DEAR READERS,

WELCOME TO THE 64TH ONLINE ISSUE OF VIVAT INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER!

The year has been eventful here at UN, given the 70th Session of General Assembly and preparations for COP21. For us, the new executive team at the Central office of VIVAT International, it is a change over from the national level to global level perspective in addressing Human Rights. This time of transition brings along numerous opportunities and challenges as we learn to understand and find ways to pursue the vision of VI. We thank each of you, VI members at different levels, for making VI what it is today. We specially acknowledge with gratitude the immense contributions made by Fr. Felix Jones and Sr. Zelia Cordeiro, the former executive team.

The newsletter reaches you late. Sincere Apologies.

This edition covers stories from the United Nations (UN) as well as from the field. At the UN level four major events occurred between July and 2015: Stocktaking of MDGs in terms of measuring achievements and failures, and setting up post-2015 Action Agenda during the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, held at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Negotiations between NGOs, UN Agencies and Member States on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for developing viable proposals for Agenda 2030; and the 70th Session of General Assembly of the UN, that took place from 15 September to 6 October 2015, and Pope Francis’ Inaugural Address to the UN General Assembly.

The stories from the field include experiences from South Sudan, advocacy work of VIVAT International Indonesia on human trafficking and ecological crisis, open letters from impacted persons of mining operations in Latin America to the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and VIVAT International Workshop in Jharsuguda, Odisha, India.

The last story of this edition is a Letter of Welcome to Pope Francis, by the Forum of Catholic Religious Orders, commonly known as Religious at the UN (RUN).

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The United Nations at its 70th General Assembly adopted a set of development goals to achieve life in dignity of all by 2030. The seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as the UN’s chief initiative for advancing basic living standards in the world and addressing a range of issues, including armed conflict, climate change, and equality.

Understanding SDGs

The SDGs are a set of seventeen goals comprising 169 targets and indicators for reducing poverty and improving environmental sustainability. Conceived of at Rio +20, the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development, the SDGs were developed with input from the UN’s 193 member states and an array of nongovernmental organizations.

The SDGs, which would replace the MDGs in January 2016, are based on six essential elements—dignity, people, prosperity, our planet, justice, and partnership. The goals include ending poverty in all its forms everywhere, ending hunger, achieving gender equality, ensuring healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, and ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.

The Difference between SDGs and MDGs

The MDGs are a set of eight goals declared in 2000 that aimed to eradicate extreme poverty, which the UN defined as earning less than $1.25/day, by 2015. These goals had a special focus on improving global health, such as reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.

While the MDGs focused primarily on poverty and health, the SDGs also cover the environment, human rights, and gender equality, among others. In our review, the MDGs failed to consider the root causes of poverty, or gender inequality, or the holistic nature of development. The MDGs were primarily targets for poor countries to work toward (with financing from wealthy countries), while SDGs demand action from all countries. The SDGs are also universal—they’re supposed to apply to all countries and try to overcome the “West lecturing the rest” dynamic.

The MDGs were drafted by a small team of technical experts at UN headquarters, while the SDGs were drafted over years by an intergovernmental Open Working Group (OWG) that comprised representatives of seventy countries. The MDGs were about resource transfer from rich countries, while the SDGs are universal and are supposed to apply to all countries.

How successful were the MDGs?

Success on the MDGs has been mixed. Between 1990 and 2015, extreme poverty in developing countries fell from 49 to 14 percent, the proportion of undernourished people fell by almost half, the mortality rate for children under five dropped by more than half, and maternal mortality deaths declined by 45 percent. Garrett writes that global health has improved so dramatically since 1990 that “we almost live on a statistically different planet.”

Still, a UN progress report on the MDGs (PDF) noted that in 2014, gender and income inequality persisted, millions remained in extreme poverty, an estimated sixty million people were displaced by conflict, and climate change and environmental degradation had reversed many economic gains and disproportionately affected poor people.

Some economists question how much the MDGs can be credited with reductions in extreme poverty. They point to China’s economic growth and increased trade as having been more important to eradicating poverty than foreign aid. Between 2000 and 2015, extreme poverty in China fell from 61 percent to 4 percent. A 2015 UNICEF report (PDF) found that while the MDGs contributed to “tremendous progress” for children in developing countries, the UN’s focus on national averages may have encouraged some countries to overlook the poorest of the poor.

Since SDGs are proposed for all and invite all to participate, VIVAT International is no exception. All members of this organization are supposed to use the UN language and employ SDGs in doing their social work in more 77 countries in the world for the next fifteen years after 2016. This is important since VIVAT has become an active member of civil society (NGOs) that has contributed in proposing the SDGs since Rio+20 Summit in 2012.

(Modified from SDG related sources)
UN and HIV/AIDS Reduction

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL’S REPORT AT ADDIS ABABA CONFERENCE FOR FFD

Combating HIV/AIDS was one of the eight millennium development goals (MDGs) declared by the United Nations in year 2000, and 2 targets were set up for the achievements of this goal, namely, halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, and achieve universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it. UNAIDS has also set up several strategies aiming at advancing global progress in achieving country set targets for universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support and to halt and reverse the spread of HIV.

After 15 years of MDG Programs, what are the impacts in combating HIV/AIDS? A new United Nations report on AIDS said the Millennium Development Goals of reducing HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths have been met.

According to U.N. statistics of 2015, since the year 2000, new HIV infections have fallen by 35 percent and AIDS-related deaths by 41 percent. U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon outlined the good news to reporters in Addis Ababa on Tuesday, July 14th, 2015.

“Today, 15 million people are on life-saving HIV-treatment. We have proved beyond doubt that treatment can be scaled up no matter what the setting. Fifteen million people on HIV-treatment means billions of families are protected and billions of dollars are saved. And it means we are on our way to an AIDS-free generation,” he said.

Saharan Africa has always been the worst affected part of the world when it comes to AIDS. But progress is being made, with Namibia, Senegal and Ethiopia being examples of countries that have significantly reduced new HIV infections.

The report said that access to treatment has saved about 7.8 million lives worldwide. Treatment also means that an estimated 1.4 million children did not receive HIV from their mothers.

UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé said that starting six to eight months from now, HIV-positive people would be able to stop taking their daily pills. The infected persons will have injection every four months or six months, which is changing completely the way the services to poor people is delivered. The injection will reduce the cost of treatment for those affected.

Despite these promising developments, more needs to be done. In 2014, there were still 2 million new HIV infections and more than 13 million children lost one or both parents to AIDS related causes. Later this year, the U.N. Millennium Goals will be replaced with the Sustainable Development Goals. The new target for 2030 is to completely eradicate the AIDS epidemic and for everyone to have access to treatment.

Though VIVAT International is not directly involved in discussions on the matter at the UN, many of our members working on the ground have been greatly involved in advocating the rights of the HIV/AIDS patients. In Maumere, Indonesia, for example, John M. Prior, SVD and his students/seminarians from St. Paul Major Seminary of Ledalero, Indonesia, do advocacy on behalf of the HIV/AIDS patients. In collaboration with local government agencies and officials of Sikka Regency and some NGOs they work to combat HIV/AIDS in the region. Meanwhile, some VIVAT members in Indonesia, also have the same concern about this matter. Two Catholic nuns, Christa Herta Freithaler, SSpS and Sesilia Ketut, SSpS, for example, developed some awareness building programs about HIV/AIDS and related diseases and defend the rights of the HIV/AIDS infected persons in Timor, Indonesia. In Africa, especially Ghana and Ethiopia, many VIVAT members, especially Missionary Sisters, Servants of the Holy Spirit (SSpS) work among people living with HIV/AIDS. Among them are Paschalina Gyerek, SSpS of Ghana, Anna Trzepacz, SSpS and Kavita Paulose, SSpS of Ethiopia.

Source: UN Related Docs.
As associate member of VIVAT International, I currently chair the Non-Governmental (NGO) Committee on Financing for Development (FfD) at the United Nations (UN) in New York. I very much wanted and had the opportunity to participate, in as much as anyone could, in practically all sessions leading to the Third United Nations Conference on Financing for Development.

Although the FfD web page of the UN says “The preparations for the Conference, under the auspices of the President of the 69th session of the General Assembly, include substantive sessions and informal hearings with civil society and the business sector during the period September 2014 - March 2015, as well as informal consultations and drafting sessions on the outcome document in January, April and June 2015,”, it was indeed more complicated than that. First, negotiations began around whether there needed to be a third conference or not. Eventually Ethiopia offered to host the conference and this was accepted. Then, most importantly, the dates for the conferences needed to be decided - a major effort as some wanted to hold it before the soon to be held “UN Summit to adopt the Post 2015 Development Agenda”, and others wanted to hold it after the Summit. It was finally decided to hold it before, that is in July of this year. Then all the “modalities” had to be decided - a very long and generally tedious although necessary process.

Although not usually the case, in FfD there are many “partners” negotiating: the representatives of all interested states, the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), Civil Society (us) and the business sector. Some UN agencies such as Human Rights, the International Labor Organization (ILO) and others also intervene. All representatives have opportunities to speak in plenary sessions as well as to negotiate with one or more negotiator in order to press what she or he considers important. And, after all the discussion, if and when an agreement is reached by consensus, a decision is made. Although sometimes a decision is reached by majority vote, in this case all wanted a final consensus decision.

We of civil society, thankfully, had many representatives present from around the world. So many issues had to be considered that we needed people well versed each of the themes or issues in order to be able to negotiate well.

We are now more 600 civil society organizations working together. It has taken us since 2007 to organize this collaboration from around the world. And we continue.

A final decision was not reached in New York and the final negotiations had to be done in Addis Ababa. We cannot say that we are happy with the final outcome document. And, yet some of the points we made were finally included in the outcome, including a follow-up mechanism that will allow us to continue to work with member states to assure that decisions made are made effective in each country.

Days, weeks, months and even years have gone into these negotiations. Now, we need to continue working so as to have decisions made become the motor for the eradication of extreme poverty and sustainable development for the good of people and planet.

To gain more information about the work of FfD see our web page at http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ and the web page and blog of all civil society organizations from around the world working together on these questions at https://csoforffd.wordpress.com/. You can also like our Facebook page (still quite new) at www.facebook.com/NGOsonFfD and our blog at https://ngosonffd.wordpress.com/

Daniel LeBlanc, OMI
Associate member of VIVAT International
Chair of the NGO Committee on Financing for Development
On September 25, 2015, Pope Francis addressed the UN General Assembly. As the pontiff mentioned in his speech, he is the fifth Pope since 1965 to have visited the United Nations. In the lengthy Address Pope Francis covered a wide range of topics, from the rule of law to nuclear weapons to the drug trade. Here are some of the key citations from the speech.

The Right of the Environment and The Ecological Crisis

The Pope stated that there are two reasons for speaking about a true “right of the environment.” “Human beings are a part of the environment. We live in communion with it, since the environment itself entails ethical limits which human activity must acknowledge and respect. Humans, for all their remarkable gifts, which are signs of a uniqueness which transcends the spheres of physics and biology, are at the same time a part of these spheres. Humans possess a body shaped by physical, chemical and biological elements, and can only survive and develop if the ecological environment is favourable. Any harm done to the environment, therefore, is harm done to humanity. Second, because every creature, particularly a living creature, has an intrinsic value in its existence, its life, its beauty and its interdependence with other creatures. We Christians, together with the other monotheistic religions, believe that the universe is the fruit of a loving decision by the Creator, who permits us respectfully to use creation for the good of others, and for the glory of the Creator; one is not authorized to abuse it, much less to destroy it. In all religions, the environment is a fundamental good.”

The Pope also reminds us of the ecological crisis at present as he says, “The ecological crisis and the large-scale destruction of biodiversity, can threaten the very existence of the human species. The baneful consequences of an irresponsible mismanagement of the global economy, guided only by ambition for wealth and power, must serve as a summons to a forthright reflection on humans: ‘man is not only a freedom which he creates for himself. Man does not create himself. He is spirit and will, but also nature.’ Consequently, the defense of the environment and the fight against exclusion demand that we recognize a moral law written into human nature itself, one which includes the natural difference between man and woman, and absolute respect for life in all its stages and dimensions.”

Building Human Dignity to Overcome Extreme Poverty

The Pope finally emphasized the importance of restoring human dignity to overcome extreme poverty. “To enable these real men and women to escape from extreme poverty, we must allow them to be dignified agents of their own destiny. Integral human development and the full exercise of human dignity cannot be imposed. They must be built up and allowed to unfold for each individual, for every family, in communion with others, and in a right relationship with all those areas in which human social life develops – friends, communities, towns and cities, schools, businesses and unions, provinces, and nations.”

VIVAT International has in fact brought issues such as right of the environment, ecological crisis, and eradication of poverty into the discussions among NGOs at the UN and to the UN agencies as well as to the member states during this last 15 years of its existence.

Source: UN Documents
South Sudan is in crisis. More than 6000 civilians have fled their homes in areas around Wau Chollo (Shilluk) district to the UNMISS (United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan) protection site in Malakal in recent days. According to the newly arrived internally displaced people (IDPs), they were forced to move to seek refuge at the mission’s base due to lack of food supplies, medical care, and other necessities in their home areas.

Meanwhile, residents of Phogege in Magwi County - Eastern Equatoria state - had Ugandan troops enter and occupy territories more than 15 km inside South Sudan. The first soldiers arrived on Friday, July 31\textsuperscript{st}, 2015. UPDF then sent more soldiers to the area on Saturday and warned residents to move away. The chief of Phogege, Okot Vincent, said the tensions resulted in gunfire from the UPDF (The Uganda People’s Defense Force).

More than ten people were missing after the shooting. Ugandan officials have confirmed the incident, that about 200 South Sudanese soldiers entered Uganda and put a boundary demarcation at River Limu in Lokung Sub-County on July 31\textsuperscript{st}, 2015. Eastern Equatoria State authorities dismissed the territorial claims and invasion.

Minister Lokai refuted reports in the daily Monitor-Kampala that South Sudan forces had invaded Ugandan territory, saying instead Uganda intruded into the young nation. The minister observed that South Sudan could not invade Uganda and that only seven police officers were deployed at the border, not 200 soldiers, as reported in the Newspaper. He stressed that the verification team from the two countries would reveal the truth. More than 1,000 people displaced from Phogege village in Magwi County are in need of humanitarian assistance, according to authorities in Eastern Equatoria.

There are border disputes between the two countries, in both states of Eastern and Central Equatoria.

Peace Talks
South Sudan’s rival forces began peace talks on Thursday, August 8\textsuperscript{th}, 2015, as international pressure mounts ahead of an August 17\textsuperscript{th} deadline to strike a deal to end 19 months of civil war. President Salva Kiir and Riek Machar, who were expected to appear later in the process, effectively face an ultimatum.

South Sudanese President, Salva Kiir, wrote a position letter to the chairperson of IGAD (The Authority on Development) stating refusal of the imposed compromise peace deal with the armed opposition. He rejected, among others the power-sharing proposal that he writes, suggests undeclared confederation structure for South Sudan. If the proposal is applied as it is, letter continues, it would undermine the sovereign authority of the independent South Sudan, prepare a ground for three regions of Bahr el Ghazal, Equatoria and Upper Nile to demand for the end of South Sudan, and constitute a beginning for the real conflict, unless this is the original intention of the IGAD plus. “The eminent result is the total disintegration of the country. And let it be on record that our government will not encourage such a move,” the letter warns.

Members of IGAD PLUS are Representatives of IGAD countries (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda); Representatives of AU 5 (Algeria, Chad, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa); The African Union Commission; The People’s Republic of China; The European Union; The Co-Chair of IGAD Partners Forum; The Kingdom of Norway; United Kingdom; United States of America; and the United Nations. After the collapse of the last round of talks in March, mediators expanded involvement to create the “IGAD-plus” group.

On August 10\textsuperscript{th}, 2015, Sr. Anna, CMS, a VIVAT International member in South Sudan, wrote, “While peace talks are going on in Addis Ababa, in South Sudan marches are organized against the last IGAD peace proposal. In one instance, a primary school that had not agreed to send the pupils to march under the hot sun, received a visit from security officers who tried to oblige the school administration to let the children go. I doubt all citizens know about the proposal and what it contains; what they are marching for is just the end of war and bloodshed.

We all, in South Sudan, are closely following the process in hope and prayer.”

But on August 19\textsuperscript{th} 2015, Sr. Anna wrote, “At the end, the peace deal for South Sudan was not signed. IGAD mediation has given the 15 days for further consultations asked by Salva Kiir. Riek Machar and Pagan Amun signed an agreement. The mediator said the government had reservations.”

Reported by Sr. Anna, CMS
Indonesia: Save Our Common Home!

ECOLOGICAL CONCERNS OF VIVAT INTERNATIONAL INDONESIA

In response to ecological crisis and a call to save the planet as our “common home”, VIVAT International Indonesia has sporadically conducted several concrete grassroots level actions. Three of them are shared here, namely the inauguration of the “Wehea Indigenous Forest” to protect the forest under customary law in Borneo, Ecology retreat in Timor, and planting trees in Central Borneo Island.

Protecting Forest Customary Law of the Dayak People

The inauguration of the Wehea indigenous forest or so called “masyarakat hutan adat-MHA”, located in Central Kalimantan Province is one of the success stories of VIVAT International Indonesia. This event was a result of the mobilization by VIVAT members in the locality, under the coordination of Paul Rahmat SVD, Director of VIVAT Indonesia. The people’s participation in the process was praiseworthy; they realized the importance of entitlement to community land and forests. Through this action on 10 August, 2015 the local community successfully confirmed the law to save their forests. They realized the power of advocacy and lobbying that led to the recognition of indigenous Forest in Wehea area by the Indonesian government. The goals of this ratification are: (1) Rights of indigenous communities to their land, water and the forests. (2) Prevention of indiscriminate land acquisition snatch away right to life and livelihood of indigenous communities by local foreign companies for business, especially for mining and palm oil plantations.

Raising Awareness through Retreat on Ecology

This year 22 SS|P Sisters, who are also active members of VIVAT International Indonesia, had a week retreat on ecology from 15 to 20, June 2015 in Halilulik, NTT Province. The purpose of this retreat was to raise awareness among VIVAT members of the importance of caring for the planet as our common home. The participants were aware of the urgent need for shared responsibility of human beings to protect creation, reconciliation with God and all creation and a real commitment to concrete action. Most of the reflections were based on Christian faith and spirituality.

A month before the retreat, the Holy Spirit Sisters and SVD priests and brothers in Kupang, Timor, had conducted several awareness building activities in some parts of Timor Island, emphasizing the value of shared-responsibility in addressing ecological crisis followed by some concrete actions on the ground such as planting trees collecting garbage and visiting impacted people in some mining areas.

Concrete Actions Bring Change

VIVAT members, Fr. Domi Kefi, Pastor of Telok Parish, Sr. Elisabethina Lusia Agno and several SS|P sisters in Central Borneo Province developed reforestation program, in which local people and school children participated. They planted trees around the parish compound along the river running through their village. The trees planted were “gaharu”, a kind of eaglewood tree, the “rotted xylem” of which yields fragrant resinous material. The children were motivated not only to learn to protect the planet but also to see the economic values of the trees they planted. Sister Elisabethina is well known nationally, among the environmentalists in Indonesia, for her ecological concerns and activities at the grassroots. She promotes the replantation and growth of local trees, such gaharu, ulin, benuas, meranti, and bengkirai, which are already extinct in some places, thus making a significant contribution to the natural resource. The stories of her activities with her companions and her profile were covered pages by KOMPAS, a National Newspaper in Indonesia, on April 26th, 2014.

Contributors: Genoveva Bikan SS|P and Domi Kefi, SVD
On July 17-19, 2015 the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (PCJP), in collaboration with the Latin American network Churches and Mining, organized a meeting in Rome with representatives of communities affected by mining activities titled “In Union With God, We Hear A Cry”. One week after the meeting (on July 28, 2015) the participants signed and sent an open letter to the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in Rome, which re-emphasized the points and concerns during the three-day meeting. Following are some basic points of the letter:

Participants came from 18 countries in the world: Chile, Peru, Brazil, Colombia, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Mexico, United States, Canada, Switzerland, Italy, Mozambique, Ghana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, India and the Philippines. This meeting was highly anticipated by the affected communities, which are increasingly organizing to be able to denounce grave human rights violations experienced: environmental destruction and contamination, health impacts, divisions among people, uprooting from territories, sicknesses, loss of culture, prostitution, alcoholism and drug addiction, loss of their own economy, and the ties to organized crime that are generated by the mining industry. The communities are also organizing to establish common strategies of resistance and alternatives. Reflecting on the Social Doctrine of the Church, the participants arrived at the conclusion that the Church cannot simply be a neutral mediator between the communities and the companies.

They expressed their concern with regard to the strategy that the large mining corporations have employed to approach the institutional Church. They also highlighted the contradictions between the discussions held in Rome by multinationals and their local practices, which continue in the majority of cases to violate human rights in the territories.

They expressed their interest in receiving the document that the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace would prepare with the reflections and suggestions related to the conflicts provoked by mining activities. They deeply desire for it to be a pastoral document: on one hand it could reinforce and empower the communities confirming their dignity and their life projects, and on the other hand it could recommend to local churches the importance of education in caring for Mother Earth, defending the victims of conflict and of criminalization, promoting policies and institutional actions to protect socio-environmental rights, and also to be vigilant in relation to companies.

They also suggested that in meeting with the business leaders of the large mining companies, the PCJP add its unequivocal support to what many peoples and organizations around the world have been demanding: progress toward the design of the Binding Treaty on Business and Human Rights, currently under development in the UN.

Finally, they considered that “the most appropriate option to manage conflicts between the companies enjoying State support and the communities that exercise their rights to territory is the total full respect of human rights and the existing laws and treaties, as well as the establishment of new consistent regulatory, political, legal, and economic instruments, both at the national and international level (LS 177); ‘The local population should have a special place at the table; they are concerned about their own future and that of their children, and can consider goals transcending immediate economic interest ’ (LS 183). Communities have the right to say ‘no’ to mining.”

In this sense, they reiterated the importance of guaranteeing areas that are free from mining (“no go zones”). These are regions of special ecologic protection, communities in small territories that would be destroyed by giant mining projects, sacred spaces where the history of a people and its culture are celebrated, areas of particular natural beauty, or places where communities that have already been displaced are settled.

They finally thanked the Catholic Church for hearing the cry of those affected by mining and wished to continue walking in hope “so that the Kingdom of justice, peace, love, and beauty may come.”
India: VIVAT International Statement

FOLLOWING A WORKSHOP AT JHARSUGUDA, ODISHA, INDIA
AUGUST 31 - SEPTEMBER 5, 2015

1. A VIVAT International Workshop was held in Jharsuguda, in the State of Odisha, India, from August 31 to September 5, 2015. Sixty seven members of VIVAT International from 17 countries and several Indian States participated. Religious and priests from the founding, member and associate congregations of VIVAT International as well as their lay collaborators reflected on and discussed their ministry and the roads to the future to enhance their effectiveness and collaboration.

2. The theme of the workshop was Training and Capacity Building on Human Rights and National Advocacy with a focus on the impacts of mining on indigenous peoples and their communities. Mining was examined as an example of development-induced displacement that often leads to a loss of individual and collective identity, loss of private and communal land, of traditional customs and employment. Though national plans and policies for development have been written, frequently indigenous peoples have not been allowed to participate in their formulation and have not given their free, prior and informed consent to these policies. This has often led to human rights violations. However, when environmental and social issues are addressed, mining operations can have a positive impact towards nation building through healthy economic growth.

3. Utilization of UN Human Rights mechanisms, especially the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is an effective way for activists, stakeholders and indigenous peoples to call attention to Human Rights violations and ensure community participation.

4. Land grabbing, sustainable development, climate change and human trafficking were addressed by speakers from VIVAT International Member Organizations working in the field, Academics, Social Activists and Representatives of private industry. Additionally, VIVAT national delegates presented reports on their activities.

5. Participants visited two open coal mining sites and spoke with company representatives and tribal peoples about the work done at the mines. The differing perspectives were informative and gave the participants a more thorough understanding of mining, its impacts on the environment and societies and the need for continuing discussion about and evaluation of policies and practices by all stakeholders.

At the conclusion of our workshop, the participants proposed the following action steps to the Board of VIVAT International and the leaders of all member and associate Congregations of VIVAT International, at National and International levels:

- That Members and Associate Congregations of VIVAT International take responsibility for promoting and strengthening the vision and mission of VIVAT International in word and deed.
- That VIVAT members at local, national and International levels strive to collaborate with other NGOs who share our vision and concerns.
- That VIVAT International promote awareness of, and utilize the Human Rights mechanisms of the United Nations, especially the Universal Periodic Review.
- That VIVAT leadership at the national and international levels enhance their communication with and support of members and National branches. Assistance with organizational capacity building, where needed, should be a priority.
- That VIVAT International leadership explore further possible ways of collaboration between VIVAT International and Steyler Bank that can be mutually beneficial.
- That VIVAT International promote the awareness of, and the participation of our members in, the system of “ethical scouting” in relation to businesses which may be working against the good of people or the environment.

Jharsuguda, 5th September, 2015.
Human trafficking is increasing at alarming proportions in Indonesia. Data indicates that in 2014 alone there were 7,193 victims of human trafficking and 92.46% (6,651) of the cases occurred in Indonesia. International Organization of Migration (IOM) Indonesia reported that 4,888 (82%) of the victims were women, 950 girls, 647 adult males, and 166 boys. Many of the cases in recent years occurred in Malaysia, three of which are presented in this article.

The first story is about Martina, a 42 years old woman from Timor, Indonesia. She went to Malaysia in search of a better job and salary. Unfortunately, like in the case of many others, her employers, a Malaysian family of Indian descent, paid her nothing during 5 years of service. Martina was trying to escape from the family, but she was not able to communicate to anyone, as she was always under surveillance by her boss. However, one day, she managed to send a text message through her cellular phone to one of VIVAT members, Paul Rahmat, who immediately contacted Peter Barnabas of Migrant Desk of the Penang Diocese of Malaysia who took swift action and rescued Martina. On July 23, 2015, Peter Barnabas wrote, “Martina is in our house currently. The employer is a rich Indian man who owns a restaurant. Maybe he went to the consulate just to cover himself. Temporarily Martina will be in my house until we decide to bring her to the Consulate. She is safe in my house in Bukit Mertajam.” After sometime, Peter Barnabas was able to send her back to Timor.

On August 1, 2015, Peter Barnabas texted to Paul Rahmat, “... Martina just left Penang Airport. Her flight to Bali is at 3.45 pm at Kuala Lumpur (KLIA2) airport.” Martina is back in Timor now and lives with family, but she could not get any of her from the exploitative employers. The success was that she was free from the clutches of her traffickers.

Two girls have just been saved from “hell of slavery”: Maria Magdalena Mali from Kimbana and Veronica Hoar Nahak from Atambua, both on Timor Island, Indonesia. Maria was 17 years old when sold by an agent to a family in Malaysia more than two years ago and came back with her memory totally lost. When asked how she came back and who brought her home, she could remember nothing. She hardly talked to her parents. There is no further information how this girl could escape from Malaysia to Timor.

Veronica Hoar Nahak, the other victim, was “sold” by her father to Mangga Dua Mahkota Inc., a recruitment labor agent based in Jakarta who has a branch at Oesao, Timor. This girl was forced to sex slavery. Unlike Maria, Veronica, a 14 year old girl who did not finish her junior high-school, luckily escaped from the trap and was able to join her family. This girl was sold to Mangga Dua Mahkota Inc., who treated her badly and was pushed to have a breast implant in order that she looked mature and more attractive to men. She said she was harassed every day by male workers and forced to have sex with men, including Mr. Nando, the security guard of the branch office of Mangga Dua Inc. But she always resisted. Not being able to stand living in such conditions, she attempted to escape several times and finally succeeded. The case is still under further investigation.

Vincent Wun, SVD, Sisters Sesilia and Genoveva Bikan, SSpsS, three VIVAT members in Indonesia, have made several efforts to save the two girls and advocated for them. The first action was to report these cases to the local police. Secondly, Sisters Sesilia and Genoveva have taken Veronica and her younger sisters and brother from their home and put them in a shelter run by the Holy Spirit Sisters in Atambua, Timor. Veronica was then sent to a nearby junior high school to continue her education. Another action was a conscientization activity. A group of nuns, priests, brothers, and lay missionaries of VIVAT members in Timor offered an awareness building activity on human trafficking to the people of Noelmina Parish, in West Timor on May 30 and 31, 2015, a program which was enthusiastically welcomed by the people. Human trafficking is still one of the major problems in Indonesia and in Timor in particular.

By: Fr. Vincent Wun, SVD & Sr. Genoveva SSpsS
On July 15th, 2015, prior to Pope Francis’s visit to the United States and the United Nations, Religious at the United Nations (RUN) wrote a welcoming letter to the Pontiff. RUN is an informal gathering of representatives of religious congregations at the United Nations, relating to each other for support and sharing of information and resources, and reflection upon their common NGO mission.

15 July 2015

Dear Holy Father Francis,

We, members of religious congregations doing advocacy at the United Nations, want to welcome you to New York, USA in September 2015. There are many congregations of women and men religious working here as Non-Governmental Organization representatives—part of the civil society network which seeks to promote systemic change toward a more just world. At the United Nations we collaborate on global issues of common concern, such as climate change, sustainable development, land and hunger, nuclear disarmament, education for all, human trafficking, human and Earth rights, women and girls, youth and leadership, and indigenous peoples.

Our congregations have a presence in more than 170 countries. We work in collaborative, interfaith way with hundreds of others faith-based organizations. In our experience of coming together in a common ministry we manifest the faith-filled oneness to which the Gospel calls us.

Thank you for all you do to call attention to spiritual, social, environmental, and economic world needs. Again, we welcome you to our world and hope you have a rich, productive visit to New York and the United States.

Sincerely,

The Women and Men Religious at the United Nations

Here is the list of the religious congregations:

Adorers of the Blood of Christ; Adrian Dominican Sisters; Augustinians International; Benedictine Sisters Erie; Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration; Camaldolese Hermits of America; Carmelite Sisters of Charity (Vedruna); Clareters; Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus; Comboni Missionary Sisters; Congregation of Notre Dame; Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd; Congregations of Sisters of Saint Agnes; Congregation of St. Joseph; Congregation of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ; Congregation of the Holy Spirit; CSJ Concordia; Daughters of Charity; Daughters of the Holy Spirit; Daughters of Wisdom; Dominican Leadership Conference; Edmund Rice International; FI Bolivia; Franciscan Friars and Sisters of the Atonement; Franciscans International; Franciscans of the Perpetual Adoration; Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help; Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; Holy Union Sisters; IBVM Canadian Province; Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary-Loretto Generalate; International Presentation Association; Little Sisters of the Assumption; Loretto Community; Marianists; Maryknoll; Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic, Inc.; Medical Mission Sisters; Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate; Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary; Missionary Sisters of the Holy Spirit; Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart; Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit; Notre Dame de Sion; OSF Dubuque, Oldenburg and Rochester; Passionists International; Precious Blood-O’Fallon; Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; Religious of the Cenacle; Religious of Jesus and Mary; Religious of the Assumption; Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary; Religious Sisters of Charity (Ireland & Australia); Salesian Missions; Salesians of Don Bosco; School Sisters of Notre Dame; Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary; Sisters of Bon Secours; Sisters of Charity Federation; Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati; Sisters Charity of Blessed Virgin Mary; Sisters of Mercy—Mercy International Association; Sisters of Notre Dame; Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur; Sisters of Providence; Sisters of St. Anne; Sisters of St. Brigid; Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia; Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambery; Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace; Sisters of St. Martha; Sisters of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin; Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament; Sisters of the Divine Compassion; Sisters of the Divine Savior; Sisters of the Holy Cross; Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary; Sisters of the Humility of Mary; Society of the Divine Word; Society of the Holy Child Jesus; Society of the Sacred Heart; St. Joseph Chyny; Ursuline Sisters (RU, MSJ, Tildonk); Vincentians, Wheaton Franciscans.