DEAR READERS,

Welcome to the 48th Online Issue of the VIVAT Newsletter!

Spring 2010 has been a busy time both for the VIVAT Executive Team in New York and for VIVAT Members all over the world! In this issue, we spotlight some of the extraordinary work of VIVAT International over the past three months. With the United Nations holding its annual Commission on Sustainable Development and Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, we had a strong presence at the UN Headquarters in New York throughout the spring.

VIVAT, its members, and JPIC Coordinators, organized several workshops and conferences all over the globe, and this issue will highlight two VIVAT workshops, as well as the World People’s Conference, a global effort to draw attention to climate change and the rights of Mother Earth, which several VIVAT members attended. VIVAT members on the ground have been equally busy, and this issue will present the work of many members from around the globe, as they work to promote the VIVAT mission.

You inspire us! We always welcome feedback, ideas, stories, and updates from our members! Please send us your comments and feedback to:

viny@vivatinternational.org

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U.N. Holds Commission on Sustainable Development, VIVAT Participates

As one of the last of the annual commissions held during the spring at United Nations headquarters in New York, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was just as much of a success as the previous commissions and forums held throughout February, March, and April. The CSD is one of the UN’s newest commissions, but was fairly well attended this year. The CSD took place this year from May 3 – May 14, and aimed to draw international attention to issues in sustainable development worldwide, specifically focusing on five main thematic issues: transport, chemicals, waste management, mining, and building a ten-year framework of programs on sustainable consumption and production patterns.

During the CSD this year, many NGOs were fortunate enough to hold many side events to correspond with the official UN sessions during the commission. VIVAT, along with several partner NGOs and other groups, organized two highly successful side events on the subject of sustainable development—one on the need for free, prior, and informed consent of indigenous peoples affected by mining, and one on the ecological, social, and political dangers of dam construction, specifically in Latin America.

Mining: Calling for Free, Prior, and Informed Consent

The first of the two side events hosted by VIVAT, organized with the Maryknoll Sisters and other NGO groups, was entitled “Mining: Calling for Free, Prior, and Informed Consent,” and was an event meant to highlight the need for free, prior, and informed consent of indigenous communities affected by mining. Through focusing on three specific grassroots communities in Peru, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Bolivia, the event presented the lessons learned in campaigns to advocate for the indigenous people left out of major mining decisions in their communities.

Members in Flores, Indonesia, elected Ms. Octaviana Hemmy Asamsama, a clinical psychologist from Indonesia, to speak in regards to local efforts to bring voices to the marginalized of Indonesia’s rural indigenous population. Along with presentations from grassroots voices, the event also involved the active participation of the Consellor Alan Coelho de Sellos of the Brazilian delegation who presented the process for developing mining for lithium, an example of developing a pattern of sustainable production.

All in all, the mining event hosted by VIVAT was a great success, raising awareness about sustainable development issues in mining through the use of examples from specific VIVAT members. With the UN’s particular focus on issues of mining, VIVAT is hopeful and optimistic that the topic will become a mainstream idea in future discussions and international actions on the subject of sustainable development.

Land Yes! Dams No! Building Cycles of Mobilization

One highly charged topic, specifically with many VIVAT members in Brazil, is the controversy surrounding dam construction, as governments often decide to begin new, massive dam projects with-out the free, prior, and informed consent of the native population who will be directly affected by a dam in their water source, and who will ultimately suffer huge environmental, social, and economic crises at the direct hand of the dam. To bring this rarely discussed controversy to light at the international level, VIVAT along with partner NGOs hosted a side event at the CSD entitled “Land Yes! Dams No! Building Cycles of Mobilization.”

The event boasted a diverse, truly informative panel with a range of guests to speak on the topic. The first panelist, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, a member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, spoke of specific and horrific stories of indigenous peoples in her country who resisted the government when it was ordered that dams be build in their lands. The results of which led to many bloody massacres of countless innocent mothers, fathers, and children, who only wished to stay living in their indigenous lands. The next panelist, Frederico Menino, a Brazilian political scientist, shared the success story of VIVAT’s member group in Brazil, MOAB (Movement of Peoples Affected by Dams), to resist a massive Brazilian dam construction project for decades. Mr. Menino used both a presentation and short DVD to illustrate the struggle of the indigenous peoples of the land. Next, Mary Corbett presented a moving story of the struggles of a Guatemalan boy who saw his family slaughtered when they resisted a dam project on their land. Finally, Judith Kimerling presented the international and environmental laws that support resistance movements against dam construction projects.

Not only was the side event a great success in terms of attendance, panelists, and persuasive information given, but it was a particularly special success thanks to the active participation of diplomatic missions in attendance, particularly the Brazilian delegation. While we had originally hoped and anticipated that some governments would be in attendance, the Brazilian delegates who did come were not only attentive during the presentation, but they were genuinely intrigued and brought many questions and comments to the panelists. The active participation of such governments gives hope that one day, and one day soon, more and more governments and state delegations will pay attention to the plight of indigenous peoples in issues of sustainable development, specifically in the rarely discussed controversy surrounding dams.

Octaviana Hemmy Asamsama spoke of the mining’s effects on communities in Indonesia

472 million people worldwide are negatively affected by dams

source: http://www.water-alternatives.org/
Thousands Attend World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth

“We, the peoples and nations of the Earth... gratefully acknowledge that Mother Earth is the source of life, nourishment and learning and provides everything we need to live well...”

—preamble of the draft Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth

In April of this year, the World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth was held to build the World People’s movement for Mother Earth. The conference was held in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and, with over 35,000 people from 140 countries in attendance, worked towards developing the “Cochabamba People’s Agreement” which proposes some basic aspects considered a minimum necessity for a climate change agreement at the upcoming COP-16 Climate Change Conference being held this December in Cancun, Mexico. VIVAT was represented at the World People’s Conference by members from New York, Ecuador, and Bolivia.

The global community present at the conference came to many far-reaching conclusions and proposals regarding climate change and international responsibility. Proposals included a 50% reduction in domestic greenhouse gas emissions by developing countries for the period 2013-2017 under the Kyoto Protocol, domestically and without reliance on market mechanisms.

World People’s Conference Proposals:

1. A 50% reduction of domestic greenhouse gas emissions by developed countries for the period 2013-2017 under the Kyoto Protocol, domestically and without reliance on market mechanisms.

2. Stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations at 300ppm.

3. Considering the proposed Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth to reestablish harmony with nature.

4. The obligation of developed countries to honor their climate debt toward developing countries and our Mother Earth.

5. Providing financial resources equal to 6% of GDP by developed countries to help confront the climate change crisis.

6. Creating a mechanism for the integral management and conservation of forests that, unlike REDD-plus, respects the sovereignty of states, guarantees the rights and participation of indigenous peoples and forest dependent communities, and is not based on the carbon market regime.

7. Implementing measures for recognizing the rights of Indigenous peoples... in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous.

8. The incentivizing of models of agricultural production that are environmentally sustainable and that guarantee food sovereignty and the rights of indigenous peoples and small-scale farmers.

9. The protection and recognition of the rights and needs of forced climate migrants.

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11. The protection and recognition of the rights and needs of forced climate migrants.

12. Creating a mechanism for the integral management and conservation of forests that, unlike REDD-plus, respects the sovereignty of states, guarantees the rights and participation of indigenous peoples and forest dependent communities, and is not based on the carbon market regime.

13. The implementation of a World Referendum on Climate Change that allows the people to decide what will be done about this issue, which is of vital importance to the future of humanity and Mother Earth.

source: http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/movement-for-mother-earth
A Novice at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

A First-Hand Perspective

Through VIVAT International I had the privilege of taking part in the Ninth Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Previously I had no experience of the UN, nor of any of the seemingly countless UN agencies. My presence at the session was meant to be a learning experience, and it certainly was that. For the most part I participated in the “side events”. On a practical level my long experience in South Africa, both during and after Apartheid, gave me some insight into what was being discussed.

The first thing I noticed was the bewildering complexity of the UN agencies. I was not prepared to encounter the multitude of inter-related bodies whose functions and the issues that they deal with seem to overlap and intertwine. For example, most of the issues that were addressed at the Forum on Indigenous Peoples came up again, although from a broader perspective, at the 18th Session of the Committee on Sustainable Development.

The second thing that came to my attention was the immense amount of information freely available through UN-sponsored studies and reports. Just in case that is not enough, the many NGOs that work in conjunction with the UN or are in ongoing dialogue with its many agencies make available their own analyses, case studies and projections. One could educate oneself with regard to countless realities of our world just by perusing documents available through the UN.

The third thing that broke into my awareness was the enormous opportunity for global dialogue in UN-sponsored events. People from all over the world, of every ethnic and linguistic group, of many different political persuasions and philosophical or even ideological perspectives were able to speak to each other politely and respectfully. Victims of various forms of injustice were able to make known their suffering to those able to do something about it. Possibly I am too inexperienced to be aware of the “political games” that were surely being played at times, but I seemed to see many sincere and dedicated people whose good will was patient and whose considerable expertise was placed unselfishly at the service of the common good.

The primary issue addressed at the Permanent Forum was how to improve the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with a focus on fostering sustainable development while protecting indigenous cultures and identities. This broad theme involved advancing the status and rights of women, preventing human trafficking, addressing the needs of children and youth, obtaining free, prior and informed consent with regard to all projects directly affecting indigenous peoples, and dealing with environmental issues such as climate change and bio-diversity.

I came away from this initial experience with great hope. Despite the limits of the UN and the seriousness and extent of the problems that must be faced, progress can be made and is being made, thanks to the efforts of so very many dedicated people.

Stop Human Trafficking at the World Cup

VIVAT Member, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, hopes to help combat human trafficking in association with 2010 World Cup in South Africa where nearly one million people are expected to enter the country. Trafficking of children and women for sexual and labor exploitation at events like these is a source of grave concern.

In Mongu, Zambia, Oblates at Oblate Radio Liseli 105.3FM have been combating this inhumane activity by running news and other programs to get information out about trafficking. As one of them put it, “we are with you all the way...to scoring and winning against the bitter cup of human trafficking.

The Oblate JPIC Office, US Province, is also working to stop trafficking. They co-signed letters, initiated by Christian Brothers Investment Services (CBIS), to CEO’s of official sponsors of the World Cup like Adidas, Coca-Cola, Anheuser Busch, Sony, MTN, Hyundai and McDonalds. 

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They also co-signed letters, again initiated by CBIS, to the CEO’s of 8 hotel chains with presence in South Africa asking them to take action to combat human trafficking and child sex tourism before the World Cup. While not responsible for this tragic crime, the travel and lodging industry is well-positioned to help prevent human trafficking by taking steps to stop the use of hotels for this sexual exploitation.

Companies are asked to educate employees on issues of human trafficking, to train staff in how to identify potential victims and report incidents to the proper authorities, to work with local police, anti-trafficking organizations and child welfare agencies to share information, and to inform guests of the penalties imposed for human trafficking and the sexual abuse of children under local and national law.

As of early June, hotel responses have come from Accor, Carlson, and Intercontinental hotels. Non-responders are: Best Western, Hyatt, Hilton, Starwood, and NH Hotels. The most substantive responses have been from Accor and Carlson:

**ACCOR** - Accor’s program is an example for the tourism industry to emulate. Accor has adopted The Code – the code of conduct against child sex tourism and sits on its board, developed an ethical policy, and has trained 13,000 employees on the issue. In South Africa, 85 employees have been trained and the company has made its training materials available to other tourism organizations. Accor has more than 20 hotels in South Africa and 4000 hotels worldwide under the brands Motel6, Sofitel, and Mercure.

**CARLSON** - Carlson is also very active on human trafficking and is the only major U.S. hotel chain to adopt a tourism code of conduct, create an ethical policy, and train new employees. The company has not provided specific information related to South Africa. With 1000 hotels in 150 countries, Carlson brands include Radisson and Country Inns & Suites.

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**Asia-Pacific HIV/AIDS Network Holds First Workshop**

Spurred to action by the alarming rates of growth of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Southeast Asia, the Catholic Committee on HIV and AIDS (CCA), under the auspices of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Thailand (CBCT) convened and hosted a Workshop of Asia Pacific Catholic HIV/AIDS Network from May 12 – May 16 in the Camillian Pastoral Center, Bangkok, Thailand. The theme of the workshop was “Challenges of HIV/AIDS to the Catholic Church in Asia and the Pacific”.

The four-day workshop was attended by 89 participants from various Catholic organizations, with representatives from 15 different countries, as well as from the Church’s donor agencies and from Caritas Internationalis and UNAIDS. The workshop had five objectives: To sharpen the response to HIV/AIDS of Catholic Church in Asia and Pacific; To exchange and dialogue on AIDS Ministry between Catholic organizations in Asia and Pacific; To build close relationship and cooperation among Catholic organizations in Asia and Pacific; To promote and sustain the spiritual strength of Catholic individuals and organizations involved in the ministry to persons living with HIV and AIDS; and to dialogue and promote concerted efforts to reduce the new HIV infections in collaboration with other religions, belief and government policies.

Colored with wonderful cultural exchanges and youth dance and music performances, the workshop also hosted several prominent speakers, who presented many facts, figures, and experiences on the topic of HIV/AIDS, both within Asia and worldwide. Speakers included Mr. Steve Krause of UNAIDS, Msgr. Robert Vitillo of Caritas Internationalis, and Dr. Rabia Mathai of the Catholic Medical Mission Board (CMMB), all of whom spoke of various current works in the field, and the necessity of continued work of Catholic organizations in communities affected by HIV/AIDS.

The workshop also included a day for participants to visit sites and centers in Thailand that work to help persons infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS. Finally, the workshop was closed with a presentation of the Draft Final Report on the workshop, presented to the President of the Episcopal Commission for Social Ministries in Thailand.

The workshop had far-reaching effects within the Church, as many were inspired by the efforts in Thailand to put together a network of Catholic organizations with similar visions. The Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI said of the workshop, “The theme chosen for the workshop, ‘The Challenge of HIV and AIDS to the Catholic Church in Asia and the Pacific,’ clearly identifies HIV/AIDS as a critical challenger to faith communities: a challenge that evokes their serious commitment more than ever before…”.

For an in-depth account of the workshop by Rosalinda Argosino, SSpS, and for a copy of the Draft Final Report on the workshop, please see the VIVAT International website.
The “Justice on Tracks” Campaign is one of the sponsors of the “1st International Meeting of People Affected by Vale”. Since the beginning of 2009, right after the World Social Forum in Belém, Brazil, we felt the necessity to elaborate an international meeting to focus exclusively on Vale and its socio-environmental impacts in many regions of the world. Evident injustice narrated by several communities in Brazil and abroad, the aggressive development model sustained by the mining company and its enormous profits made it urgent to create alternative collective strategies of resistance.

As Combonian Missionaries, we felt directly touched: it was up to us to help the people that we follow in Açaílândia, São Luís, and other small villages along the Carajás railroad, to comprehend the history and the causes of the degradation of their lives. As we defend life in abundance, we always need to denounce and destroy models that, on the contrary, bring death because of an irresponsible search for profits.

Blessed and encouraged by the 2010 Fraternity Campaign, which stimulates us to study the most evident economic injustices and to compare them with decentralized experiences of popular economy that respect life and the environment, we enthusiastically assume the organization of this new phase of confronting Vale: we dream, together with God, about new ways to relate with the Earth, the natural resources and the whole Creation.

Justice on Tracks, from the beginning, involved the North-East Braziliana province, which supports the campaign and identifies with it. Once more, in this occasion, the participation of Combonians was massive in different preparatory initiatives. We wrote the magazine “Vale No”, containing many well-informed articles about the evils of the mining company, particularly in the Carajás corridor. The magazine supports and complements the artistic work of a well-known Italian movie-maker, Silvestro Montanaro, who made a 75-minute movie about the greatest conflicts and popular resistance along the same region. Both the film and the magazine will be published soon within the affected communities during simultaneous formation seminars in Pará and Maranhão. Members of the Brazilian Environmental Justice Network and other international partners have already received the material, which is very useful for the formation of their communities and leaders. Everything was ready for the inter-

tion is available on the blogs of the event). We managed to rescue the dynamics of reciprocal empowerment that allowed local and international participants to mirror in one another.

In all places, we identified the same strategies from Vale: the conquest of the territory, the marketing to defend a socially and environmentally friendly image, the co-optation of political and judiciary power. In relation to the local leaders, the tendency to manipulate, blackmail and the deliberate intention to divide local communities, threat and criminalize local groups, according to the level of organization of the local resistance groups.

We have also talked about interesting ideas for popular resistance: the effort to give visibility to the conflict (via publications, reports, dossiers), direct actions in opposition to the aggressiveness of the company (land occupation, closing roads, manifests), judiciary actions demanding reimbursement and compensation for environmental damage, production of knowledge adding local knowledge and university research, articulation in networks (international, national and regional), the involvement of key actors and partners, especially in the judiciary sector.

From the 12th to the 15th of April, the March met with another march, coming from the South System of Vale (states of Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo). There were also many other people, all converging on Rio de Janeiro where the headquarters of Vale are located and where, every month of April, the company holds its annual meeting with shareholders.

In total, there were 160 people, 80 associations and other entities representing 12 countries. It was a unique occasion: for the first time, all the affected people and their leaders systematized their demands and learned with each other.

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These were four intense days, in which we studied and improved our collective strategies. Several areas of conflict were identified: the model of development and the robbing of natural resources, environmental conflicts and pollution, labour conflicts and unionist resistance, conflicts with the communities for land, economic conflicts and exaggerated profits (Vale is the biggest company in Latin America and the most profitable in the world!)

The most important points highlighted in the final document produced in the meeting had to do with Vale’s public image as a socially committed and environment friendly company: the affected people committed to dismantle such image by showing the impacts of Vale in their lives. A detailed report, with 120 pages and 21 specific cases was presented in the Rio de Janeiro State Parliament and given to the press and shareholders of Vale.

An international movement became in charge of producing regular ‘alternative reports’ that point out omissions on the annual sustainability report produced by Vale. The alternative reports will trigger new denunciations and will help the mobilization of communities by giving them tools to elaborate better claims in regards to their rights for more sustainable forms of economy and local development.

During the meetings, we also established new potential sources of alliances between communities and missionary provinces in which there are conflicts involving mining and mineral resources: Mozambique, Chile, Peru, Ecuador…

Justice on the Tracks will now resume its work in the North and North East regions of Brazil, strengthened by national and international alliances that guarantee strength to the actions in favor of local communities.

As missionaries, we feel the demand to advance in this unprecedented frontier of dialogue between the Church, the communities and the social movements for the preservation of life, dignity and land.

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**VIVAT Hosts North America Workshop**


The first evening of the gathering included general introductions of participants and some simple sharing of JPIC issues from each congregation. For this opening session, the OMIs graciously hosted the group at their residence in Washington, DC. On Friday, April 16th, the day began with a history of VIVAT International by Bernie Spitzley, SVD and Judy Vallimont, SSpS, who studied the possibilities of the starting a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). This informative history was followed by a general overview presented by VIVAT Team/New York: how VIVAT operates, the issues that VIVAT works on, and the communities that are now involved with VIVAT.

Friday afternoon session, John Kilcrann, CSSp engaged the participants in a very interesting discussion on the spirituality of advocacy work. In light of our various charisms, it is important that we construct a spirituality that integrates the thinking of our founders/foundresses with our present work in peace and justice issues. The day ended with a presentation by VIVAT team members on how we can work together in our various communities. Since we are now a strong (and still growing) NGO, it is vital that we try to work together as a unified voice.

The discussion on Saturday was the most interesting and lively. We divided up into issue groups, based on the various JPIC projects of our communities; these issues were: immigration and migration, human trafficking (specifically, women’s issues), the environment, and integral human development. After a good, long discussion in our issue groups, there were presentations on some of the key points of each area. Some of the issue groups decided to continue their discussion and advocacy work by sharing e-mails and building a listserv. This illustrated one of the many ways that VIVAT communities can work together.

In reflecting back on our experience together, some good bonding occurred between participants and communities. This was a first step in working together as an NGO. Hopefully we will be able to get together again in a few years. The more we can work together, the stronger our voice for the poor and disenfranchised.
Over the past few decades, the issue of global warming has become a pervasive topic in the discourse among policymakers worldwide. However, climate change talks may be a helpful forum for voicing concerns and ideas, but they have thus far proven to be inadequate in global policy implementation. Fortunately, while the problem of coordinated action remains an obstacle to any large scale agreements regarding Climate Change, some people are taking matters into their own hands to create a sustainable future for the next generations.

Three years ago, a nine year old boy named Felix Finkbeiner decided to proclaim during a class presentation that he wanted to “plant [a] million trees worldwide - a million in each country!” Initially inspired by the Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai and her “Green Belt Movement” and Richard St. Barbe Baker, Felix’s proposal has spawned a student climate change initiative entitled “Plant-for-the-Planet,” that has gained widespread support and popularity. Plant-for-the-Planet gradually transformed itself into a worldwide network for climate justice and it now functions under the auspices of the UN Billion Tree Campaign.

The challenge now is to mobilize children and young people to plant a million trees in their countries during the next three years. One way to publicize this ingenious project is through the campaign, “Stop Talking, Start Planting,” a slogan that Benigno P. Beltran, SVD has taken to heart. Fr. Ben has taken on a Plant-for-the-Planet initiative of his own to counteract the effects of last years’ floods in the Philippines. Typhoon Ondoy, which struck the Philippines during tropical storm Ketsana in September 2009, caused devastating floods and resulted in the destruction of mountain coverage and terrain. The denuded mountains and untended waste left in the wake of the typhoon led to unmanageable water runoff on Mt. Ayaas, causing the Marikina River to overflow. Although emergency relief was disseminated quickly, Benigno, coordinator of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Secretariat of the SVD Central Province, realized that this would not be enough to secure a positive future for this region of the Philippines.

It quickly became evident that long-term solutions were essential to reconstruction, first and foremost of which was the reforestation of the Marikina Watershed. In light of this long-term approach, Benigno undertook a Plant-for-the-Planet initiative through the Secretariat last December 12, the Global Day of Action on Climate Change with 400 other volunteers. In a letter detailing the Marikina reforestation project, Benigno explains “we hope to nurture thousands of seedlings in the mountain to mitigate climate change, help prevent flooding and keep water in the aquifers of the Marikina Watershed so that people in Manila will have water to drink.” Benigno notes “we would like to ask for your help in making our advocacy known... so that we can raise funds to plant a million trees in the Marikina Watershed and give livelihood to the people in the area so that they will not cut the trees and turn them into charcoal.”

Among the volunteers who made the trek up to Mt. Ayaas to reforest were soldiers and young people, including Children of Mother Earth, an environmental performing arts groups comprised of young people and children who were born and raised in Smokey Mountain, a garbage dump in Manila. Benigno created the group Children of Mother Earth in 1993 to raise awareness of environmental degradation through interpretive dance. Children of Mother Earth perform the dances and rituals of indigenous peoples from the Philippines to spread the message of the need for humans to live in harmony with each other and with creation. The dedication and passion of these 27 dancers in their efforts to “save the planet” through their dancing, has prompted an invitation by Filipino and environmental groups for them to perform a series of concerts in Phoenix, Arizona and San Diego and Los Angeles, California this April.

The Plant-for-the-Planet campaign has mobilized young people all over the world to take an active role in the endless work against Global Warming. Benigno has further contributed to this education by encouraging younger generations to understand the interconnectedness of life on our planet. The activities undertaken by children all over the world demonstrate that each person can contribute to the preservation of our environment, for “talking alone isn’t going to stop the glaciers from melting. Each tree [planted] is a symbol for climate justice.”

Through their care for creation, their desire to take responsibility for future generations and life on this planet, and their campaign to “stop talking and start planting,” children all over the world are working towards a sustainable future for all of humanity. VIVAT International and its members offer our prayers, solidarity, and support to environmental groups such as Plant-for-the-Planet and Children of Mother Earth, who raise awareness about the necessity of environmental justice and inspire people of all ages to take action to mitigate the negative consequences of Global Warming.

“If a hand full of children plant trees, then a single tree won’t have such a grave effect. But if all the children from over the entire world came together to plant trees, then the world could change.”


Through Plant-for-the-Planet, children all over the world are working towards a sustainable future for all humanity.
25 Years: JPIC Commission in the Netherlands

On August 20th, 1985 the Provincial Council of the NEB province decided that a JPIC commission should be started in order to realize a resolution of the SVD General Chapter 1982. Our province was one of the first to take this initiative. One could wonder why the NEB took more or less the lead in this new missionary apostolate. First of all Provincial Superior of that time, Ad de Groot, SVD was absolutely convinced that “working on justice and peace was a constitutive element for evangelizing the world”, as it was stated by the Bishopsynode of 1971. Secondly the Dutch missionary Herman Wijtten, SVD was the first secretary for JPIC at the Generalate. And thirdly I would say, that I was so happy to be privileged to take part in the missiological commission to prepare the general chapter. It was this commission that made the proposal that the general chapter should provide in a new secretariat at the general council. Within this preparatory commission Fr. Heekeren and Carlos Pape of the general council were very much in favor. So, by these highly convinced confreres the NEB province was well prepared to start this apostolate in 1985.

Already in 1986 we could share this conviction with the provincial superiors and confreres involved in JPIC in a European meeting at Fatima which had put JPIC highly on the agenda. In Fatima the resolution was accepted to organize every 2 years a European meeting of JPIC coordinators. The first of these meetings took place in 1988 in Deurne and was set up by our NEB Commission. During this meeting and the next ones the great concern was: how to make our confreres aware of this new mission approach. All provinces made a list of the many obstacles and of the good results. Another concern was our lack in knowledge of economy. It was felt that economy became more and more dominant in our world and determinant in matters of justice. How could we, religious, be a partner for this discussion without any formation? Therefore in 1993 the NEB commission gave the impulse for a 2 weeks seminar on the economy in St Gabriels, Austria. Commission member Koos van Schie organized this very helpful seminar. It was by this occasion that also the SSps sisters were invited. One of the results was the proposal that our provinces should try to make alternative, ethical investments.

Together with other NGOs our commission made during all the 25 years lobbying as its core business, specifically in the areas; for debt cancellation, against racism and discrimination, child soldiers, in favor of refugees and asylum seekers, migrants and people of other religions etc by petitions and personnel letters addressed to the WTO, Summit 7/20, European Union, Heads of State etc. In that way we tried to shape the world according to the Gospel, which is evangelizing the world. After 25 years of membership of the JPIC commission Jan Hellemons, Koos van Schie and myself like to continue this missionary commitment for a better world.

Upcoming U.N. Observance Days

The United Nations has a long list of observance days, weeks, years, and decades which are established to encourage all to focus on a specific world issue, topic, or idea. Each observance holds significance within the UN organization, and stands to commemorate an area of work for the international community. We encourage all to think about promoting commemoration of some or all of these days, in any small or big ways.

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