Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 74th Edition of VIVAT Newsletter!

Since this edition comes to you right after Easter, we wish you all HAPPY EASTER!

This issue covers three stories from the United Nations in New York and Geneva. Those are the 56th Session of UN Commission on Social Development which focused on Strategies for Poverty Eradication (p.2); the 62nd Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women focusing on “Challenges and Opportunities in Achieving Gender Equality and the Empower of Rural Women and Girls” (p. 8); and statements made by VIVAT International in Geneva and New York on Migrant Workers’ and Widows’ Rights (p. 2).

Continently speaking, a story from Hong Kong on Migrant Workers (p. 3) and Awareness Program on Child’s Rights in Pune, India represent Asian Continent. Meanwhile, a story from Nigeria on Peace Project for Internally Displaced Persons (p. 4) and Anti-Trafficking in Persons Initiatives in Cameroon represent Africa (p. 10).

From Europe we received two stories on the ASC Sisters’ involvement in the education of children in Bosnia and Herzegovina (p. 5) and the works of Comboni Missionaries in Italy for Migrants and Refugees (p. 7).

The last two stories are from North and South America. The one is about World Social Forum that took place in Salvador, Brazil, 12 – 17 March 2018 (p. 9) and the other is about the youth “March for Lives” in Washington, D.C. on 24 March 2018, demanding gun control (p. 11).

This issue ends with the seventh part of “Introducing Sustainable Development Goals” focusing on SDG 6 (p. 12).

While thanking the contributors of this edition, we continually invite you to send and share your stories with others through VIVAT News Letter.

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Poverty is still one of the major and global challenges of our planet that needs to be addressed seriously and consistently at all levels. The United Nations has included poverty eradication in its 15 years development agenda known as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This year 2018, the priority theme for the 56th Session of UN Commission on Social Development was, “Strategies for Poverty Eradication” which offered the opportunities to explore the issue of poverty through many lenses including the perspectives of rural communities, migrants, women, indigenous peoples, youth, people with disabilities, and so on. VIVAT International participated in the event in some ways: first, by submitting written statement on the rights of migrant workers and oral statement on the rights of widows for social protection and decent work. In collaboration with other non-governmental organizations, especially with the NGO Committee on Social Development (NGO CSocD) and with UN DESA/DSPD, VIVAT also organized two side-events, under the theme, “Strategies for Poverty Eradication” focusing on grassroots taking on SDGs awareness and implementation.

One of the speakers at this side event was Helen Saldanha of VIVAT International who shared about the strategies taken by rural Indian women to eradicate poverty. The other two were based on the experiences of grassroots communities in Brazil and Vanuatu.

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**THE RIGHTS OF WIDOWS AND THEIR MINOR CHILDREN**

Oral Statement by VIVAT International at CSocD 56th on Agenda Item 3b.

VIVAT International delivered an oral statement on the rights of widows and their minor children to development, mentioning that 115 million widows are living in poverty and being left behind in many ways; that many widows and their minor children have no or very limited economic opportunities and are being marginalized in their societies, often vulnerable to stigmatization or blamed for many social ills; that in many cases widows and their children are often forced to beg or engage in prostitution, their children are often taken out of school and subject to child labor and not given opportunities for education.

**VIVAT recommended Member States and other relevant stakeholders to:**

- protect, respect and fulfill all basic human rights of widows including their rights to development in all its forms;
- protect widows from being subjected to torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
- ensure all widows gain access to decent work and decent wage for a more decent livelihood;
- defend through legislations and their implementation the right to inheritance and property to widows;
- ensure all widows and their minor children are covered in the social protection programs and public policies in their countries.

**MIGRANT WORKERS’ RIGHTS**

Paul Rahmat SVD, the Director of VIVAT Indonesia had the privilege of addressing the U. N. in Geneva on the rights of migrant workers. He appealed to the Government in Jakarta to investigate all rights abuses committed against Indonesian migrant workers and that a moratorium be imposed on sending them to work in Malaysia. He issued the appeal at the 37th regular session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva on March 14.

He was speaking as a representative of VIVAT International and Franciscan International, non-governmental organizations with U.N. General Consultative Status.

He also demanded that Indonesia and Malaysia ratify the ILO Convention on Domestic Workers and the U.N. Convention on the Protection of Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. “The exploitation and mistreatment of Indonesian migrant workers still continues today,” he told the council. Paul, also had the opportunity while in Geneva, to learn more about advocating on behalf of the downtrodden in his country and elsewhere.
The Forgotten Heroes: The Story of Migrant Workers in Hong Kong

I remember, nine years ago, walking around the walkways in Central and Victoria Park Causeway Bay on a Sunday and seeing the hundreds of thousands of women migrant workers sit in a cardboard box or on the grass out there. When I started to get to know a few of them, they had incredible stories. Nobody is aware what is behind these happy, smiling faces.

The Story Begins: Poverty

Since the 1970s, migrant workers have been permitted to work in Hong Kong. Most of them are from Indonesia and the Philippines, with small numbers from Thailand, India, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka. They come to Hong Kong because of the economic conditions back home. Increasing poverty has prompted many of migrant workers in developing countries to seek work in Hong Kong. They hope to leave behind unemployment and poverty in their home countries to find jobs, higher wages, and better living conditions. Of course, there are some other reasons, but the main reason is poverty. Now, there are 320,000 migrant women working in Hong Kong as household workers.

Life in Hong Kong is not an easy. They leave behind a life with children and families in order to provide education, health care and house for their loved ones. They clean, cook, look after children and elderly for a minimum wage of HK$4,410 per month. From their salaries, they can support, not only their families, but also the economy progress of their countries. For example, the Indonesian migrant workers’ contribution to the foreign exchange is even nationally second in rank, after oil and gas exports. In 2015, the Indonesian migrant workers contributed IDR 144.95 trillion and it is increasing. However, our government calls them the heroes and heroines of foreign exchange.

Yes, they are the real heroes, but it is ironic, in the reality, the migrant workers are treated like property or like documentation, even modern slaves. They are particularly at risk of discrimination, abuse and exploitations. Erwiana Sulistyaningsih is the person best known for suffering from abuse at the hands of her employer in 2014. Now, some of the migrant workers are in the prison because of their own mistakes or the regulation of the authority. Living condition is also one of the major problems because some of them sleep in living room, kitchen, or bathroom. Human trafficking and over charging are some other problems too. Of course, the solution is more strongly related to the empowerment of migrant workers, through education, legal support, and collective action from these migrants, government, and civil society organisations to work together.

The Story Continues: Empower Others

In Hong Kong, the migrant workers also influence others and help others find out and fight for their rights. On Sunday or public holidays, many of them join the gatherings of the religion and migrant workers’ organizations. In fact, Hong Kong is now home to hundreds of migrant workers’ organizations. Erni Lestari, Sring Atin, Nur Halimah, Rosyi Mansyur and some other leaders of grassroots migrants’ organizations always stand to fight their rights in Hong Kong and international level. They are migrant women who are empowered, who are strong, leading others, committed to the communities.

Many migrant workers, while are working, they also go for studies (St. Mary’s University and Open University) on Sunday. The reason is before they come to Hong Kong, they could not afford to study in their own countries. Data from Justice Centre Hong Kong shows that only 58.3 per cent of migrant workers have finished secondary education. Twenty-three per cent of those graduated from colleges and 4.2 per cent from universities. Study in Hong Kong is one of the opportunities. After the years spent working away from home and family can pay off when they return and start their own businesses.

I’ve always been hoping there would be an increased understanding for migrant workers’ life aboard. It is not always like a paradise. Hopefully people will be able to draw the realities. Today, we continue the long journey toward a world where love and justice are not reserved for some, but extended to all. Everyone is in the same boat.

Heribertus Hadiarto, SVD Chaplain for Indonesian Migrants of Hong Kong Diocese

Solidarity protest at Malaysian’s consulate in Admiralty in 2017. We raised the issue of the organ trafficking of Indonesian migrant workers from East Nusa Tenggara.
From Yola (North East Nigeria) I am very happy to share with you an aspect of a three week intensive program ‘EMBRACING PEACE FOR THE NE’ that I have been engaged in. This program was co-led with a colleague of mine, Duke Duchschere, who has years of experience working internationally in conflict areas. Our work included Trauma Healing program for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Restorative Dialogue for Herdsmen and Farmers conflict and workshops on non violent communication (NVC) with various groups. In this article, I share about our work with the IDPs.

Work with Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

We worked with 35 most traumatized of the 700 in a camp managed by the Catholic Diocese of Yola. This camp opened her arms to both Christian and Muslim IDPs. As we sat under the trees in a shaded open area in the middle of their camp, we listened to stories of pain which were at times shocking, horrifying, heart breaking, and awe-inspiring. For instance, one of the women still does not know the fate of 3 of her children taken by Boko Haram. All of them face this kind of pain in one way or another; and yet all still have room for great gratitude as well.

We focused on body-based activities to help them to reconnect with their physical beingness. Over the first few days most of the IDPs showed limited emotional expression. Although they said what we were doing was helpful, it was difficult to discern any impact. It was not until the third day that one woman who had lost about 50 in her family reported that the night before was the first night she slept all the way through the night without waking. After this, others began to report improved sleeping and feeling lighter in their bodies: one woman stating “it’s as if my shoulders are not carrying so much weight.”

Many were carrying the heavy weight of watching their loved ones die in front of them, and not being able to do anything to help save them, or even to be able to offer the dead the dignity of burying the body. So on the last day we had a ceremony where they were able to symbolically bury their dead and/or hand their loved one who had disappeared over to God. During the ritual ceremony participants brought symbols of their deceased or missing loved ones. I was shocked to see that not less than four different people brought a tree branch with many, many leaves as a symbol for the more than 50 people they lost in their families.

To imagine that this woman or this man in front of me has endured this level of loss and still has the resilience to be functioning… was a strength I was not sure I possessed. The ritual was a solemn and powerful experience for the IDPs. One of them expressed her huge relief in these words: “With this ‘burial’ ceremony, I see my loved ones in their full humanity and beauty and I am relieved.” The pain of loss was there, but so too was the deep love that those who had passed away had brought into their lives. At the close of the four days many reported that they felt a huge amount of relief having finally buried their dead with the care, love and dignity befitting a loved one.

For me, it was a huge privilege to be part of this sweet, painful, sacred journey in the lives of so many……which I continue to hold with profound gratitude and awe.

Sr. Franca Onyibor, MSHR
VIVAT International, Nigeria
While thinking about “yesterday,” and everything that we, the staff of the “Leptirići” (Butterflies) kindergarten in Glamoč, Bosnia and Herzegovina, went through and thinking about the article I have been requested to write, I think that I could probably write an entire book.

However, since I cannot change what we have already lived through, I will lock the past away in the drawer of the past. What I cannot put away in that drawer is the “consequences of the past,” because they are still here today…

**Today and Now**

While the situation today is a little better because the Supreme Court has changed its previous ruling in our favour; however up to now, it has made hardly any impact on our daily lives.

According to the existing [Law](#), an individual/group who have not been paid by the State and even when they manage to prove to the court that they have been wronged, they will not receive their full outstanding salary dues right away.

In our context, the Glamoč Municipality currently owes our staff 240,000 KM (approx. 120,000 euros). According to the [Law](#), only 0.3% of the 2017 Budget amounting to 7,300 KM (approx. 3,650 euros), can be reimbursed to us annually. This means that we will be paid our salary dues, owed to us as ruled by the court, over the next 30 years. God help us!

In October 2017, the Mayor of the Municipal Council passed away. Should the candidate from the SNSD party currently in authority in Glamoč be elected as the new Mayor, I believe that the situation may improve as his child attends our kindergarten and he is aware of the problems faced by the staff and is sympathetic towards our situation.

I take this opportunity to thank many good people who have stood by us. I also thank Fr. Andrzej Owca CSSp and VIVAT International for telling our story and even bringing it to the United Nations. VIVAT’s help has had the great impact for the entire procedure and allowed us to look with hope towards the future.

And while waiting for what awaits us tomorrow, we place everything in God’s hands. We live each day as a gift from God, accepting and loving Jesus in these little children who are currently in our care.

Thank you for your support and prayers.

Sr. Janja Martina Katović, ASC
Glamoč
Incidents of violations of Child Rights are common in most parts of India. Even today there are children forced to work, forced to marry, children who do not have adequate shelter and are deprived of education amidst various issues of child protection.

As part of our efforts in promoting child rights and their safety, Sarva Seva Sangh, Pune, an organization working with children at risk, conducted two awareness sessions on child rights and protection for the Government Railway Police (GRP) on 27th March 2018. The first session was at the GRP Divisional Headquarters, Pune, which was participated by 60 GRP personnel from Pune, Miraj and Ahmad Nagar including Dr. Prabhakar Budhavant (Superintendent of Police), Mr. Tushar Patil (ASP), and Mr. Dabde (DySP). The second session was in the GRP station at the Pune railway station, participated by more than 20 GRP personnel.

The sessions were based on Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act 2015. The definition of child according to the Act, the functions of Juvenile Justice Board and Child Welfare Committee, use of child friendly terms, being sensitive to the problems children face, respecting the dignity of children, the importance one's attitudinal change towards children etc were discussed during the session.

The participants interacted by raising questions, seeking clarifications and sharing their experiences. They also raised certain concerns like lack of care homes in Pune for mentally challenged children and psychologically disturbed women and lack of personnel to escort children who need care and protection. The interest and involvement of Dr. Budhavant (SP) as well as Mr. Patil (ASP) during the session were commendable.

Fr. Mathew Korattiyil, SVD INM/VIVAT India
The work we are doing as Comboni Missionaries and Comboni Lay Missionaries in the concrete situation of migration is essentially accomplished by networking with associations, organizations and movements, both ecclesial and social, involved in this area in recognizing and defending the rights of immigrants and refugees.

Since September 2013, the port of Palermo, Sicily, has become part of the line of Mediterranean landing spots where migrants from Africa and other parts arrive. At their arrival we are present to give out kits of clothing, shoes, a bag with a sandwich, an apple and a bottle of water, trying to establish a contact with the new arrivals. We don’t want to be simply a material presence, but we also try to collect information on how people arriving are treated, since they are already burdened by indescribable experiences suffered before or during the journey, and they are totally clueless about what expects them in Italy.

Together with the living, unfortunately, on many occasions, the bodies of those who died at sea have also arrived. From the very beginning, our concern has been to follow these bodies up to a dignified burial in the cemetery of Palermo. Every year in November, on All Souls Day, civil society joins the representatives of various religions for an interreligious service in their memory. It is an act of solidarity with the victims to denounce the causes of their death, among them the disgusting agreements of Italy, and behind Italy, of Europe with Libya, and other third parties that work to block or reject migrants.

We recognize the spreading of a culture of exclusion. Today, people feel free of any social responsibility, any tie with others, any common objective. It is urgent to focus again on the stories and the lives of migrants in order to stand up to racism and xenophobia, that are based on false assumptions and on information controlled and manipulated by the media. Through activities we promote in schools and in parishes, we present the stories of migrants by retracing the various phases of their journeys: the reasons why they left, their stay in Libya which upends their lives forever, crossing the Mediterranean and their arrival in Italy, where they end up being mere numbers. To go beyond the lies, to recognize and defend the rights of migrants as persons, are all very important steps in the building of an inter-cultural and multi-cultural society.

In cooperation with civic and church organizations we share lodging spaces for the migrants, and welcoming projects with the idea to produce grassroots meetings and a relation with the territory. In the accepting process there are critical stages tied above all to the excessive time they remain in centers of first acceptance and to the small number of special structures or places in the SPRAR. In many cases, the insertions of migrants turns into a veritable “lottery.” To reflect on the migrants means to rethink our social, political and ecclesial structures. It means to have the courage to change the current order of things.

Finally, the constant element of our presence is the prophetic denunciation of people and institutions who speculate on the hopelessness of the migrants, exploiting their labor, or of those, in the political underbrush, who end up grabbing funds destined for the arrival process.

Calvin wrote, “Any time you build a wall, think of what you leave outside.” What today looks like a protective structure, tomorrow could become a prison. Life develops and grows beyond the wall. But, if fear is contagious, so are courage and hope.

Fr. Domenico Guarino, MCCJ
Palermo, February 2018
The 62nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 2018

Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls

**VIVAT International**
participated in the Commission on the Status of Women, which took place at the UN Headquarters in New York. CSW62 took place at the UNHQ in New York from 12-23 March 2018. Besides the member states and UN agencies, over 3000 participants from different parts of the world attended CSW62.

VIVAT as a member of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women (NGO-CSW) participated in studying the zero draft that was deliberated upon during the commission adopted as the Agreed Conclusions. As part of the advocacy, VIVAT has submitted a Joint written Statement, organized and cosponsored two side events and endorsed an oral statement.

Side event 1: “Women as Changemakers: Empowering Stories of Rural Women and Girls”
highlighted the engagement of civil society organizations with local communities and women’s groups to facilitate their participation in the 2030 Transformative agenda for rural women and girls to claim their agency and build synergy. One of the panelists was Sr. Julia George SSpS, Director of Streevani from Pune, India. Her presentation dealt with the stories of women migrant domestic workers, rebuilding lives as urban poor in the context of socio-economic and legal challenges. Through her decade-long experience, she highlighted the empowering journeys the domestic workers, who, though of the internally displaced and migrant women workers transform their lives in the urban settings.

This event was well attended represented by women from all the continents. It also brought forth hope amidst violence meted out to women and girls. The interactive sessions followed by the presentations where the participants shared the work they do highlighted the need for best practices especially in the context of bringing them to the UN.

Side Event 2, “Shouldering the Burden: Rural Women and Climate-Induced Displacement”
This side event was sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh and as a member of the Climate Induced Displacement subcommittee of the NGO Committee on Migration, VIVAT was one of the cosponsors. The event was a response to the governance of Bangladesh to deal with the impacts of climate change discussed the climate realities in the South Pacific and Sub-Saharan Africa, their impact on rural women and girls; how to address them at various stages of displacement. Finally, it will highlight opportunities for advocacy on the issue of climate-induced displacement, seek collaboration among different stakeholders and offer some recommendations toward durable solutions.

Eight VIVAT members who were a part of this event, found it a great opportunity for learning about the critical issues affecting women today, alongside with gaining insight into the work of civil society organizations at the UN. The Priority theme of CSW62 was Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls, and the theme reviewed was the participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women. The focus on rural women and girls threw open a spectrum of issues that contribute to their vulnerabilities. At the end of CSW62, the member states adopted the Agreed Conclusions (outcome document) on “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls”.


Sr. Helen Saldanha, SSpS
This year, Brazil welcomed more than three thousand participants from around the world to the 14th World Social Forum (WSF) from 13 - 17 March 2018 in Salvador, Bahia under the motto “Resistir É Criar, Resistir É Transformar” (“To Resist is to Create, to Resist is to Transform”).

It began with a big rally on the first day, March 13th, 2018, where ten of thousands of people from around Brazil as well as from other countries came together to express their willingness to make “Another world possible”.

Numerous events and exhibitions were organized which showed that “Another World is Possible.” It really served as a networking platform for socially committed people and organizations, for mutual exchange of perspectives and for developing common positions to call for specific practical approaches to solving current social, economic and political problems.

The 2018 World Social Forum had a set of themes. It prioritized environmental and climate justice, feminism and gender issues, organizing resistance, combating racism and intolerance democracy, economic alternatives, fighting to keep water and land as public domain, migration as well as urban development and living.

VIVAT International’s Participation

VIVAT International’s participation in WSF was represented by a number of male and female Comboni Missionaries, Society of the Divine Word (SVD), Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit (SSpS), and Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary (MSHR).

Four side events were organized with special topics/themes on land-grabbing, mining impacts on indigenous peoples and local communities, the current crises in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan, and on violence against women.

On the last day – Saturday, March 17th—there was an opportunity to reflect and evaluate the WSF 2018 process. All agreed at some point on the value of networking, partnership and collaboration at three levels—local, national and global. Another point is the importance of concrete actions and follow-up programs.

For me, this was a good opportunity to meet people from around the world, especially the vulnerable ones, human rights activists and defenders, environmentalists and indigenous peoples. It was also a good opportunity to meet VIVAT International members of several congregations. There is something to learn from the Comboni missionaries at this event; their presence at the WSF was very significant in terms of numbers (60 participants), gender balance (male and female Combonis were there), age (young and old), and in terms of bringing issues and organizing events. They were able to bring issues from different parts of the world and shared their concerns, experiences, best practices, and their dreams with others. They also unified their ideas, commitment and agenda for change and better future. Thanks to the Comboni Family. I also thank 4 SVD confreres, MSHR and SSpS sisters who participated in this event.

Robert Miesel, SVD
Anti-Trafficking in Persons Initiatives in Cameroon

**Human trafficking** as we know is our modern slavery. It is the third well organized crime in the world. As Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary here in Cameroon we are engaged in the following initiatives.

**Prevention:**
Under prevention we carry out the following activities:

1. We carry out educative talks in churches, social groups, in schools and we use the local media. Here we emphasize on the dangers of human trafficking and the consequences. We have a lot of deaths mainly from the young people who died outside the community and many families do not know how or when they died, they receive their bodies and bury and the story ends there. We use this as a tangible example as it is affecting so many families.

2. We carry out sensitization to the young people in schools and in the youth groups in villages.

3. We educate communities about the Cameroon law even though this is a challenge as prosecution is yet a dream to be realized, thus we prefer to use community heads to challenge this ill from the grassroots.

4. We work with the drivers unions and the motor bike riders as they are the cheapest means of transport to help us to identify the movement. This has worked well despite a few instances of corruption.

5. When we get in touch with some young women who are tempted to travel to the middle East precisely Kuwait and Dubai we discourage them through counseling and providing support like skills training because many want to go out because they have no means to go to school.

6. We encourage formation of micro scale initiatives through women’s groups. Women are wonder educators and a great force in fighting such ill in the society, all they need is follow up, education and encouragement.

7. Behavior change programs among the youths have also helped because the lessons on HIV/AIDS, the abuse and exploitation help the young people to think twice before making a decision to move out.

**Protection and repatriation**

1. This has been a very huge challenge. Between 2014 to date, we have experienced mass exodus to the Middle East. We have tried to work with the embassy of Central Africa Republic in Kuwait unfortunately it was closed down last year. We have worked with TAlitha Kum Network Rome and IOM and religious organizations within. Many of the cases that have been deported came back traumatized due to the amount of abuse and exploitation they encountered. They had so many debts as they had to get huge sums to enable their travel and back at home they have not cleared the debts. So they come back more miserable than they left. Some are now mentally disturbed. Some come back and hide as they are not able to bear the stigma and shame.

2. We try to do family counseling, trauma healing for the affected women and men. Right now we do not have a shelter or a place where even young men and girls who are rescued locally can be protected for some time but we look forward to initiating one.

*Sr Franca Onyibor, MSHR
VIVAT International, Nigeria*
Massive demonstrations of people of all ages took place on March 24, 2018 inspiring millions to reflect on the centerpiece issue, gun reform, but also citizen safety, and the more complicated issue of mental health. Originating in Washington, D.C., where approximately 800,000 marched, the protests encompassed over 800 U.S. cities, and also world cities such as Sydney, Stockholm, London, Paris, Rome, Mauritius, Tokyo, Geneva and Berlin. The day was motivated by the deadly February 14 mass shooting that killed 17 innocent students at a Parkland, FL high school. The young killer left not only dead bodies but dozens of young people wounded.

Powerful messages were delivered by articulate students and children, who took the lead on the March for Our Lives, most of whom had experienced gun violence in some way. From Emma Gonzalez, the Parkland High School senior, came a demonstration of the power of silence. She spoke for a couple of minutes and then remained silent until an alarm went off; a total of six minutes and 20 seconds had passed, just the amount of time the killer took to gun down the students. There were very candid and creative statements on thousands of posters. The sign to the right listed the places where 526 were killed, and 1424 wounded, by guns, since 2005.

The following day, in his Palm Sunday 2018 message, Pope Francis alluded to the power of youth although he did not mention the demonstrations in USA specifically. "It is up to you not to keep quiet," he said. "Even if others keep quiet, if we older people and leaders, some corrupt, keep quiet, if the whole world keeps quiet and loses its joy, I ask you: Will you cry out?"

When interviewed, the young people's consistent message was "Go talk to the other kids; Go talk to the black kids; go talk to the poor kids; go talk to the Latino kids." The televised program of speakers and performers that March for our Lives set up was well orchestrated and inclusive, and in no way exclusive to just the Parkland tragedy. Put it all together, there would seem to be "no going back," and that real change is possible. Let’s continue to support and encourage our children and youth wherever they are around the world: they are a powerful resource for an extraordinary change!!! Against any arms and violence that can take away innocent lives!

Daniele Moschetti, MCCJ
Comboni Missionary/
VIVAT International
One of the essential parts of the world we want to live in is clean and accessible water for all. There is sufficient fresh water on the planet to achieve this. But due to bad economics or poor infrastructure, every year millions of people, most of them children, die from diseases associated with inadequate water supply, sanitation and hygiene.

TARGETS

6.1. achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water.

6.2. achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.

6.3 improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and increasing recycling and safe reuse globally.

6.4 increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity.

6.5 implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate.

6.6 protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes.

6.A. expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water- and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies.

6.B Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management.

PROGRESS OF GOAL 6 IN 2017

Access to safe water and sanitation and sound management of freshwater ecosystems are essential to human health and to environmental sustainability and economic prosperity.

In 2015, 6.6 billion people (over 90 per cent of the world’s population) used improved drinking water sources and 4.9 billion people (over two thirds of the world’s population) used improved sanitation facilities. In both cases, people without access live predominantly in rural areas. Achieving universal access to basic sanitation and ending the unsafe practice of open defecation will require substantial acceleration of progress in rural areas of Central and Southern Asia, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

Effective water and sanitation management relies on the participation of a range of stakeholders, including local communities. A 2016-2017 survey found that over 80 per cent of 74 responding countries had clearly defined procedures for engaging service users/communities in water and sanitation management.

More than 2 billion people globally are living in countries with excess water stress, defined as the ratio of total freshwater withdrawn to total renewable freshwater resources above a threshold of 25 per cent. Northern Africa and Western Asia experience water stress levels above 60 per cent, which indicates the strong probability of future water scarcity.

In 2012, 65 per cent of the 130 countries that responded to a survey on integrated water resources management reported that management plans were in place at the national level.

ODA for the water sector has been rising steadily, but has remained relatively constant as a proportion of total ODA disbursements, at approximately 5 per cent since 2005. In 2015, ODA disbursements in the water sector totalled about $8.6 billion, which represents an increase of 67 per cent in real terms since 2005.

Source: Report of the Secretary-General, “Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals”, E/2017/66

UPCOMING EVENTS


UN Calendar of International Days:

April:
4: International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action
7: World Health Day
12: International Day of Human Space Flight
21: World Creativity and Innovation Day
22: International Mother Earth Day
23: World Book and Copyright Day
25: World Population Day
26: World Intellectual Property Day
29: Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare

May:
3: World Press Freedom Day
8-18: Time of Remembrance and Reconciliation for Those Who Lost Their Lives During the Second World War
9: International Day of Families
16: International Day of Living Together in Peace
17: World Telecommunication and Information Society Day
21: World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development
22: International Day for Biological Diversity
29: International Day of UN Peacekeepers

June:
1: Global Day of Parents
4: International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression
5: World Environment Day
5: International Day for the Fight against Illegal Fishing
8: World Oceans Day
12: World Day Against Child Labour
15: World Elder Abuse Awareness Day
17: World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought
25: International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict
29: World Refugee Day
30: United Nations Public Service Day
23: International Widows’ Day
24: International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking
26: United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture
27: Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Day
29: International Day of the Tropics