions and films about current issues, problems, and good practices of varied social realities like land, housing, employment, health, politics, trade, economics, and environment. There were moments, during the forum, when spontaneous display of the cultures of Africa and of the other participants, expressed in songs and dances, were displayed around the grounds of the venue. The rhythms of the African drums were pleasantly prominent and engaging. Demonstration marches, accompanied by chanting that expressed the longings of different groups occurred sporadically at various times of the day in the grounds of the forum. The final day was marked by a big marathon event that later culminated in Uhuru Park were speeches, songs and dances was a plenty.

Some 30 members of VIVAT International were among the participants in the Forum. There were the SSpS Sisters, SVD Brothers and Priests, Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Comboni Missionaries, the Holy Rosary Sisters, and the Spiritan Missionaries. On the third day of the WSF, VIVAT International organized a workshop entitled: Corporation --- the Link between Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development. Mick Siegel, Seamus Finn and Lee Cormie were panelists. Gretta Fernandes chaired the occasion. There were some 85 people who attended the workshop.

The five days of the Forum confirmed the solidarity of people from all other continents with the struggles that transpire in Africa. The Forum has been an event that confirms the need to network and stand up and work united toward the commitment that another world is possible, acting locally and envisioning globally.

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The religious service flowed into a procession that culminated in a peaceful rally in Uhuru Park, close to the City Centre, which welcomed speakers from all walks of life. The subsequent four days were characterized by organized workshops, panel discussions and films about current issues, problems, and good practices of varied social realities like land, housing, employment, health, politics, trade, economics, and environment. There were moments, during the forum, when spontaneous display of the cultures of Africa and of the other participants, expressed in songs and dances, were displayed around the grounds of the venue. The rhythms of the African drums were pleasantly prominent and engaging. Demonstration marches, accompanied by chanting that expressed the longings of different groups occurred sporadically at various times of the day in the grounds of the forum. The final day was marked by a big marathon event that later culminated in Uhuru Park were speeches, songs and dances was a plenty.
CELEBRATING OUR PRESENCE IN AFRICA

Kenya-Tanzania

Hakuna matata was a phrase popularized in the English speaking world in the film entitled “Lion King” It’s a phrase one can hear wherever Kiswahili Language is spoken in Africa. It means no worries for the rest of your life. Yet the SVDs in Kenya and Tanzania do not take this phrase that lightly. There are efforts to lead the way in helping build a more decent life. People who work with us have been registered and granted their Social Security System Thus, they gain an initial guarantee of pension when they retire and health assistance when needed already now.

Education plays a primary part in our outreach. Primary schools have been built in Kayole and Soweto. Likewise, the continuing adult education on issues like human rights, voters rights, land issues are organized in our parishes and houses of formation. And it does not stop there, our VIVAT members have opened Voluntary HIV counseling and testing (VCT) Centers in Kayole, Soweto, Langas, Arusha andShimanjiro parishes. Also, Romy Cagatin SVD from the Philippines works among the Burundi refugees in Kibondo, Tanzania together with the Jesuit Refugee Service.

Laurence Kithinji, SVD, the source of our Kenyan report is our VIVAT leader in Kenya. Lawrence works among the marginalized in Nairobi. He is also the SVD JPIC Zonal Coordinator of Africa.

Jose Boeing, SVD, our VIVAT Coordinator in the Amazon Brazil meets the Maasai women and an African delegate at the World Social Forum in Nairobi in January 2007

Ethiopia

The SSpS Community in Ethiopia aims to promote peace. Our internationality is in itself a witness to the call to peaceful co-existence. We work with groups devoid of any prejudice to religion. We strive to build a harmonious relationship among the people we work through workshops that provide professional trainings that can lead to decent jobs. We help educate the youth to understand the dangers and evil of drug abuse, the awareness and prevention of HIV/AIDS pandemic. We help set up useful and accessible libraries facilities.

Our work has a strong focus on the promotion of the dignity of women and the girl-child. Harmful traditional practices, like female genital mutilation, early marriages and kidnapping are addressed. There is work with the marginalized women to reclaim their rightful dignity and assist them to create alternative life-giving jobs. In order to help build up the local economy, we team up with research centers and help introduce seeds selection and product marketing. There has been also a campaign to promote home gardening, bee keeping, poultry and fishery. All these are means to help generate small but life-giving income for the families. It is a way to fight against malnourishment. There are around 600 women who are now involved in micro-credit industries.

We have established Kindergarten schools, which are now starting to be appreciated. Our health programs include water treatment, preventive and curative health education, home sanitation management. We promote ambiental sanitation through the construction of pit latrines per household. We campaign for the development of better housing facilities. We have assisted to build health centers that conduct test and counseling for HIV/AIDS victims. We have help set up programs that cares and support people living with HIV/AIDS, and care of the orphans, and care of the caregivers.

The SSpS has started work in Ethiopia in 1994 but God has helped us improve the life of the people entrusted to us, because the people have also owned and been part of the work. We only enable them to discover their own capacity and equip them to make the space to allow their creativity become productive. We await other helping hands that those who have been enabled continue to be enablers themselves.

Edita Vera, SSpS an Argentinian is our VIVAT member who shares with us her experiences in Ethiopia. She has been there since VIVAT started there in 1994.
Confreres in parishes embarked on serious tree planting. Thousands of trees have been planted across the country the initiative of confreres mainly in the parishes. Confreres in the Yendi district and especially the district coordinator are involved in the Peace Building Groups in the Diocese. They organize workshops for conflict resolutions, reconciliation and dialogue. In Brong Ahafo district the SVDs help in educating the minority groups through workshops and seminars that inform them of their civil and religious rights. An educational fund has been established in the province to assist poor and needy young students.

Andrew Campbell, SVD had established a leprosarium in Accra for the lepers who had been banished from their homes. Joseph Marzur, SVD in Yendi is taking care of the unfortunate women who have been thrown out from their homes as witches. Paul Ayitey, SVD in West Akem district is working as a chaplain in the National prison where he was able to help build a small library for the inmates.

Joachim Mika, SVD has recently been appointed as the provincial coordinator for HIV/AIDS Issues.

Tarcisius Ruyter, SVD is the founder and presently the director of the Orthopedic Training Centre. Last year alone they have attended to over 4,000 patients, have manufactured a number of orthopaedic shoes, shoes prostheses leg braces, and artificial limbs. All those they attend to are patients who cannot afford the total cost and are highly subsidised from few local donors with the heavy burden on the foreign donations, which unfortunately had dwindled for the past few years. Excerpt from the report of Cyprian Kuupol, SVD Ghana Province.

Cyprian Kuupol, SVD is a native of Ghana and follows a solid tradition of VIVAT in the Americas, and Europe.

Keep Ghana Green & Keep It Truly Alive

Collaboration with the “Organisatie Parahu” (Umbrella) in the poorest quarter of the city (Schilderswijk) to promote the education of women

In other areas such as Nieuwegein, Breda, Deurne and Tilburg there are SSPS and SVDs both individually and as a community, are taking care of migrants and poor people. In a few of these locations, great priority is placed on work, focusing on the refugee and asylum seekers.

Special mention should be made of a project in the community of Teteringen, which is known as “Third World Workshop”. Young men with a handicap and who can hardly find employment for different reasons are offered here a part-time job. Bicycles, typewriters and other instruments are recycled and renovated.

Reported by Toon van Bijnen SVD by e-mail dated October 22, 2006

VIVAT IN EUROPE: Networking and Advocacy

In our situation in North West Europe, our contribution to a more just global society consists mainly of influencing the decision-makers in the developed countries. We lobby at our national governments, MPs, the EU-commission and MPs, the WTO, the G8. We do this in our own name and in the name of VIVAT International, in collaboration with the European Africa Network, the Council of Churches, Lenten campaign, and other national and church related actions. These campaigns advocate for the rights of different groups such as the poor farmers (especially in Africa), migrants, ethnic minorities, refugees, women, landless people and asylum-seekers in the whole of the EU.

Some of the other issues we work towards securing are: fair trade in a globalized world (e.g., EPA’s between Africa and the EU), just health-care, pharmaceutical trade, and water supply systems, debt cancellation of poor countries, and watching over the democratic system in African countries. SVDs and SSPS work for social projects in many towns, with a priority being placed on close collaboration with other organizations.

The SVD/SSpS-communities in the Hague (Netherlands) are involved in the following projects:

Collaboration with “Werelvenster Organisatie” (Window to the World) to provide Dutch language-courses for refugees, who are still in the procedure for recognition. About 130 refugees take part in these courses.

Collaboration with the Salvation Army and other ecumenical centres and the “Paddenberg organisatie” to provide for the poor of the area.

Collaboration with “Humanitas”, to take care of problems in families.