This first issue of Vivat International – Kenya Newsletter, presents the different JPIC activities of three Congregational Members featuring their particular focus of involvement and engagement in such areas where they are and the impact they have brought and generated to the people.

We keep you informed of our VIK JPIC activities as they unfold. Inviting thus our Member Congregations of your sharing related to your continued engagements and employed initiatives.
Dagoretti Market is a small but densely populated slum area in Nairobi West Division, in the outskirts of the city. It is also near Ngong forest which makes the place cool though in some months it can be hot. Most of the residents of the area are people without land or higher education. Many did not complete primary level education.

The Salesians Sisters are present in this area. They have a program called “Mama Margaret”. This program has the aim of creating a source of job for the mothers and young girls of this place. Most of these women or perhaps all of them are the ones who sustain their families economically. They come from different backgrounds and have found in this program a way of being empowered, an opportunity to improve their quality of life.

This project has two levels. The first is for students. They learn how to make different handicrafts using plastic beans such as necklaces, bracelets, key holders, table mats, bags, belts, etc. In the second level is the production. The women produce the orders received and they also have a space for exhibitions and selling.

But not everything is work. Once in a week they have formation in Human Rights. The topics discussed are based on their reality and needs. For instance, we have discussed in several times the topic about Human Trafficking. Everyone has a story to tell directly or indirectly. I would like to share one of these stories. “Sister: When the time has arrived for me to get married according to my culture, I run away. My father wanted that I am to be married to an old man, which would give him some animals. I told him that I do not want to get married, that I wanted to study, but he did not consider my wish of studying. It has not been easy, I have been going from one house to another looking for a safe place to stay, afraid of my father thinking that if he finds me, obliges me to get married. It is two years that I feel somehow safe” The culture still has power in the Kenyan people. Many of these practices like the above story, are justified for the culture and tradition but such cases are the situations from where Human Trafficking takes its victims.

I think that the mothers and young girls that participate in the Project “Mama Margaret” are able to improve their quality of life, however, they need a lot of support and formation. This is a process, a different process, I cannot say that it is fast or slow, but a different one. I am grateful for being part of this process.

During this short time that I am with them, I have witnessed how they have changed and of their interest for protecting themselves and improving their quality of life. I hope that we continue writing this story of freedom and human dignity with hope and faith where the God of Life accompanies us day by day.

Sr. Milagros Plaza, CMS
Kangundo is a town in Kenya's Machakos County in the lower eastern region of Kenya. In 2013 the Religious of the Assumption (RA), accepted the invitation of Bishop Martin Kivuva to run Holy Spirit Secondary School which had been started by the parish to provide education for students who couldn’t afford to go to boarding schools. It had been started by the parishioners 6 years earlier but still needed to take off as none of its graduates had managed to pass the national exams. With its school fee of KES 3,000 ($30) per year, it could hardly pay the teachers, who eventually left for better prospects elsewhere, neither were there books for the students.

The parishioners warmly welcomed the Sisters who have courageously accepted to live in the tiny house of iron sheets that would become their convent. They saw the challenge of the difficult mission, where HIV-AIDS was rampant, miraa (khat) openly sold and freely taken by young and old alike, teen pregnancies and early marriages. In spite of this difficult reality, there was much goodwill in the people and the parish was actively doing pastoral care with its 8 outstations. The Sisters knew this was a place for ‘tough love’...reaching out to the youth, starting to instill discipline in the school, visiting homes where grandparents were taking care of the children left by parents who had died of AIDS, integrating faith formation with upgrading the academic standard of the school, going out to the outstations on Sundays to help in the animation of the faith. The doctor and nurse at the Health Center were invited to give talks on the harmful effects of drugs and miraa, pilgrimages and educational trips were initiated, meetings with parents and guardians to convince them to support the school.

After 3 years, the people began to see changes in the youth, there were less dropouts, enrolments doubled, as word got around that Holy Spirit Secondary School was performing well. With the efforts to give better pay to the teachers, they were more committed to stay, books were acquired and even computers were donated to the school for computer classes. Every year the Form IV’s were now passing, with fewer D’s (who were those who were still on drugs) and this year, for the first time, Holy Spirit Secondary School had 4 graduates qualifying for university getting B- marks.

During a close-of-the-year meeting, the parishioners marveled at the transformation that has taken place, not only in the school with the students but in the town itself...with fewer crimes. They felt it was because for the first time they now had Sisters in the parish who not only were running the school but were having whole afternoon Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament every day in their small chapel, praying for them. Yes, transformation has happened in Kangundo, but Kangundo has also transformed the Sisters. It is always like that, the mission itself transforms us as we give ourselves totally to it. It teaches us lessons and gives us graces and experiences of God we would never have had without it.
“He’d arranged to meet the girls out of school on the Monday and take them off with him.”

One of the many Children’s abuse stories that we are all aware of and knew have happened and in fact are happening, be it in our own nearby communities or somewhere just out there. Testimonies such as of this kind or sort undoubtedly creates in us mixed emotions of anger and pain. What to do?

What is precious needs to be cherished and defended, what is young and beautiful needs to be guarded and appreciated, what is weak needs to be protected so it can grow strong. (From the Foreword of KEN-TAN Province’ Booklet Policy on Sexual Abuse and Safeguarding of Minors by Fr. Albert Fuchs, SVD, Provincial Superior, Kenya-Tanzania Province, Dated: April 26th, 2016). P.1

SVD KEN-TAN Province finally has its own official document on sexual abuse and safeguarding of minors. A milestone in the ongoing crusade on the care and protection of the most vulnerable ones of society.

This document is an expression of our commitment to protect, nurture and promote children and their welfare wherever and whenever they are under our care. This will bear fruit in happy and strong young people to lead our nation and the Church in the future. This policy will also guide us where life has been harmed and restitution and healing are needed. As Divine Word Missionaries we are committed to working with civil authorities to ensure that all dimensions of child welfare are managed properly, mercifully and justly. (Ibid.)

Each SVD Cleric and Brother will get a copy of this document and will sign the Commitment Form found at the last page of the booklet.

The love of Christ compels us to take our share and be part of this worldwide crusade of the care and protection of our children.

- Fr. Eusebio Manangbao, SVD
Vivat International Kenya (VIK) is moving guided by its Action Plan. VIK has its National Board of Directors (NBOD) in place. VIK has its Executive Team (ET) in place. VIK has its Office in place although still very bare and empty as needed equipment and furniture are not yet available, but they will be made available in due time.

A 3 days Workshop for the JPIC Coordinators of the 9 Member Congregations (CSSp, ASC, CMS, MSHR, RA, OMI, MCCJ, SVD, SSps) present in Kenya & Tanzania will take place in November from 8-10, 2016. It is dubbed: SKILLS TRAINING geared towards Advocacy and Lobbying. Three facilitators were invited and they are from the Jesuits International, the Marists International and Franciscan International. The other two Member Congregations like Cssp and LSA are not yet present here in Kenya.

Plan of Action: Animation of JPIC Coordinators of VIK Founding and Member Congregations

Strategies:

1. Education & Organization-Building
   - Providing training of skills & consciousness-raising,
   - e.g. workshops and seminars
   - Finding out available training programs useful for VIK JPIC Coordinators

2. Communication
   - Research - data gathering, fact-finding
   - Newsletter - communicating on issues, best practices, relevant materials
   - Setting up a directory of VIK JPIC members and resources

3. Networking
   - Identifying GO's and NGO's, Faith Based Organizations (FBO’s) and Online Networks with the same JPIC orientation
   - Partnering on activities with selected Organizations

Fr. Eusebio Manangbao, SVD, VIVAT International Kenya
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