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NEWSLETTER No. 65
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DEAR READERS,
WELCOME TO THE 65TH ONLINE ISSUE
OF THE VIVAT NEWSLETTER!

This Edition covers the stories and information on global matters linking to social development, climate change and security concerns. It also includes reflections on women issues in the context of dignity and equality as UN is preparing for the 60th Session of Commission on the Status of Women.

From national and local levels we have the stories about indigenous people's struggles for identity and basic human rights (Brazil, India and West Papua/Indonesia). At the regional level, the members of the Coordinating Committee of Churches and Mining Network held their annual meeting in Bogota Colombia. It is an ecumenical initiative of faith-based organizations that works against the exploitation by the mining and extractive industries and its impact on communities and the environment.

We are happy to share a brief reflection on the VIVAT Workshop in Madrid, Spain. In their final statement the members resolved to continue working with migrants and refugees, and support them when their human rights are violated. The last two stories are experience sharing by two of the members. Janet Tellis gives us an insight into the life of the Riangs, one of the most vulnerable indigenous communities in the northeast India; and Genoveva da Costa Amaral, speaks of her internship in VIVAT Office in New York.

We welcome your feedback and request you to share the success stories and concerns with us. Our special thanks to those of you, who have contributed articles for this edition of VIVAT Newsletter and in the past as well as to our editors and translators.

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From MDGs to COP 21

GLOBAL CONCERNS ON ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

Environmental crisis has become one of the greatest concerns of the global community at present, especially when it comes to the inter-related issues of global warming, climate change, sea level rise, etc., which have already affected the lives of many people of this planet earth. Many have expressed the depth of their concerns through concrete actions at global, regional, national and local levels.

Pope Francis, in his Encyclical “*Laudato Si*” (May 2015), reminds us of our “shared responsibility” for the earth as “our common home” and “our mother.” He also calls our attention to the necessity of defending and protecting the rights of the environment, an issue that has been raised quite often by civil society during climate change talks since the Rio de Janeiro Conference in 2012.

The United Nations has put its energy to include environmental issues into its goals for the development agenda. As it set up Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a fifteen year development agenda—2000-2015, it also included environmental issues in it. MDGs 7 explicitly mentions this issue as the part of the United Nations Development Agendas.

As MDGs were about to come to an end this year, the United Nations proposed another 15 year development agenda which is called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in which environmental issues are once again strongly addressed, but with more specific details. Seven out of seventeen SDGs are directly or indirectly related to environmental issues. This indicates the seriousness of the United Nations as well as the global community in undertaking to address this global challenge.

As part of the follow up on the SDGs deliberations, the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (or COP 21) was held in Paris between November 30th and December 11th, 2015. The 196

MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability.

Indicators:

- Integrate principles of sustainable development in country policies and programmes;
- Reverse the loss of environmental resources;
- Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010;
- Halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation;
- Improvement the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020;

Environmental related issues in SDGs:

- **SDG 13:** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts;
- **SDG 14:** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development;
- **SDG 15:** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss;
- **SDG 6:** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;
- **SDG 7:** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all;
- **SDG 11:** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

participating countries achieved the so-called “Paris Agreement” on December 12, 2015. Of particular importance is Article 2 of the Agreement which states:

Article 2

1. This Agreement...aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, including by:

(a) Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change;

(b) Increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production;

(c) Making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development.

2. This Agreement will be implemented to reflect equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances.

For more information on Paris Agreement, see <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/109.pdf>.

For VIVAT International, commitment to protecting the environment is primary concern. In many countries where VIVAT members are working, programs have been set up to raise the awareness of its own members and the people with whom they work. They also undertake advocacy works related to preventing the detrimental effects of mining operations in developing countries. Actions have been taken locally in Brazil, Argentina, Indonesia, India and some other countries by VIVAT members, as well as nationally and globally. At the UN, VIVAT International, in collaboration with other NGOs, has initiated Mining Working Group which focuses on environmental issues and will continue to work on them.

United For Security, Dialog for Peace

UNSC PASSES RESOLUTION ON COMBATING TERRORISM.
SOME GOOD PRACTICES ON THE GROUND.

On Friday, November 20th, 2015

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) approved Resolution No. 2249/2015 urging countries to counter terrorism. This French-backed resolution calls for states to take action against terrorism, especially against ISIS/ISIL.

The Resolution condemns the November 2015 events in France as well as previous terrorist attacks perpetrated by ISIS/ISIL that occurred on June 26, 2015, in Sousse (Tunisia), on October 10, in Ankara, on October 31 over Sinai, on November 12 in Beirut, and all other attacks committed by ISIS/ISIL, such as hostage-taking and killing, and states that it considers all these terrorist acts a threat to peace and security. It also states that any action against ISIS/ISIL must be in compliance with the UN Charter, international humanitarian law, and human rights law. It reaffirms that those who have committed such terrorist acts, or violations of human rights or humanitarian law, must be held accountable. Furthermore, this resolution also calls on the U.N. Member States that have the capacity to do so to take all necessary measures to prevent and suppress terrorist attacks committed in the territory under the control of ISIS/ISIL in Syria and Iraq by ISIS/ISIL or other terrorist groups or businesses associated with Al Qaeda, or by other terrorist groups included on the U.N. Sanctions List. Finally, it urges the Member States to increase their efforts to prevent foreign terrorist fighters from going to Syria and Iraq and to prevent the financing of terrorism.

Several Council resolutions already apply to the fight against terrorist groups. Sanctions are in place against Al Qaeda and related organizations and individu-



Fr. Leo Kleden, SVD, VIVAT member and Provincial Superior of SVD Ende Province (Blue Shirt) and Mrs. Siti Halimah Asaidah, President of Walisongo Foundation (center with scarf).

Source: Flores Bangkit

als, is aimed at preventing the flow of foreign fighters into groups like Islamic State, and yet another forbids trade in oil or antiquities with Islamic State.

Prior to the above Resolution, UNSC adopted Resolution No. 2170/2014 dated August 15th, 2014, condemning gross, widespread abuse of human rights by extremist groups in Iraq and Syria, under the binding Chapter VII of the United Nations.

Meanwhile, small-scale activities have been initiated and carried out by VIVAT members to promote peace and protection in communities where they work and serve. The first is a good practice by *Tim Relawan Untuk Kemanusiaan Flores (TRUK-F)*—Flores Voluntary Team for Humanitarian Service at Maumere, a small town on Flores Island, Indonesia. TRUK-F provides a shelter for victims of domestic violence and ethnic conflicts, and of trafficking in persons. Some programs such as trauma healing and self-advocacy are conducted to pro-

tect the victims.

Another good practice has been initiated and developed by VIVAT members in, a small town on the same island, where Christians and Moslems live together. In that town, SVDs have been involved in program in which seminarians candidates to be Catholic priests) do their pastoral regencies by teaching in Pesantren Walisongo—an Islamic based High School. This practice

has been taking place since 2002. The goal of this program is to develop mutual understanding, acceptance and religious tolerance on both sides. By taking part in the program, both Christians and Moslems are expected to be able to collaborate and to counter religious radicalism and fundamentalism. This kind of practices is often called “dialog in action.”

VIVAT International will continue to work together and hand-in-hand with other agencies to create a more just and peaceful world for all, especially for those in desperate situation through several activities such as trainings, workshops, seminars, and retreats on peace, inter-religious dialog and reconciliation.

Dignity and Equality for Women and Men

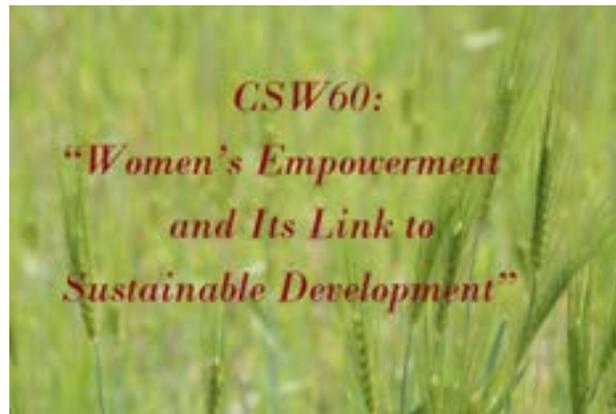
60th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The Commission The UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the main international high-level organization committed to the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It was established as a functional commission by resolution 11(II) of the ECOSOC on 21 June 1946, and has been instrumental in advocating for equality between women and men for decades. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW), the International Women's Year (1975), the UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (1976-85), and four World Conferences on Women, held in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985), Beijing and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) are some of the major events and platforms that have positively impacted women's lives world over. While the focus of the first three decades was on women's legal and political rights, the subsequent decades focused on struggle for gender equality. The approval of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in 1993 and the appointment of a UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women in 1994 are some of the milestones in addressing the issue of violence against women. UN Women established in 2011 is the Secretariat of the CSW. (<http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/brief-history#sthash.1FcPbQEb.dpuf>).

The Annual Session of CSW60

This annual two week Session, to be held from 14 to 24 March 2016 at the UN headquarters in New York, is a platform where the representatives of UN Member States, civil society organizations and UN entities discuss and deliberate on issues and policies that affect women's lives and gender equality rights in the political, economic and social fields across the world, keeping the focus on the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the recent adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Number 5 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is on Gender Equality. It gives a specific

mandate to ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS. The Priority theme of CSW60 "Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development" points us to this goal. Further, the Review theme of CSW60 is, "The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls" in accordance with following the agreed conclusions from the fifty-seventh session.



NGOs at the CSW

The NGO CSW Forum will be an important event during the CSW60 to bring the civil society together. Organized by the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, NY (NGO CSW/NY), this event is an opportunity enabling the activists to discuss and highlight priority issues pertaining to women and girls, to network, strategize, share best practices, and most importantly crafting Joint Statements to lobby governments to implement resolutions and treaties, and to provide wording for the agreed conclusions. The NGO CSW Forum includes a Consultation Day (13 March 2016), a Reception, and several thematic Parallel Events during the CSW60, that are aimed at setting the stage for the CSW60 especially on emerging issues and trends. The final proposals will be written up and submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women and UN Women for further discussion and dissemination to other UN agencies.

NGO CSW/NY and VIVAT International

The NGO CSW/NY supports the work of the UN Commission on the Status of Women and UN Women and advocates for women's rights and the advancement of women and girls worldwide. It provides a forum for the exchange of information and substantive discussion on issues and policies concerning women, and gender mainstreaming (a strategy for

promoting gender equality). In its work with the NGO Committees on the Status of Women in Geneva and Vienna, NGO CSW/NY supports the Beijing Platform for Action, UN Security Resolution 1325, the Millennium Development Goals, and the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). <http://www.ngocsw.org/>

The NGO CSW/NY keeps alive the issues of women's rights and the advancement of women and girls throughout the year. Regular meetings are held every month and side events are held on important occasions when high-level meetings, such as UN General Assembly, are held at the UN. As a member organization VIVAT International participates in these meetings, learns and contributes to the subcommittees working on CSW60. As part of the advocacy and networking subcommittee, VIVAT has submitted a Joint Statement on the status of women to the Commission on the Status of Women. The active participation of NGOs is essential to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and without networking and collaboration one cannot hope for a better world. It is only in joining hands, we can make the leaders be accountable for the commitment they make for gender equality.

Helen Saldanha

SPAIN: Strengthening National Branch

STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL WORKSHOP OF VIVAT INTERNATIONAL IN MADRID



The national level workshop on Justice, Peace Integrity of Creation, organized by VIVAT International was held in Madrid, Spain from 19-23 October 2015. Forty participants comprising 9 out of 12 religious congregations, who are members and associate members of VIVAT International namely, Divine Word Missionaries, Missionary Sisters, Servants of the Holy Spirit, Comboni Missionaries, Comboni Missionary Sisters, Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Spiritan Missionaries, Adorers of the Blood of Christ, Sisters of the Asuncion and Little Sisters of the Assumption.

The objective of this workshop was to explore the possibility of creating national VIVAT International in Spain, promote awareness among the members about VIVAT International, and identify JPIC issues in the context of Spain and draw a plan of action to address them.

Among the topics covered during work-

shop were, VIVAT International: History, vision, mission, activities in relation to advocacy at the grassroots and UN level; UN Systems as platform for advocacy for the promotion of human dignity and rights, poverty eradication,

sustainable development, empowerment of women, climate change, culture and peace, migration, refugees, and indigenous people.

The positive outcome at the conclusion of the workshop was the readiness for starting a branch of VIVAT International in Spain based in Madrid, as reflected in the statement made by the participants:

We, the forty members and associated members of VIVAT International, from nine religious Congregations/ Institutions and eighteen nationalities, participated in the national level workshop organized by VIVAT International, and held in Madrid, Spain, from 19th to 23rd October 2015. We reflected on various issues pertaining to justice, peace and integrity of creation in the context of Spain as well as internationally and looked for ways to connect these to UN systems in the light of human dignity and rights of the marginalized.

We are deeply hurt by the violation of human rights that offends the dignity of people, pushing them to live in poverty, to suffer violence, uprooting and destroying of creation.

We recognize and value the networking with other organizations, to collaborate in our congregational mission with migrants. As members of VIVAT International and consistent with this work, we carry out joint actions of denunciation and advocacy with the governments at local, national and international levels.

We are committed as members of VIVAT present in Spain to:

- Continue working with immigrants and refugees and support them when their human rights are violated.
- Joint actions for denouncing the violation of human rights of immigrants and refugees.
- Using media and looking for a practical and effective way of organizing nationwide. The Kingdom of God urges us to work for the underprivileged "that all may have life and have it more abundantly" (Jn.10:10). We put our trust in the Spirit's action that precedes and accompanies us.

Divine Word Missionaries; Missionary Sisters, Servants of the Holy Spirit; Spiritan Missionaries; Comboni Missionary Sisters; Comboni Missionaries; Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate; Adorers of the Blood of Christ; Sisters of the Asuncion; and Little Sisters of the Assumption.

Reported by Modeste M. Osung, SVD

COLOMBIA: Don't Kill Us and Our Mother Nature!

THE MEETING OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF THE CHURCHES AND MINING NETWORK IN BOGOTA, NOVEMBER 11-14, 2015

The members of the Coordinating Committee of the Network held their annual meeting in Bogota Colombia, from November 11th to 14th, 2015. The Churches and Mining Network is an ecumenical initiative of faith-based organizations that work against the exploitation of mining and extractive industries and the impact on communities and the environment.

The first two days, thanks to the coordination of the National Secretariat of Social Ministry of Catholic Charities Colombia, a visit was conducted to the town of Marmato, in the Diocese of Pereira. There the Churches and Mining Commission visited craft-mining local residents that are facing the onslaught of the company Colombia Gold, which bought mining rights and threatens to do mining at a large-scale and in open air, which puts the survival of the community that depends on craft-mining for their livelihood at risk.

The town of Marmato is nestled on a mountain with gold reserves, where for more than 400 years the villagers and locals have done craft-mining, which lacks any regulatory state intervention that would ensure the health, safety and a regulatory framework for craft-mining.

Churches and Mining Commission confirmed its identity and that of the organizations that are part of its coordinating body. Vivat International is part of this coordinating body, essentially aiming at bringing mining disputes to the scope of the United Nations, as well as to provide support with an international vision the numerous situations of conflict caused by the same mining companies and their subcontractors. The representatives of Vivat International to the Coordination of the Network Churches and Mining were Br. Victor Hirsch SVD and Fr. Dario Bossi.

The Commission confirmed its work on animation based on five areas: Communities and ground-work; Joint Networking and Partnerships; Theology and Spirituality;



Fr. Dario Bossi, an associate member of VIVAT International (far right) is one of the participants in the meeting

Communication and Institutional Relations among the Churches.

During the current year, the Churches and Mining Commission had the opportunity to present its position against mining to the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace of the Holy See, accompanying people affected profoundly by mining to Rome. They denounced the serious ecological impact, the lack of sustainability, low standards for the care of the environment, the lack of social agreement for mining, as well as agreements between mining companies and states with lax and unprofitable concessions, with a high long-term impact on communities and ecosystems.

The Commission analyzed, in turn, the preoccupying search for alliances and justifications on the part of mining companies before the same Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, presenting false or distorted data to dioceses, religious authorities and governments in their different organizational levels.

During the conference, it was possible to analyze thanks to the contribution of Observatory for Mining Conflicts in Latin America (OCMAL) the current situation of the conflicts between the mining companies and the affected communities, as well as a projection of mining, international prices, and other factors related to mega-mining.

The Commission valued the doctrinal

position that the recent encyclical letter of Pope Francis "Laudato Si" offers, where the Catholic Church is positioned in line with the defense of our "common home". The efforts of local churches and pastoral agents that are committed to accompanying the struggles of affected communities were also recognized. Moreover, it was considered of great value the statements made by some Dioceses and Episcopal Conferences of Latin America, defending the communities, noting the impact, and denouncing the negative effects of

mining.

The commitment of the Network of Churches and Mining to accompany religious communities, associations and organizations with a religious inspiration in their efforts to provide advice, contribute to the struggles and movements against all mining activities and their impact was renewed.

The Coordinating Committee committed to act in a fast, horizontal, and participatory manner, associating their fight against mega-mining with other ecclesial and social organizations. They decided to present their case to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and to promote ongoing dialogue for cooperation with the Social Ministry Secretariat of Catholic Charities of Latin America, as well as with the Latin American Episcopal Conference- CELAM.

On the last day, the Commission had the opportunity to hear about the activities of social and church organizations working with local residents in Colombia, appreciating the great work of awareness, training, counseling and advocacy they do.

Finally, the Commission reiterated its interest in conducting an Assembly of Religious Organizations that work with people and communities affected by mega-mining during the year 2016.

*Br. Victor Hirsch, SVD
VIVAT Argentina*

INDONESIA: Keep up Fire of Hope Burning

SEMINAR ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN SORONG, 14-17 OCTOBER 2015

A seminar on human rights was held from 14 to 17 October 2015 in Sorong, in West Papua and was attended by 60 participants from various interest groups of human rights and JPIC activists of Catholic Church, JPIC Coordinators of Papua Dioceses and religious congregations, pastors and parish pastoral workers, nuns, Papuan women groups, local NGOs, academia, VIVAT International-Indonesia, Franciscans International and the OSA General Assistant. The participants could slightly figure out the power of the worldwide Catholic Church Network, from Papua and Jakarta to Geneva and Rome.

Human rights violations in West Papua are awful and systematic: murder, intimidation, terror, stigmatization of separatists, alcoholism, domestic violence, AIDS/HIV, corruptions, the annexation of the collective lands of indigenous peoples, forest destruction in a massive scale, depopulation of the indigenous Papuans, and the disappearance of Melanesian tribes in Papua land. This has happened more than half a century and makes Papua as a field of dire humanitarian massacre on the planet.

In the midst of these human rights violations, the indigenous Papuans devote a glimmer of hope to the churches. The trust of indigenous Papuans in the churches, particularly the Catholic Church, is quite high. The Papuans, however, are staring quizzically and agitated when the Church keeps silent in the midst of human rights violations and structural violence that happened in West Papua.

Bernadeth Mahuse, a Papuan women group leader, was shouting out: "The Church's teaching on the dignity, human rights, justice and peace is so wonderful. But where is the prophetic voice of the Church today? We, the Marind people are in risk of endangered. Our lands were robbed (by MIFEE transnational corporations). Why is the church silent on?" With a dejected tone a layperson pastor/deacon, Viktor Motombri, was claiming, "We, Papuans, became catholic because

roles," said Neles Tebay, Coordinator of the Papua Peace Network and the initiator of the Jakarta-Papua dialogue. "It is because the Church is a witness to human rights violations in Papua land." The Church is challenged as well as challenges itself to ask, where its position is and what role it may play in the midst of the awful situation? The Church must assert a position and then take real actions.

Church and the power of its wide-reaching network is a decisive social capital for advocacy works of human rights in Papua. Thus, one of the key recommendations of the joint meeting in Sorong was to improve prophetic voices and actions of the churches in Papua, Indonesia, Asia-Pacific and the universal Church (Vatican). Additionally, capacity building and strengthening structural basis of indigenous Papuans, Christian communities, youth and women as well as documenting, reporting and publication of the human rights situation in Papua is the future work agenda of the wide-reaching Catholic

Church Network for Papua.

Keeping the fire of hope brightly burning in Papua land is a gracious call and a historic challenge for the Catholic Church and people in good will today. VIVAT International-Indonesia has the privilege to be part of the movement and journey.



Mrs. Neles Tebay, Coordinator of the Papua Peace Network and the initiator of the Jakarta-Papua dialogue speaking in the seminar in Sorong, 14-17 October 2015.

the preaching of the Franciscan missionary, OSA and MSC in the past. Now, right to life of the indigenous Papuans is threatened. The religious orders and congregations have to take a moral responsibility to save the indigenous Papuans.

The dreadful violations against human rights are happening before our own nose. The culture of death is real must be confronted. "The Church needs to reflect and reaffirm its position and

By Paul Rahmat, SVD
VIVAT International Indonesia

INDIA: Our Land, Our Life

AWARENESS TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN ODISHA



Over 5000 Indigenous people (*Adibasis*) from each Gram Panchayat (village council) of Sundargarh district and different parts of the State of Odisha; as well as renowned advocates, academicians, social activists, leaders, and experts from different parts of the country as resource persons came together for a mass awareness programme, “The Governance in 5th Scheduled Areas”. This event that took place from 18 to 20 November, 2015 at Jhirpani ground, Rourkela, Odisha-India, was organized by “*Sundargarh Jilla Adibasi- Mulbasi Bachao Manch*”. Fr. Nicholas Barla, SVD, a VIVAT International member was part of the Organizing Committee.

This gathering is of great relevance given the changing scenario in the country, precipitated by development-induced displacement that pushes Adibasis to the margins, leading to grave conditions of hunger, loss of livelihood and forced migration.. Their condition is worsened over the years. The percentage of Adibasis in northern districts of Odisha is over 50%. Indian Constitution documents indigenous people as Scheduled Tribes (STs) and has affirmative action in protecting their rights to land, forest and water. However, today there is frustration and

desperation at the policies of the government that has increased the land grab by the companies and business groups; social, cultural, traditional and economic rights of the *Adibasis* are threatened. There are open human rights violations. There are violations of Constitutional provisions by the State and Other Non-STs. Appeals, petitions, protest rallies, dialogue with district administration including the Governor have not yielded results.

The topics were dealt in the awareness training programme were, The PESA (Panchayats-Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996 and the Supreme Court Judgment on Niyamgiri; The SAMATA Judgment 1997 (a court judgment against the government that declared the lease of tribal land to private companies for mining, as null and void); The Land Rights in Scheduled Areas; The Power of Gram Sabha (Meeting of the entire body of a village); The Implementation of Law by the Peoples; The ST & Other Traditional Forest dwellers (Recognition of the Forest Rights) Act 2006; Constitutional Provisions for STs; Right To Information Act Governance in 5th Scheduled Areas & Adibasi Expert; and Violence Rights in Sundargarh, Odisha.

At the end of the programme the participants made a joint Declaration which demanded that all laws and rules that were in consonance with the Constitution meant for Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes, PESA, and FRA (Forest Rights Act) and Supreme Court Judgments that upheld the rights of the Scheduled Areas/Tribes. The plans

must be barred and be declared Null and Void in the State including, among others, The Land Grabbing Act 2015; The Law on Bhu Bank; The SMART CITY in Rourkela; the acquisition of land in Khandadhar Waterfall and around the hills for mines to any Companies or for State; Inclusion of Adibasi areas and villages for Rourkela Mahanagar Nigam; Amendment in Regulation 2 of 1956 and amendment of 2002; Implementation of the FRA 2006 and Recognition of the Individual, habitat and Community Rights; The identification and bringing back of over 50,000 women and girls who have migrated to other cities for livelihood by the Sundargarh district administration; Implementation of the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act 1989 and Rule 1995; Restoration of Land through Gram Sabha that has been taken by Non Tribals; Restoration of Land to 26 ROR (rate of return) holders in Marang Pidi in Block Lathikata, Sundargarh district; and Reservation in Scheduled Areas for 3rd and 4th grade services for Scheduled Tribes and proportional percentage for 1st and 2nd class and not the National ST population.

The participants also condemned TATA Company for killing 14 Adibasis and injuring many in Kalinga Nagar in Jajpur district of Odisha. They demanded that such companies should not be allowed in the Scheduled and *Adibasi* areas for any purpose.

Nicholas Barla, SVD
VIVAT International India

SOUTH SUDAN: The Voice of God's Servants

OPEN LETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES IN SOUTH SUDAN
TO THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY OF MAPUORDIT AND THE DIOCESE OF RUMBOK

On this day, October 12th, 2015, we, the Comboni Missionaries community of Mapuordit, write to you the entire community of Mapuordit since you are the people we are engaged with through our Christian service together with other pastoral groups. It expresses the sentiments of each member of our Comboni Community presently assigned in Mapuordit.



There comes a time when each one of us is troubled, challenged and discouraged. We are deeply saddened by the recent shocking events which so violently affected our own Comboni Community; more so, by the gradual disintegration of the peaceful community among whom we have long laboured in the last 22 years. Our hearts are wounded and so we need to share these feelings with you, our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Most people within the Diocese and the Lakes State, would be aware, and experience the increasing level of lawlessness and tribal conflict which is literally tearing apart the fabric of family life, relationships, cordial social interactions, free movement, safe access to educational and health facilities and occasions for worship and celebration of the Sacraments. This is more evident in our area of Mapuordit with violent clashes between different clans.

People living on the outskirts of the village are afraid to sleep in their own homes at night and there are many such families who move to the town area, or seek a safe night's shelter, either in school or hospital compounds. The Hospital now has a permanent group of 6

community police, stationed there by the Payam Administrator, with a mandate to the hospital at night from the threats of attacks by the current aggressors.

The present anguish, a sense of disappointment as well as spiritual struggle, is caused by the very recent incident of 11/9/15 in which our assistant Parish Priest, Fr. Placide Majambo, suffered a gunshot on his back, during an ambush of the hospital vehicle well marked and very well recognized by the people who live along the route as we travel so often back and forth to Rumbek.

It was most unexpected to experience such a blow when we were on a routine hospital trip to Rumbek. On the return journey, in the area near to Makur Agar, a group of 3 armed men sprang out from the tall grass and forced the driver stop, at gun point. Our driver sped, but as the car passed the bandits, they shot through the back window and Fr. Placide was seriously injured.

The main purpose of this letter is to ask the authorities and Elders of this village,

Payam, County and State, to make concrete and real effort to address the situation of deterioration which we see all around us. How do we see this effort being addressed?

1. We wish that the community to at least show respect for the work we are doing here and to collaborate in respecting and supporting the property and the normal running of the Mission - hospital, schools, pastoral Centre; to ask the community to show responsibility in contributing, also financially to the service offered for caring for the various boreholes around the area, to have them mended when broken, and not to continually look at the Mission as the source of water, food, education, health services all the things which each family should try to supply for themselves.
2. We want the appropriate authority to lobby at government level for a movement of disarmament in Lakes State. We want the authorities to ensure the security of every person in Mapuordit and the wider community.
3. We would welcome a discussion at the appropriate level of Government and Local Authority in regard to increasing security for the area.

Finally, we want to assure the people of this area that we remain at their service, and we do offer our daily prayerful thanks for those in the Christian and wider community who really strive to build a new Mapuordit, a new State and Nation in the ways that they can.

Yours in Christ,

*Comboni Missionaries Community of Mapuordit,
Associate Members of VIVAT International*

BRAZIL: Audience at OAS

A NOTE FROM WASHINGTON, DC

Representing VIVAT International, I was part of the Audience at the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights of the OAS (Organization of American States) in Washington, DC, held on 20 October 2015. Extensive groundwork was done to prepare the documentation for this



purpose and for obtaining the approval for the Audience. There were more than 500 requests for the audience, which shows the extent of the problems in relation to mining and its impacts. However, the Commission approved only 53 requests for the Audience.

The Audience treated two specific cases: The community resettlement request of Piquiá de Baixo – Açailândia – Maranhão, affected by pollution from mining activities of Company Vale, S.A; and Violence Against Indigenous people in Brazil. In both cases we reported the violations of Human Rights, and the violations of the rights to land and territory. We asked for the fulfillment of these rights by the Brazilian Government, so that the affected people can live with basic minimum guaranteed constitutionally. In general our request to the right of

land and territory is not a favor that we are begging of the government. It is the Federal Constitution that makes it mandatory that they are demarcated, defended and monitored.

In general our request to the right of land and territory is not a favor that we are begging of the government. It is the Federal Constitution that makes it mandatory that they are demarcated, defended and monitored.

This Audience took place on October 20th 2015, during the 156th session of the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights and was a collaborative effort by the following institutions: Community Association of Residents of Pequiá (ACMP), Fédération Internationale des ligues des droits de L'home (FIDH - International Federation for Human Rights), International Alliance of Inhabitants (IAI – A network of grassroots movements fight-

ing for housing rights), Global Justice (GJ - Human NGO with a base in Rio de Janeiro – Brazil), Justiça nos Trilhos (JnT) and VIVAT-International.

Representing the Community of Piquiá de Baixo, the president of the ACMP Edvard Dantas Cardinal and the Lawyers Danilo Chamas (JnT) and Raphaela Lopes (GJ) intervened at the audience. Jimena Reyes (FIDH) and Jairo Godinho (VIVAT-International) were present. At the request of the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI), FIAN International and Global Justice, Cleber Buzzato (CIMI Attorney), Lindomar Terena (indigenous leader) and Eliseu Lopes Guarani Kaiová (indigenous leader) intervened on the subject of violence against indigenous people in Brazil.

*Jairo Godinho SVD
Member of VIVAT International*

INDIA: My Journey with the Vulnerable

THE RIANGS, AN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY IN TRIPURA, NORTHEAST INDIA

My stay with the Riangs, one of the most vulnerable indigenous communities was a journey to the unfamiliar shores. The Riangs, I soon realized, had the answers to some of the environmental and economic crises in the world. Riangs are different and unique in their tradition, culture and approaches towards land, life and religion. I was in fact fascinated by their rich cultural heritage. An in-depth study of the Riangs would enlighten the world, I was convinced. Despite knowing that such research would consume time and energy, I took it up with much joy. The daring and committed people had shared with me how they have spent sleepless nights, fearful that groups indulging in secessionist activities would target them. The restrictions on their movement within the State added to their woes. I went to remote villages walking four hours through hilly forests. I had to adjust to some hardships and sleepless nights: Bugs and rodents ran through the room where I slept, and there was no electricity or washroom. With the little language that I learned, I used to converse with them. Nevertheless, it was a joy to be with them. Although they had the bare minimum, they welcomed me with whatever they had. Living and working closely to them through social developmental activities, especially women empowerment programmes helped me learn more about them, their customs and rituals.

In a National seminar on Syncretism in India: Cultural and Religious dimensions, which was held on 21 and 22 November 2015, the book **Riang of Tripura** by Janet Florine Tellis was released during the inaugural session by Professor Dhruvajyoti Saikia, the Vice Chancellor, Cotton College State University, Guwahati. National seminar was organized by 'Sanskriti' Guwahati.

The book highlights the struggles of a vulnerable tribe to survive in the fast changing modern society. Change is an ingredient of human existence that



leads to social transformation. It is a process which substitutes the old with new. The Riangs are no exception. According to the 2011 Census Riangs are the second largest tribal group with a population of 188,220. The federal Home Ministry in its Sixth Plan has re-designated Riangs as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group on the basis of their pre-agricultural level of technology, extremely low level of literacy, declining or stagnant population.

The Riangs are by nature nomadic. They were nurtured by nature and natural resources. They survived by fruits, vegetables, fishes and animals. Their food gathering activities were hunting, fishing and jhum cultivation. In Jhum, they produced everything they needed. However, they now find themselves pushed to peripheries under the pretext of development. Today they are as a group isolated among other communities pushed into peripheries of hills and valleys from the main stream of

developments. They are in the wedges of developments. They are in the wedges of using traditional tribal culture life and rapid changes bring new challenges for the Riangs. Many remained within the traditional land and others migrated to cities and towns in of better life, occupation and education. There are social changes due to the various tribal welfare programs by the government and NGOs. This has resulted in significant changes in their lifestyle, customs, cultural aspects and religion.

One of the grave problems faced by the community today is the loss of land ownership. Like other indigenous communities in India and all over the world, Riangs are also victims of land encroachment by non-tribals and government, in the name of development and urbanization. The development initiatives taken by the government do not reach to them and is unable to protect them from becoming marginalized. The dominant section of the society has completely excluded them from the predominant history of human civilization. Every day they are facing many atrocities behind the veil of government policies and its high time that the issues are addressed. Development of community leadership to bring about constructive changes in their lives is a challenge. Standing by them is to take walk less trodden.

*Sr. Janet Tellis SSpS
VIVAT International India*

My Internship With VIVAT International

SR. GENOVEVA AMARAL'S STORY

The three months of my internship with VIVAT International provided me with many opportunities for learning and personal growth. Not only did I get a first hand

understanding of VIVAT's functions, vision, mission, goals and objectives, but also was able to access to United Nations Head Quarters to attend different events that took place at the UN headquarters as well as meetings and advocacy programs by that various NGO Committees at various locations. One of the prime events that occurred during my internship period was the 70th General Assembly of United Nations. It was held from 25 to 27, September 2015 and attended by the legislative bodies of the countries from all over the world and some of the NGO representatives. This assembly focused on the issue of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



On September 28, I attended a high level thematic debate in the UN General Assembly which gave me an insight into how the member States hold discussions, present reports and deliberate on issues that are important to their nation. The first part of discussion was on human rights reports, presented by Presidents of China, Mongolia, Congo, Vietnam and Turkey. All of them talked about success and failures in the areas of human rights implementation. The session

on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focusing on the Member States' commitment to the implementation of SDGs in the society.

NGOs committee meetings and discussions that I attended were Human Trafficking, environmental issues (specially the mining issue), Gender Equality, Women's Peace and Security, Working for Girls, and Religious at the United Nations (RUN). VIVAT International actively collaborates with the NGOs by being part of NGO committees. NGO committees are issue based. They meet every month to keep watch on issues that need to be taken to the UN. I realized that joining hands with others is

very important while working at this level. It is together with others the goals can be achieved.

Besides meetings I was also volunteered with interns of other NGOs to assist the event "The Third Annual Girl Speak out" that marked the commemoration of "International Day of the Girl Child" held on October 9, 2015 at the UN headquarters. The main purpose of this event was to recognize girls' rights, and encourage young girls to break a culture of silence and begin to stand up for their rights. The entire programme was conducted by the girls that included facilitation, talks, poetry, storytelling, songs, and monologues on that stressed on rights, various forms of injustice and breaking silence on violence against girls/women. In their speeches and other performances they demanded from all countries, governments, and societies to respect the rights of women, girls, and children and giving them the opportunity to be part of decision-making

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 28 - 30
Conference of ISTF - New Haven, USA

January 30 - 31
ECOSOC Dialog on UN Development System - NYC, USA

February 3 - 12
CSocD - NYC, USA

March 14 - 24
CSW/NY 60 - NYC, USA

March 31
ECOSOC Forum on Partnership - NYC, USA

processes.

Another two-day workshop that I participated in October 2015 was on *Gender equality in the context of peace and security*. This workshop discussed three main issues namely the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on women, peace and security, importance of equal participation and full involvement of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security and voices from the grassroots.

It was a time of learning; building relationships and networking with others. I believe that through collaboration we are able to create a better world.

Genoveva Da Costa Amaral SSPS