Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 59th Online Issue of the VIVAT Newsletter!

VIVAT International entered the new year motivated, with members continuing to work tirelessly around the world for peace and justice.

In this issue you will find various articles expressing concerns for human rights in today’s world, such as Women’s Rights in India, a Divided School in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Human Rights Violation in West Papua, Mining Activity in Brazil, and Immigration Reform in the United States. While considering all of these issues, we hope the formulating Post-2015 sustainable development goals appear as important as ever. An article on concerns about the Development Model can be found on page two.

Additionally, we remain inspired by our members’ efforts, such as the Youth and Community Elders advocating for environmental protection in Indonesia. You may also find links to VIVAT’s recent advocacy work at the United Nations at the end of this issue.

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Board of Directors
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- Guy Mazola Mido, SVD
- Gervase Taratara, CSSp
- Carmen Bandeo, SSpS
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- Zita Reich, ASC

Secretary
- Selvi Selva Rani, SSpS

Executive Administration
- Zelia Cordeiro, SSpS
- Felix Jones, SVD

VIVAT Int’ Rep in Geneva
- Edward Flynn, CSSp

Contributed with this edition
- Philip Gibbs, John Converset, Dario Bossi,
- Zita Reich, M. Teresa Viana de Freitas,
- Paul Radomat, Céline Paramunndayil,
- Ozanan Carrara, Aileen Reynolds,
- Octavianus Mote

Translators
- Juan Domingo Griffone, SCJ
- Roberto Garcia Martiño, SCJ

Spanish
- Alain Martial Nguebosop, SCJ

French
- Simone Petra Hanel, SSpS

German
- Edni Gugelmin, SSpS

Portuguese
- viny@vivatinternational.org
- geneva@vivatinternational.org
Challenges to the Post 2015 Development Agenda

The existing Development Model is flawed, and must be redirected in order to have a truly sustainable post-2015 development agenda.

A Gross Domestic Product (GDP) based economy ignores two vital economies necessary for human survival: sustenance economy and the natures economy; in these, the economic value is a measure of how human life and the Earth’s life are protected. The currency is life-giving process, not cash or market price, which should be valued in the development agenda.

An economy unleashed by economic liberalization and deregulation—with privatization and commodification of seed and food, land and water, women and children—grades social values and intensifies violence against women. In a culture of commodification, everything has a price but nothing has value. For example, human trafficking is currently a $32 billion industry, with 80% of the trafficked being women and girls.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) intend to be a balanced integration of three dimensions of development: social, economic, and environmental. At Rio+20, it was determined they should be action oriented, concise, easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature, and universally applicable while respecting national priorities and policies. The co-chairs of the Open Working Group have submitted a summary report with 19 focal areas to become the basis for Member States to move forward on identifying SDGs. Some focal areas are Poverty eradication, Education, Gender Equality and women’s empowerment, Water and sanitation, Ecosystems and biodiversity, and Peaceful and non-violent societies.

During the post 2015 process, Gender equality and Women’s empowerment have not yet entered the main stream, despite 48 countries giving a joint statement emphasizing its importance. The current Development Model masks the injustices done to women and the vulnerable population. A radical change is needed in the global political and economic system through a transformative and redistributive framework that aims at reducing inequality.

The current challenges of poverty, climate change and growing inequality are driven by an unsustainable consumption and life style by a tiny population mostly in the Global North. An OXFAM report revealed that the wealth of the richest 85 people in the world is equivalent to the combined wealth of the bottom 3.5 billion people. Unless the root causes, structures, and policies that deprive people of the necessary resources to enjoy their human rights are addressed, development cannot be sustainable. A guiding principle for the SDGs must be human rights and equity, built on the common but differentiated responsibilities of the “historical debt” which a minority owes to the majority.

What we want to see in the post-2015 framework:

• Rio+20 UN conference on Sustainable Development affirmed that poverty eradication must be at the center of the SDGs. Reform of International Financial Institutions (IFIs), just Trade policies, progressive taxation, closing the loop holes of tax evasion, and illicit money flow need to be tackled along with universal Social Protection to those in the margins to achieve irreversible poverty eradication.

• The SDGs and the post-2015 agenda should be people centered, giving priority to human security and freedom from violence. Likewise, the governments must be the primary duty bearers for the wellbeing of its citizens. There needs to be a strong accountability mechanism for all actors—government, private business, and multilateral institutions—whose actions directly impact development and human rights.

• Gender equality should be a crosscutting issue in all goals and targets. It should expand women’s capabilities through education with access to and control over resources, including equal participation in the decision-making processes of all sectors—public, private, and household.

• SDGs should be built on agreed commitments such as from Universal Human Rights, Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing, Convention on the Rights of Children, people with Disabilities, the indigenous people, Rio, and Monterrey. All of these commitments should include targets with indicators that can be measured.

• Human rights and rights of nature are interdependent. Without a healthy environment, there will not be healthy people. Destroying the Earth is destroying ourselves; we need to learn from the wisdom of the indigenous communities who preserved the Earth system for centuries.

What we are facing is not only an economic crisis, an environmental crisis, or a social crisis, but the consequence of greed from the corporations against people and planet with the support of the militarized states. The world is in urgent need of an alternate system.

We need to hold our politicians accountable, and as responsible citizens practice sustainable consumption and life style. Let us continue our struggles in solidarity, for a life of dignity for all.

For a detailed account the post 2015 agenda you are encouraged to read the United Nations-Non governmental Liaison Services’s (UN-NGLS).
Defending Women’s Rights: Our Prophetic Response

The increasing incidence of rape, sexual abuse and violence against women followed by the vigorous public discourse and campaigns, woke up India’s conscience to the horror infants, girls and women suffer daily and silently and brought us to the realization and acceptance that safety of women is not an issue of women’s struggle but a human rights’ concern as well. Another humiliating aspect of the crime against women is that her status in the patriarchal structure of society also impedes her access to justice. The inequities of social status, caste prejudices, and economic deprivation further compound the gender injustice says Justice Verma Committee report. Women’s representation and participation in Church Bodies is imperative to ensure the wholeness of the Church. Non-representation of women will result in their exclusion of the perspective, experiences, strengths and needs of half the church. (Gender Policy of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India, 2010: Page 34).

In spite of all the efforts to create gender sensitivity and to curb the barbaric acts of rape and sexual assault on women and children, increase in the number of cases reported in the media and the apathy of the authorities still continue to haunt us daily. In the Church, too, morals and morality among the committed persons that were once the subject of hushed rumors and forced silence, are now being openly discussed by the Media, Laity, Clergy and Religious etc. Therefore today’s situation of violence against women and children calls for our concrete response to intervene in their life struggles with magnanimity and certain urgency.

Another important factor is that our society and the justice system remains obsessed with stereotypical and patriarchal notions that have developed with regard to women’s sexual behavior. Most of these notions are based on the assumption that the chastity and virginity of a woman are her most important “assets”, and not her bodily integrity. Recent comments by powerful politicians and religious leaders on the lines that women bring sexual crimes upon themselves have left women shocked. Most of these men cutting across seemingly overwhelming religious barriers, seem to be on the same page when it comes to crimes against women.

The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013 has provisions for increased sentencing for rape convicts, including life-term and death sentence, besides providing stringent punishment for offences such as acid attacks, stalking and voyeurism. The government has amended various sections of the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act. Introduced new Acts such as The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 and The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition And Redressal) Act, 2013. Still we need a criminal justice system that works with responsibility, without undue delay, biases and misogyny.

Our society is deeply patriarchal and it has become an ideology so deep-seated to our experience of being men and women that we rarely detect its pre-eminence in our ways of thinking and acting. There are ample instances where the victims of patriarchal violence themselves enforce patriarchal values on others. At the same time there is a general increase in the consciousness concerning this issue, we are more aware than previously that it is indeed a central concern of any contemporary mission which seeks to integrate justice and equality. There is a critical awakening and courageous protest of women themselves, many men too have joined women in rejecting attitudes which offend against the dignity of women. In Delhi, after the December gang rape, was the first time we saw men take to the streets in authentic resentment. Since then, we have begun to see men join women in rallying against rape, domestic violence, sexual assault etc. Today, more and more men are finally making this issue their own. Gender inequality is not a women’s issue but should concern & engage men as well as women. (Gender Policy of the CBCI, 2010) After all, we need to defend our women strongly more than ever.

By Julie George SSPS
How does an Adorer of the Blood of Christ (ASC) live in Bosnia-Herzegovina, a country divided into two parts, with two government entities where three ethnic populations live? Two realities – three nations, each with a different religion! It is a real challenge.

The reality of this country suggests a series of questions to me that personally affect me because I belong to the third nation, the Croatia. I see the problems of my people and, at the same time, I am sent on a mission to “be a sister” to everyone.

When my people find themselves in that role of “third”, downtrodden and deprived of civil rights, how can I, an ASC, carry out my mission “by witnessing to God’s love and ministering that love to others, especially the poor, the oppressed, and the deprived” as we Adorers are called also through our Constitution? (LC 3) I arrived in Glamoč in August 2000 and began to work in the “Butterflies” public pre-school.

The population here is mixed, made up of Croatians, Serbians, and Bosnians, who are in continual tension among each other. Thus, bringing children of three nations who just a short time ago were fighting each other to the same pre-school is nearly impossible. I also want to say, I was beginning from point zero, even though I was enthusiastic and had a good preparation from the Dominican Sisters in Zagreb. The pre-school, which had opened initially before I arrived, had been closed because of a lack of competent personnel.

I have now been living in Glamoč for 13 years, 13 wonderful years filled with beautiful and difficult moments where I have succeeded in setting up a pre-school. This has been possible because I believe each child is a gift of God, one of God’s children. It does not matter to what ethnic group the child belongs. Thank God for this … however, there is always a “but”, and this is another story…

The school I work in is a public school and most of the personnel are lay Croatians. That is, they belong to the Croatia group, the “third” nation who do not have access to their basic human rights. Therefore, we face many problems. I will name only a few:

1. Since June 2008, the workers at the “Butterflies” pre-school in Glamoč have not been paid. Since that time I have been fighting on all fronts to obtain funds for them. There are four ASCs working in the school and we have not been paid either.

2. Another problem is that our “religious garb bothers” the town administration.

3. The town authorities want to divide the children of the pre-school into ethnic groups and give each a separate playground. That is unacceptable and we will not do it. How can the children learn toleration and living together if we do not allow them to have contact with each other, with those who are different?

Often the politicians in this town put the motto “divide and rule” into practice, but we have not wanted to follow that motto.

Of course, when we are up against the “powerful” of this world, the first consequence is denial of financial resources to carry out the activity. Perhaps it was hoped that by not paying us we would have given up the task, but we will not do that.

In the name of all those who find themselves in similar situations but cannot, must not, or do not know what to do, I raise up my voice to speak against injustice.

By Janja Martina Katović ASC
The people of West Papua have experienced situations of great violence since Indonesia took charge of the area on May 1st, 1963. Since then West Papua has experienced a lot of human rights violations.

Over the last three years, Human Rights Watch has documented hundreds of cases where the police, soldiers and intelligence officers used unlawful force when dealing with Papuans exercising their right to peaceful assembly. The government’s tight control over the flow of information from Papua complicates efforts by foreign media to expose these abuses. c.f. http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/06/13/indonesia-lift-restrictions-reporting-access-papua

The Indonesian Human Rights Commission, based on their evaluation on human rights situation in Papua since 1963-2009, concluded that Indonesia is committing a crime against the Papuan people (Daftar Laporan Tim Dom, Komnas HAM, 2009). Some Heads of State, including Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, have raised the human rights issue with the Indonesian President, SB Yudhoyono. Representative Eni Faleomavaega from American Samoa, with support from other members of US Congress, sent a letter to the UN Secretary General to intervene on the issue of Papua.

The question remains: why has there been no effective way to stop this ongoing 50 year human tragedy that the West Papua Action Network describes as “creeping genocide?” The answer is a combination of several factors, ranging from the Indonesian government's inability to control crime, to ignorance and/or negligence of the problem from many Independent States, believing their bilateral interests with Indonesia to be more important than the fate of about 2 million Melanesians who inhabit a region rich with a variety of natural resources.

The efforts of humanitarian workers, including churches in Papua, upholding humanitarian political pressure, were branded supporters of the separatist movement, and some people including Church workers have been killed. Currently there are no human rights organizations, including the International Red Cross, allowed to work in Papua. We note that when Indonesia was evaluated in the Universal Periodic Review in 2012, at least 13 UN HRC member states gave special attention to the issue of Papua.

Furthermore, the Prime Minister of Vanuatu, in his speech before the UN General Assembly, requested that the UN Secretary General appoint a UN official to deal with West Papua. The prime minister continued the same demand in his speech in the annual session of the UN Human Rights Council, March 4, 2014 in Geneva. The Prime Minister of Vanuatu, in the struggle to uphold human rights in Papua, is also in line with the attitude of the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon. After attending the annual meeting of the South Pacific Forum, answering reporters who questioned the issue of West Papua, he said the matter should be discussed in the Committee on decolonization and the UN Human Rights Council. C.f. http://www.un.org/sg/offthecuff/index.asp?nid=1935

Now it is time for the issue of human rights violations in West Papua to be resolved through UN mechanisms, since the UN participated in handing over West Papua to Indonesian rule. VIVAT International and other faith-based organizations including the World Council of Churches are committed to finding a just resolution to the situation of human rights violations in West Papua.
Mining in the Brazilian State of Minas Gerais

Brazil’s natural patrimony is one of the world’s largest and richest, and has led to the exploitation of land and people for the mining industry. The concerns about the mining industry are particularly serious as it is dealing with non-renewable and limited resources. Mining activities demand a lot of water to wash the minerals as well as huge amounts of energy. They do not use dry technology despite offering a much less harmful strategy to the springs of drinking water. Thus, the same water used to supply the big cities around Belo Horizonte is also used for most of the mining sites. There are already several cases in south of Minas Gerais where the ground water has been contaminated by chemical products used by the mining companies, leading to an increase in the number of people with cancer, skin and lung diseases. Serra do Gandarela and Serra do Caraça, responsible for supplying water to cities around the capital of Minas such as Nova Limeira, Rio Acima and several others, act as the last untouched reserves of high quality water. Alarmingly, this area is now being disputed by Vale do Rio Doce: a company that has 28 open pit iron mines in the state and wants to explore the heart of the iron quadrangle of Minas.

Mining activities are highly harmful to water resources as they irreversibly destroy the aquifers, reduce the water sheets, and seriously degrade the environment by contaminating the water channels with radioactive and toxic products. Additionally, it destroys biodiversity and causes permanent and irreversible loss of natural areas that are fountains of mineral waters. The process of mining removes the layers of rock (canga, ferruginous geo system) responsible for replenishment of the water basins, which are then exploded and discarded as waste material. Some mines like Sapecado, in Itabirito, have dried up due to the mining activity around it. Likewise, cities like Itabira (109,783 inhabitants) and Congonhas (48,519 inhabitants) are suffering from water shortage problems due to these mining activities.

Dozens of families are forced to sell their family properties to leave space for the mining roads for prices stipulated by the mining companies, usually below market prices, and some of them were not even compensated by the company in cases of bankruptcy. Community and family small enterprises of agriculture, settlements of landless and indigenous people, and quilombolas (lands of descendants of former slaves) are all removed for the exploration of the subsoil wealthy.

The Brazilian government is elaborating the New Mining Code, which offers an opportunity to change this practice. NGOs are discussing strategies to address these concerns and civil society is launching a social movement focused around the various concerns for the future generation.

First, the mineral reserves were formed over a period of millions of years and are not renewable. Once explored to exhaustion, there will not be a second harvest.

Second, Brazil’s natural patrimony is a good that belongs to all Brazilian people and cannot be privatized. The government cannot make decisions solely with the mining companies as has often happened. Everything must be submitted to an ample process of democratic decision-making.

Third, it is urgent to determine the allowed levels of extraction. In the state of Pará, a huge iron ore mine in Carajás supposed to be explored for 400 years, is about to extinguish its reserve due to the intensification of exploration with the constant improvement of extraction technology.

Fourth, transparency and a strict public control over mining extraction with public consultation about the concessions for research and exploration is necessary. Public access must be guaranteed to the contracts signed between government and companies, with a clear and previous determination of the allowed levels of productivity with a subsequent accompaniment of the socio-environmental impacts.

Fifth, the ecologists defend an economic and ecological division of the national territory, with a clear and rational determination of zones where mining activities will be allowed and prohibited.

Sixth, there is concern about politicians from parliament actively participating in the elaboration of the New Mining Code who had their electoral campaigns paid for by the mining companies and therefore now defend their interests. These politicians may favour their personal interests in detriment of their own country and people.

Mineiros used to say in the eighteenth century, “Our gold left cathedrals in Portugal, made bank owners millionaires in London, and we stayed only with the big holes of the mines.” Has history changed since then? Many people doubt…
Youth and Community Elders in Indonesia Concerned with Threats to the Earth

Protecting Mother Earth was the main concern at the heart of both gatherings when Indonesian Youth and Community Elders came together in two major events held in October 2013 and January 2014 respectively.

A total of 210 people from the three regencies of Manggarai, East Manggarai and West Manggarai in Redong met at an inter-faith youth meeting from 25th to 29th October 2013. The youth voiced their multiples concerns and expressed the urgency to address what they referred to as the mutilation of the earth that, they stated, they are direct witnesses of in their own communities. Deforestation, pollution, mining activities were some of the issues they denounced as directly causing natural disasters such as floods and landslides. The Indonesian youth also pointed to the birth of social conflicts, injustice and human rights violations as issues tightly interrelated to natural resource management and land issues, which in turn they say are causing poverty, famine and death.

While participants recognized that the government was expected to manage the distribution of the natural resources for our prosperity they discussed and agreed on a series of actions they will undertake in their own capacity to preserve the Earth. These include fighting whatever companies come to mutilate the earth through activities such as mining and deforestation as well as keeping the environment clean and free from rubbish; and protecting the farm land and preserving soil fertility by promoting the use of organic manure through organic farm training. The declaration also included the unobvious and mindful commitment to make a decision to eat what we get and buy what we need.

When the Elders of various communities in Indonesia convened in Sengari between 24th and 26th January 2014, their discussions seemed to echo the plight expressed just a few months earlier by the youth. Elders from Ka, Lante, Nggalak and Jong tribes were accompanied and guided by the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) SVD Ruteng in their gathering. The Elders stated that Earth, water, forest, mountain, hills, sea and the village are the elements that can’t be apart from our lives. Earth is mother that gives life to human being. As brother, forest and mountain also give life to everything around.

The Elders’ final declaration is impressive in the level of minute detail with which it goes on to describe the relationship between their communities and the use of what the Earth freely provides and aspects of community management, with sustainable development and preserving the Earth representing the backbone of both their vision and commitment.

Furthermore, the Elders clearly emphasized the existing linkages between the land and their cultural identity, spirituality and practices without which their communities could not exist. In this regard one fragment of the declaration reads as follows: The relationship between human being and nature is expressed through some traditional rites such as tente teno, caka cicing, pu’ung weri, kalek, cau ceos, hang rani and cepa to respect the earth. There are also some rites to respect the water, the village and the ancestors such as takung mangkok mese and dara lampet... Deforestation, mining activities, and the sales of land, are the challenges for us in maintaining the custom regulation; but we always solve any problems in gendang one and lumping peang (trans. Culture centre) by discussing.

There are certainly lessons to be drawn for our own communities by the Indonesian Youth and Elders participants’ striking sense of social responsibility, level of engagement in addressing communal concerns and heirs to be agents of change for present and future generations of the Earth in Indonesia and beyond.

By Elizabeth Mary Lanzi Mazzochini and Simon Suban Tukan SVD
The Cost of a Dream

I was born in Veracruz, Mexico. My husband, Edmundo, was born in Puebla. We went to college, studied Industrial Chemistry but were unable to find work. In 1990, Edmundo and I made a decision that forever changed our lives: we said, "I do" and those words marked the beginning of our journey together. That same year, after our first attempt to cross the border was unsuccessful, we came to the United States like many other people looking for opportunities and a better life for our future family. East Harlem, NY became our new home.

One of the most difficult decisions was to leave our loving and close-knit families, not knowing if and when we would see them again. I have three brothers and Edmundo is the oldest of eight siblings. We never realized how difficult life would be: leaving all behind, adapting to a new culture, not understanding English or finding meaningful work.

Shortly after the birth of our first child, I was introduced to the Little Sisters of the Assumption who became, and nearly 25 years later continue to be, the ‘family’ we did not have. I began attending their programs – Mothers’ group, Nutrition, Arts & Crafts and 4 years of English as a Second Language classes. There I felt at home meeting others who were living in similar circumstances. Eventually I volunteered to teach the Arts & Crafts class and with Sr. Susanne, I began to lead the mothers’ group. Eventually I was employed part-time with the Little Sisters and today I continue to be of service as an Independent Contractor. Nothing could have prepared us for what happened two years later.

In 1998, Edmundo was detained by immigration officers after a raid at the clothing factory where he worked. It was a terrifying experience to receive that phone call; it contained no information as to where he was being held. Fortunately he returned home late that night, lamentably with an order of deportation. We found a lawyer and started a process to stop his deportation. During this long and painful process we went to court repeatedly and were treated like criminals. With the support of friends and the community we initially won our case and residency was offered to Edmundo, but a month later the decision was overturned on appeal.

The next year we received another letter stating that Edmundo had another order of deportation due to our lawyer’s failure to respond to the immigration procedures. The situation worsened. We were extremely frightened and thought about moving because now the Office of Immigration had our information. We decided not to move, just wait and pray that they did not come looking for us. We put plans in place for our sons, Emi (8) and Erik (2½); on the refrigerator there were the phone numbers of those whom they should call if Immigration came to take us. They were also instructed to call my family in Mexico. Emi still remembers being at court seated on Father Martin’s lap but not knowing what was going on. Erik recently told me he had nightmares that he never mentioned to us.

Edmundo’s order of deportation still hangs over our heads – it looms in the dark as we stay determined to keep our dream alive. We continue to work and live in the community of El Barrio, East Harlem. We began to pay taxes in 1999 and also paid 10 years of back taxes. We send money to help our families on a regular basis, especially in times of illness. We have not been back to Mexico for many years; we yearn for the day when we will be able to visit in person.

Last year I had the opportunity to talk to NY Senator, Charles Schumer. I shared our story, the story of many people, with him and others. I am aware that many people believe what we did was wrong. As one parent to another, I appeal to their hearts. Our dream for the future is what moved us to take a great risk for a chance at life and it was not without tremendous personal suffering. My children missed having family around them and couldn’t enjoy the love and care of grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. It was very sad when we couldn’t say goodbye to our own grandparents and very difficult when Edmundo’s dad died and he was not able to be with his mom, brothers and sisters. My father has had several life-threatening episodes of ill health and every time the phone rings, my heart beats hard and fast. In my opinion, we have borne the consequences of our actions long enough.

We need changes in the immigration laws; we need laws that are just and humane, laws that help families to stay united and also help working people like my husband and me to continue to contribute our talents to the benefit of this country.

Today our older son, Emigdio, is in college and soon Erik will be too. Despite everything, I feel that we have been more fortunate than many others. We have been and continue to be surrounded by good people who have supported us every step of the way.

By Norma Flores
and Annette Allain LSA

Focused upon the Family in underserved neighborhoods of NY since 1891, The Little Sisters of the Assumption have given witness to the Gospel in concrete actions of love, service, and the promotion of social justice. Their center in East Harlem, LSA Family Health Service, offers home-based and center-based programs designed to empower those who are most vulnerable and who have least access to the basic necessities of life, in the conviction that the entire community grows when individuals and families are affirmed in their own dignity.
VIVAT Board Meeting

On 27 January 2014 the VIVAT Board Meeting took place. Sixteen members attended, including: President Sr. Maria Theresia SSpS, Vice President Fr. Heinz Kulüke SVD, the Executive Team from New York, the representative from Geneva, and JPIC Coordinators of VIVAT Congregations. Per usual, six-month reports from New York and Geneva were presented. In addition, for the first time, JPIC Coordinators presented a report on how each congregation carries out VIVAT’s vision and mission internationally. Likewise, reports were received from the five national branches: Argentina, Bolivia, India, Indonesia, and Kenya.

Various future workshops were discussed. A workshop in Paraguay for 2014 was approved, to occur in Spanish, and is anticipated to take place in July or August. Likewise, an European workshop was approved for 2014 and a workshop in Nigeria to occur in September or October of 2014. A VIVAT Brazil follow-up on mining, human rights, and environmental concerns is expected in November.

Other approvals from this Board meeting include: an approval of the 2014 VIVAT Budget; approval of the statues of VIVAT Kenya; approval of three workshops on Land Grab and approval of internships for Olga Estela Sanchez Caro, CMS and Ms. Anna Maria Pozzi.

VIVAT New York Meeting

VIVAT International New York members met on 17 February 2014. A summary of the VIVAT Board meeting was presented, extracts of Reports from National Branches were shared.

An information sheet and petition urging governments to create, form, and/or implement Social Protection Floors (SPFs) in their respective countries was shared. VIVAT New York members were asked by the Executive Team to distribute this document to coordinators internationally to collect as many signatures as possible. The goal of this effort is to educate VIVAT members on SPFs and to contribute to the ongoing campaign by the International Labour Organization.

VIVAT USA shared their plans to prepare a draft on an intervention for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the USA on “Separation of Parents and Children in Deportation Proceedings and Prevention of Detainee Contact with Families and Lawyers”.

Mr. Octovianus Mote of West Papua was invited to this meeting to discuss the human rights crisis occurring in West Papua. Mr. Mote shared that he is currently working with Yale Law School Students, and Hollywood stars such as Ryan Felipe to ultimately pursue West Papua’s decolonization from Indonesia.

Currently, his team is attempting to target independent countries to support West Papua. Mr. Mote requested VIVAT International’s assistance in gaining support from independent countries in where we have members through strategies such as presentations in capital cities and distribution of accessible information. Likewise, he is looking to create a mechanism within the United Nations to improve the situation in West Papua.

VIVAT New York members appreciated the informative dialogue about West Papua and offered various resources to contribute to Mr. Mote’s initiative.
Recent Advocacy Work through UN Human Rights Mechanisms

February 2014
Statements submitted to the 8th Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals

Continued Land Grabbing May Lead to Global Conflict
Land acquisitions poses a threat to humans of the Earth, particularly indigenous populations. Through the destruction of local communities, loss of culture identity, and systematic human rights violations, land grabbing paves the way for conflict in the countries where we are working to promote peace and social justice. In the spirit of “sustainable development”, preventing and counteracting land grabbing must be recognized as urgent priorities.

Threat to Biodiversity from a mining perspective
Mining is a serious threat to local biodiversity. This threat continues to grow as the mining sector encourages new projects in remote, biodiverse areas—additionally threatening indigenous and poor population who rely on these areas to survive. The extractive industry must be recognized as a threat to biodiversity and mining must be halted in said areas.

March 2014
Statement submitted to the HRC 25th session of the UN Human Rights Council
Mapuche human rights and the use of the special legal framework in Chile - Video


VIVAT International, Franciscans International and Movement for the Mountains and Waters of Minas in collaboration with several local organizations from Brazil submitted a contribution to the call of the Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation for her forthcoming report to the HRC. Read report

Joint letter from the Conselho Indigenista Missionário (CIMI), the Inter-Franciscan Service for Justice, Peace and Ecology (Sinfrajupe), Franciscans International, and VIVAT International on the situation of the rights of the Tupinambá People in Bahia, Brazil. Read more

Upcoming Events

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<tr>
<th>April and May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>Forthcoming meetings, workshops and seminar</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 9-10</td>
<td>June 17-18</td>
<td>July 7 VIVAT Int' Board Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Assembly (GA) and UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)</td>
<td>Human Rights and Rule of Law</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 14-15</td>
<td>June 23-25</td>
<td>August VIVAT workshop - Paraguay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dialogue on Financing for Development</td>
<td>ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs</td>
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<td>May 12-23</td>
<td>June 30 - July 9</td>
<td>September, 15-19 VIVAT workshop - Nigeria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues</td>
<td>High-Level Political Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 20-21</td>
<td></td>
<td>December Seminar: Dialogue on Life and Mining, Brazil</td>
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<tr>
<td>North-South, South-South Cooperation</td>
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