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Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 78th Edition of VIVAT Newsletter!

This edition brings you stories both from the United Nations (UN) and the grassroots. Since February 2019, VIVAT International participated in, and contributed to many events that we held at the UN. Among them are the 57th Session of Commission on Social Development (CSocD57), 11-21 February 2019 (p. 2), UN Conference on International Law in Nairobi, Kenya, 18-20 March 2019 (pp. 3-4), and 63rd Session on the Status of Women (CSW63) in New York, 11-22 March 2019 (p. 5).

Six stories from national and local levels will be part of this issue, including Robert Mirsel and Daniel LeBlanc’s visiting migrants in Tijuana, Mexico (p. 6), Gretta Fernandes’ participation in Conference on Religions and SDGs in Rome (p. 7); Sr. Rani’s sharing on the celebration of the Earth Day (p. 8), four articles on International Women’s Day in various parts of India (p. 9-10); and sharing of experience with the migrants in El Paso, USA by Sisters Selvi-Raj, Sko lastika Wea and Maria Theresa Nguyen (p. 11).

This edition ends with the 11th part of Introducing SDGs, focusing on SDG 10 - Reduce Inequality Within and Among Countries (p. 12).

We thank all the contributors for their generosity to share their stories with all of us, and the editors and translators for their help. We earnestly invite you to send your stories for the upcoming editions.

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VIVAT Newsletter 78
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VIVAT participated in the Fifty Seventh Session of the UN Commission on Social Development (CSocD57), that began on 11 February 2019 at UN Headquarters in New York. Social Protection Floors was at the center of the deliberations as the Commission focused on the priority theme, “Inequalities and challenges to fiscal wage and social protection policies.” It also looked at the emerging issues, “Empowerment of people affected by natural and human-made disasters to reduce inequality: Addressing the differential impact on persons with disabilities, older persons and youth”.

The relevant SDG related to Social Protection Floors is SDG 1.3, “Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable”. It is also based on the ILO (International Labour Organization) Recommendation No. 202. Four High-level Panel Discussions that included Ministerial Forums and Interactive Dialogues, and the Civil Society Forum were held during the 1st week of the Commission. One of the achievements of the Civil Society Organizations was bringing the issue of homelessness into the discourse.

VIVAT International made an Oral Statement on Brumadinho dam disaster in Brazil, asking the member states for stronger laws that hold the Mining Companies and governments accountable.

VIVAT International expresses its deepest sympathy to the families of the victims of the ore waste dam breaking in Brumadinho, in the State of Minas Gerais, Brazil, on 26 January 2019, causing deaths of at least 90 people and 292 missing. This occurred only three years after a similar disaster in Mariana. It also causes insecurity in the people as there are several other dams in the region. While the environmental impact is not clear, it is estimated that 14 million cubic meters of waste were cleared in the Paraopeba, one of the main tributaries of Sao Francisco River.

This tragedy is one of many disasters around the world, that highlights the need for strong frameworks for policy and practice in order to protect the lives of people; and to make it imperative for the Mining Corporations to take all necessary steps for environmental protection.

A clear policy that would enable the States make Mining Corporations liable to maintain high levels of environmental risk-management could help in preventing and dealing with disasters. Many countries have policies for compensation payment. Such policies should consider the impact on social protection policies by addressing loss of employment and livelihood options, income and related access to social protection and social services in the occurrence of disasters. Environmental bonds can be more effective at securing environmental compensation than post-disaster penalties.

We, therefore, urge the Member States:

1. To bring environmental and mining disasters in mining companies to prioritize human safety and environmental protection by using the Standard for Responsible Mining to improve their practices.

2. To provide social assistance policies to help the most vulnerable individuals, households and communities affected by natural disasters, including of this kind, to meet a social floor and improve living standards.

Finally, we support a Binding Treaty for Business and Human Rights, at the international level, and a responsible, effective and prompt judicial response for those who bet on impunity.
A United Nations Inter-governmental Negotiation Meeting took place in Nairobi, Kenya, from March 18-20, 2019. This meeting was a follow up session after the previous one in January 2019 and organized by an open ended working group of the United Nations Environmental Protection (UNEP). The purpose of it was three-fold: to discuss further on the urgency and importance of international law on environment; to look at the gaps and challenges of implementing international environmental laws at national level; and to look at the guiding principles for such laws.

Civil society organizations, including Non Governmental Organizations accredited to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (UNECOSOC) were also invited as observers. Brother Lawrence Kibaara, SVD, the Executive Director of VIVAT Kenya and myself had an opportunity to participate in it.

GAPS OR CHALLENGES?

The UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, in his report to the General Assembly of the United Nations at its 73rd Session in November 2018 under the title: “Gaps in international environmental law and environment-related instruments: towards a global pact for the environment” [http://www2.earthlink.net/libcat/docs/LI/MON-094092.pdf] indicates five gaps and discrepancies in international environmental laws and environment-related instruments. First, “There is no single overarching normative framework that sets out what might be characterized as the rules and principles of general application in international environmental law...”; Second, “International environmental law is piecemeal and reactive. It is characterized by fragmentation and a general lack of coherence and synergy among a large body of sectoral regulatory frameworks...”; third, “The articulation between multilateral environmental agreements and environment-related instruments remains problematic owing to the lack of clarity, content-wise and status-wise, of many environmental principles...”; fourth, “The structure of international environmental governance is characterized by institutional fragmentation and a heterogeneous set of actors, revealing important coherence and coordination challenges. International courts and tribunals often stress the lack of international consensus concerning environmental principles.” The implementation of international environmental law is challenging at both the national and international levels. National implementation is constrained in many countries by the lack of appropriate national legislation, financial resources, environmentally sound technologies, and institutional capacities. At the international level, implementation is constrained by the lack of clarity of many environmental principles.

These above mentioned gaps and discrepancies were brought to the attention and discussion of Member States, UN Agencies and civil society organizations in Nairobi during this negotiation meeting. However, there was no agreement on whether to name these as gaps and discrepancies or as challenges. Secondly, some countries like China and Brazil tended to look at some of the international laws and instruments more as traditional or indigenous laws imposed on international communities which could violate State sovereignty.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This negotiations also discussed the need for common guiding principles for international environmental laws. Referring to Rio Declaration (1992) [https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mandate] participants agreed on the...
Kenya:

MEETING THE GRASSROOTS AND RAISING AWARENESS

Following the three-day UNEP meeting (March 18-20, 2019) in Nairobi, I had a chance to visit and meet with some VIVAT members in Kenya. One of the three parishes I visited was Soweto. It is a parish in slum area of Nairobi, most of whose people are poor. Fr. Leon Ipoma Mbo Nzali, SVD who is the secretary of VIVAT Kenya and Brother Lawrence Kibaara, SVD live and work in the parish serving the poor and marginalized. The parish runs a primary school which accepts children of various ethnic and religious backgrounds most of whom are poor. Not far from the rectory there is a SVD formation house for SVD candidates where we got an opportunity to introduce VIVAT International to the Brother candidates bringing to their attention how VIVAT works and addresses issues at grassroots level and how they can contribute to VIVAT advocacy work.

Late in the afternoon Fr. Amaldoss Rethinasamy, SVD, the mission secretary and Superior Delegate of SVD Kenya Province, brought me to SVD Theologate Formation Centre in Langata, Nairobi where I could meet with VIVAT members, including some formators and formands. Our journey that day ended with a meeting with the Seminarians and their formators in St. Joseph Freinademetz House – Philosophy Centre, where I had another opportunity to talk to the seminarians about what VIVAT is and what they could do to support VIVAT advocacy work both at grassroots (local and national) and global (UN) levels. Moderated by Fr. Eric Lacandula, SVD, Prefect of the formation house and JPIC Coordinator SVD Kenya Province, this meeting was aimed at raising the awareness on VIVAT Members that they all are VIVAT members and that all of them must promote VIVAT through their activities at national, regional and international levels. Through this meeting it was clarified that VIVAT is not a profit-oriented organization; it focuses on advocacy. This advocacy work can not be done alone but in collaboration and networking with other stake-holders.

The meeting went on well with a lot of questions of curiosity and comments of enthusiasm. Frs. Eric and Samy thanked VIVAT International for its visit to Kenya and for its advocacy work at the United Nations.

In both meetings, I emphasized the role of JPIC coordinators of at national levels and VIVAT Kenya to promote VIVAT among its members, to raise awareness of VIVAT members about the current problems, challenges and opportunities, and to strengthen their commitments to doing its mission of promoting life, dignity and human rights.

Robert Mirsel, SVD
VIVAT International Office, New York

A HOPE FOR PROTECTING MOTHER NATURE….. (continued from p. 3)

... following basic principles: the precautionary principle which states that, “if there is a strong suspicion that a certain activity may have environmentally harmful consequences, it is better to control that activity now rather than to wait for incontrovertible scientific evidence”; the prevention principle which emphasizes on doing no harm to the people and planet; “the polluter pays” principle in which it demand that polluters must bear the real costs of their pollution; the integration principle which states that environmental protection requires that due consideration be given to the potential consequences of environmentally fateful decisions; and the public participation principle which mandates extensive public access to government information on the environment.

As observers, civil society organizations present in the meeting came together and made statements emphasizing the importance of sizing the importance of identifying the major issues of environmental problems and the inclusion of multi-stakeholders in the process of drafting an international environmental law. It also emphasizes the urgency and importance of budgeting a policy at the national level to support civil society initiatives in environmental rehabilitation and protection-related activities. The meeting ended with an agreement to hold a follow-up meeting in May 2019 before presenting the results to the General Assembly in September or October 2019.

Prior to the May negotiation meeting, civil society organizations have already planned to have a series of discussions to gain more input on the draft agenda for an international environmental law. The hope for such a law is a series of open-ended working group meetings and that Member States will come to an agreement on an international law that is legally binding.

By Robert Mirsel, SVD
VIVAT International Office, New York
Eight VIVAT members represented VIVAT International at the CSW63. The priority theme for this year’s Commission on the Status of Women is “Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls” with a review theme of “Women’s empowerment and the link to sustainable development”.

More than 5000 women and men civil society representatives and 1850 delegates from Governments participated in this largest annual UN gathering on advocating for the rights of women. The zero draft of the agreed conclusions were negotiated extensively by the governments focusing on the social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure for promoting rights and equality of women and girls in which we, the civil society worked for ways to advocate for a document that helps those left on the margins of the society.


CSW64 in 2020 is going to be a mega event as it marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the most visionary agenda for the rights of women and girls everywhere and will focus on national level reviews and implementation of programs. (Link: http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020/preparations).

Helen Saldanha, SSpsS
VIVAT Office, New York
MEXICO:
MIGRANTS AT THE HEART OF TIJUANA

From Monday, March 25 to 28, 2019, Fr. Daniel LeBlanc, OMI and I visited Tijuana, Mexico. The main purpose was to look more closely at the migrants and refugees situation on the border between the United States and Mexico. On March 26, we drove along the border on the Mexican side. We could see that the United States is building a new fence beside the older one. In between there is a space for patrols to monitor the movement of people and to control the border.

MEETING THE MIGRANTS

On the same day, March 26th, Fr. Bill, OMI drove us to two migrant centers in Tijuana City run by Scalabrini Priests and Sisters. “Instituto Madre Asumta, A.C” is a migrant center for women and children migrants, while “Centro Scalabrini” is for men and boys. Four Scalabrini Sisters and some lay persons are in charge of doing ministry to provide shelter, food and clothing for the migrants. According to the Scalabrini Sisters, the center used to be for 45 people only, but now there are more than 90 people, way beyond full capacity. The same situation can be found at the other center. According to one of the staffs there, the capacity of the center used to be for 90 people, but now there are more than 100 people, trying to find a way to accommodate the increasing number of migrants.

In terms of their nationalities, many of these migrants and refugees come from Haiti, Ecuador, Guatemala and Honduras. But there are also some families from Afghanistan and other Central American countries. Most of these people led their countries because of poverty, social conflict, political turmoil, discrimination and natural disasters. They all are dreaming of a better life and freedom. We had an opportunity to speak personally with four migrants, two of whom are from Guatemala, one from Honduras and the other from Nicaragua. People came with a caravan in November 2018, hoping they could pass across the US border and gain a better life. But they failed because they didn’t have enough documents in their hands. The government of Mexico has granted each of them a temporary visa for work, but it is only valid until 2020. They didn’t know what would happen next.

RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT VIVAT INTERNATIONAL

There were two moments where we spoke about VIVAT International and its concerns. The first one was with a Catholic youth group in Tijuana. Organized by Fr. Jessy, an Oblate of Mary Immaculate priest, the young people asked about what VIVAT is doing at the United Nations. They also wanted to know what success stories VIVAT has done at the UN. Daniel LeBlanc and I explained to them that as a faith based non-governmental organization in consultative status with Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (UN-ECOSOC) VIVAT has been working with many other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to address some local, national and global issues such as migration and refugees, human trafficking, water and sanitation, indigenous peoples’ rights, mining, global warming and so on. These issues basically come from our members working at local and national levels. VIVAT’s role is to speak on behalf of these people to the United Nations and Member States. The goal is three-fold: first, to bring the issues to the attention of both United Nations and Member States; second, to put pressure on Member States to act on human rights violations; and third, to contribute to the UN global policies for social development and human rights improvement. One of the success stories was the inclusion of water and sanitation as human rights in the Sustainable Development Goals or 2030 Agenda.

On March 27, we were invited to speak at a diocesan seminary in Tijuana. The topic was about Religion and the United Nations. Daniel and I informed them that many people of faith work at the UN. In particular we mentioned the presence of the Holy See and religious at the UN (RUN)—faith based organizations (or more precisely, organizations founded by priests, nuns and brothers) working at the United Nations. All of these organizations are in collaboration with Member States and United Nations agencies, most of whom promote the values of the Kingdom of God—justice, peace, love, prosperity, equality, life and dignity of all. Many activists speak in the name of religion to influence United Nations’ policies and actions.

Even Pope Francis’ Laudato Si was often quoted by many to protect life and to give more concerns to “our Mother Earth.”

FOLLOW UP IS IMPORTANT

After meeting with migrants and students, we took a while to reflect on what should be done to align ourselves with the marginalized and to promote and protect their rights. We urged those with whom we met to promote life, dignity and human rights. Furthermore, we encouraged them to make use of VIVAT International as a tool or instrument of doing advocacy at the international level.

By Robert Mirsel, SVD
VIVAT International - New York Office
The International Conference on Religions and the Sustainable Development Goals organized by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral human development (DPIHD) and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue was held at the Vatican from March 7-9, 2019. Each of the 17 SDGs fall within these five basic goals: people, planet, prosperity, partnership and peace.

The participants represented world religions, international organizations of government and non-governmental natures, including those already in the process of implementing one or more of the SDGs. One of the common messages echoed in the opening remarks was that the role of religion was not clear in the creation, implementation or realization of SDGs. Religions play an important role in promoting peace, dialogue and common good, and therefore they hold a special place in the public square. This needs to be recognized by the SDGs by having a religious dimension. The lack of political will or scarcity of economic and human resources to achieve the SDGs, world religions can work in implementing and realizing the 2030 agenda through belief and conviction. By including many religions in the conference, the Dicastery has initiated a partnership to promote human dignity, to protect the planet and promote peace, so that all people can enjoy a prosperous life. Speakers unanimously stressed the urgency of achieving the SDGs and reminded the participants that four years into 2030 agenda the imperative is clear; we must accelerate our actions and we must act now if we want to achieve these goals. Mr. Michael Moeller, Director General, United Nations, Geneva, called upon all participants to demonstrate that we can come together and rise to meet the global challenges we are facing today.

Cardinal Turkson, Prefect for the DPIHD, invited the participants to commit themselves from their various moral persuasive strength and their point of views in their implementation of SDGs. He reminded us that our presence in this international event is an indication that religions and Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) can contribute in promoting dignity and development of all. He urged the participants to keep the sense of urgency in their discussions and deliberations.

Speakers from different religions, activists, and those who have already forged partnerships with other religions in addressing the 2030 agenda, asked the participants to focus on what unites them and not what divides them. The conference ended with a renewed sense of optimism and purpose, though being aware that the problems we are facing are interconnected and the solutions are often fragmented. If we do not take immediate action to reverse it, we will be worse off than we are today.

The Call for Action session on the final day had five working groups meeting separately and sharing their plan of action in the plenary session.

The group on Partnership suggested that in the next six months every single organization present must create a new partnership with a group they have not heard of before, which would result in 200 more partnerships in six months. The working group on People, urged that all religions share their resources in building and supporting young leaders, women and indigenous people. The Prosperity working group sought to 'redefine prosperity and good investment'. All religions and FBOs need to ensure that our ethical financial structures share the wealth and redistribute it among all sections of society. Faith communities should walk the talk when it comes to ethical investments. The group on Peace suggested that religions and FBOs find concrete ways to give more space for young people to act. Grassroots action must be undertaken by religions for peace and technology and social media must be used to promote peace. Policymakers at all level need to dialogue with civil society organizations on promoting peace. The group on the Planet encouraged participants to celebrate our good experiences in protecting and caring for our planet, and to give visibility to those experiences. In the urgency to hear the cry of the Earth and the cry of the Poor, partnership with interfaith groups and the science community is the need of the hour to keep a check on global warming.

In his concluding remarks, Mr. Moeller reiterated that the strength of the SDGs rests on three strong principles: first is to leave no one behind; second, the 17 goals are indivisible and completely integrated, we cannot address one without addressing the other 16. Third, every single one of us is responsible for the implementation of the SDGs and all have to be active participants in achieving the 2030 agenda.

Contributed by Sr. Gretta Fernandes, SSpS, Mission Secretary/VIVAT International
Rome: Celebrating Mother Earth Day

“As care for the environment is always a social concern as well. Let us hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”

Pope Francis

On 22nd April, when the world celebrated, International Mother Earth day, we the Adorers of the Blood of Christ gathered together in the garden of Generalate community, in Rome to celebrate this day more significantly. Sr. Rani Padayattil the co-ordinator of JPIC/VIVAT, guided us into prayer. Sr. Nadia Coppa, the Superior General planted a tree and Sr. Dani Brought the General Councillor gave a memorable speech to the members gathered.

We reflected together; we have only one Earth, one Home, one Planet and nobody can escape the Earth even when it becomes unliveable.

World earth day is quiet a significant day to bring in the awareness of the healthy world we expect it to be. Whereas the fact remains to the extent of abuse done to it.

As we tend to progress in our life, we have changed our lifestyle, we changed our attitude, we tend to ignore in very many ways the means to protect the world we live in for our future generations. The possessive nature and greed had overshadowed the thought and awareness to save this beautiful earth for many generations to come.

Off late we tend to hear often about Global warming, Ozone layer depletion, Greenhouse gases etc. which are the main causes and concern of our present study. Why our beautiful earth which was much cooler a century ago is not so now. Why is the ultra violet rays from the sun affecting the earth so much more now than ever before. Why is the man made gases destroying the protective layers of our earth.

Many of us have heard from our grandparents or even from our parents about the weather, temperature, forest, plants, trees, rivers, pure water which are the beautiful resources of this wonderful earth. Even we have personally experienced these in our childhood. But within our own time of life we are facing a huge scarcity of very many basis needs.

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Shortage of water, floods, landslides, pollution, contamination, huge rise in temperature. A massive weather change and very many unknown diseases to add on to it.

What accountability we have as civilian, citizens of the current world! We can walk away from our responsibility as saying that we are not directly accountable. Every civilian living in this world are equally responsible and accountable to bring this beautiful world to its former glory.

The purpose of celebrating the Earth day is to solve climate change, to end plastic pollution, to protect endangered species to broaden, educate and activate environmental movement across the globe.

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India: International Women’s Day Celebration

- Domestic workers demand Constitutional provision in Madhya Pradesh

In line with this year’s theme for the International Women’s Day, 2019 “Think Equal, Build Smart, and Innovate for Change”, our domestic workers, unlike other years planned the women’s day celebration in a very different manner and it was celebrated on 6th of March 2019. Streevani paved the way for women to be innovative and more participative in the celebration. Hence the women planned to put up stalls of different items prepared by them and accordingly there were 13 stalls consisted of various snacks such as vada pav, idli – chutney, lemon juice, fruit salad, gulab jamun, papad and vegetable rice, along with ice-cream. The women were encouraged to sell every item for Rs. 10/- per plate or per piece. Streevani supported the women by giving every woman two coupons worth Rs.20/-. The coupons were used by all the participants to purchase the snacks of their choice from the stalls. Other than food items, there were stalls of spices, cosmetics, stationery, cloth bags, jewelry etc., as well as packed food products which were prepared and packed by women from villages. Some of the stalls were managed by various Self Help Groups.

There was immense joy on the faces of women. Forgetting the daily chores and the tensions of the house and the workplaces, they enjoyed the day. There were folk dances by the children of domestic workers and at the end of the program all women danced to the rhythmic film songs.

The day was a unique day for Streevani and for all our women domestic workers. Many of them earned rather well through their stalls. Thus it was a day of economic empowerment as well as women empowerment.

Sr. Rose Thomas SSSpS
Streevani/VIVAT India

Domestic workers demand Constitutional Provision in Madhya Pradesh

Uday Society observed international Women’s Day at Gandhi Bhawan Bhopal. On this day, the women domestic workers persuaded the state government to work towards the Domestic Workers’ Bill in Madhya Pradesh. The domestic workers around 700 women, media representatives and other NGOs together urged both ruling party and the opposition party present on the stage to work towards including the domestic workers within the purview of constitutional provision in Madhya Pradesh.

In many parts of India, the domestic workers are demanding their rights and its need of the hour to promote and uphold their rights, said Sr. Lizy Thomas, Director of Uday Social Development Society, Bhopal. She also added that states like Bihar, Karnataka, Kerala, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, Jharkand, Andhra Pradesh have some provisions like such as Fixation of Minimum rates of wages for the domestic workers in the Minimum Wages Act 1948. All the domestic workers of Madhya Pradesh recommend the Government to adopt similar stipulations. The Govt. also needs to speak in terms of ‘livable wage than Minimum wage’ because the minimum wage prescribed by the Govt. is not sufficient to meet their daily needs.

The women shared their untold stories of various abuses and difficulties. Many women are engaged in domestic work but most of the time, they are deprived of their rights such as fixed wages, health benefits, decent and safe working condition, holidays, maternity leave etc. The Chief Guest of the event Mrs. Shobha Ojha, Spokes Person of congress party assured to take up the demands of domestic workers with the present Government. Shri Surjit Singh Chauhan of BJP party also spoke about promoting the rights of domestic workers in Madhya Pradesh.

While marking the Women’s Day, eight women of Bhopal slums were honoured for their outstanding contributions in the development work of the slums, resolving the conflicts among families and reducing the violence in their slums. A skit was performed by women focusing on protecting the rights of domestic workers.

Some of the domestic workers shared their dreadful experience at their workplace such as verbal and physical abuse, accusing of stealing, at times nonpayment of their work, not getting wages on time or getting less wages as compared to the work assigned. Rajkumari, a domestic worker said that, “we have been working for many years but we are paid very low and no increment, we also require holidays”.

Tara Ahirware, another domestic worker added “domestic workers...(Cont. to p. 10....)
in Madhya Pradesh are not paid attention and give us our right”.

As part of the program, the women leader of Madhya Pradesh Domestic Workers’ Trade Union submitted a memorandum to the representatives of government with their demands.

★ Adopt the International Labor Organization Convention 189 and give Constitutional Provision at Madhya Pradesh which stipulates bringing the domestic workers in to the organized sector.

★ Proper laws should be made for domestic workers wages, wages are notified according to the work and time.

★ Legislation should be made for domestic workers regarding the maternity leave, health care benefits, holiday-once a week and protection of rights of domestic workers.

★ Address them not by servant, maid but as ‘Domestic Workers’ or call them by their name.

Domestic workers should also get the status of a ‘worker’ because they are entitled to payment. If constitution speaks about equality, then there should be a law for domestic workers too said, Anita Rajpali, Legal Consultant of Uday Society.

Finally, all the domestic workers shouted slogans and brought to the notice of the government to ratify the ILO Convention 189 for domestic workers and give their due recognition, dignity and self respect along with social security and protection against workplace harassment. A significant proportion of the world’s workforce is engaged in domestic work, yet these workers are among the least recognized. Since many years, women domestic are fighting for their rights but they are not heard except certain schemes are launched by the governments.

Sr. Lizy Thomas, SSpS, VIVAT India

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**ASC OF INDIA REGION CELEBRATED WOMEN’S DAY**

This year International Women’s Day was celebrated in different centres of ours in India like Tarikere, Mysore and Velugodu on 8th March 2019 and the main vision for the celebration was to celebrate womanhood, their social, political, cultural, economic achievements and acknowledge their significant contributions to the society at large.

The celebration was a participation of women as equal partners with men in achieving sustainable development, peace, security, and full respect for human rights. We work for the empowerment of women which continues to be a central feature of our mission to address the social, economic and political challenges across the globe.

Apart from focusing on women-centric developments, this day also emphasized on the importance of gender equality.

Women’s day is about making Sustainable Development Goals and it is a reality to provide women with adequate standards of living, access to education and health, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

We are proud to express that we have managed to bring about a lot of changes through our meaningful services by stepping into the remotest villages though there’s a lot more to do. We’re striving towards for a better accomplishment.

We don’t need a day to celebrate being women!
We need to celebrate ourselves, and each other!

Sr. Rosina Joseph, SSpS, VIVAT India
USA: IN MISSION WITH MIGRANTS IN EL PASO

Responding to an appeal from the Leadership Conference of Women Religious for volunteers to help in the service of migrants at the Mexican/American border, Sisters Selvi Raj, Skolastika Wea, and Maria Theresa Nguyen spent two weeks in El Paso, Texas, to help provide short-term hospitality to refugees and migrant families. Following is one of their stories.

Sr. Selvi Raj:

“Annunciation House in El Paso provides hospitality to a great number of refugee families being released by ICE. The three of us were assigned to work in one of the temporary centers called “Messa Inn”. Our task was to help connect the migrants with their sponsors in the US and provide accommodations while in El Paso. The majority of families arriving at the border have relatives and friends in the US who gave them financial help to pay “coyotes” to lead them to the border. Most of the refugees we met came from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and a few from Cuba, who fled violence, corruption, poverty, and threats of many kinds to their family in their home country.

I had direct contact with many refugees while completing the intake form. Many of the migrants were mothers with young children or fathers with their children; but their were not “whole” families (parents and their children). I wondered “why”? A father came with a one and half year old child and a mother with a three month old baby. I learned what a desperate strategy it was to be able to cross the border. For the safety and future of their children, the parents under take that perilous journey in the hope of something better.

Watching the people getting off the bus that brought them from the immigration office to the shelter, I was struck by the complete silence and the great fear and sadness in their eyes. In that silence, I was reminded of Jesus’ silence before his judges. While talking with one woman, I asked her about the silence. She replied, “we thought they were taking us to prison”. She continued saying, with tears in her eyes, “no one should go through this experience”. For her the hardest part was not the suffering she endured during the journey but the dehumanizing experience of the immigration procedures.

IN the first days of our ministry, I noticed that most of the women and men brought to the center had an “instrument” attached to their ankles. I cautiously asked a man if he could show me what he was wearing. He did so and immediately a woman standing next to him also volunteered to show me the instrument. I asked their permission to take a photo. The anklet is a control mechanism which indicates their whereabouts. It is a GPS fixed on their body. This incident made me question our Christian values: Jesus proclaimed liberty to captives and to set the downtrodden free. But how do we set the downtrodden free? We speak about respect and freedom, of human rights and dignity, and here we fix our desperate sisters and brothers with gadgets of control. This experience in El Paso helped me to better understand the situations of the migrants and the refugees. I thought the words “undocumented” and “illegal” referred to those who crossed the border without anyone noticing, but here the people arrive and the security cameras detect them and information is sent to the border patrol. They are picked up to the immigration office. Their connection to someone on the US is confirmed and immigration issues a document with the same and address where the migrant is supposed to be located. The document also has a date for a court appearance where it will be determined if the person entering the country without documents can remain or not. The human suffering of these people invites me to solidarity with them as my sisters and brothers.”
SDG 10 TARGETS

10.1 By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40% of the population at a rate higher than the national average.
10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.
10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including through eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and actions in this regard.
10.4 Adopt policies especially fiscal, wage, and social protection policies and progressively achieve greater equality.
10.5 Improve regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen implementation of such regulations.
10.6 Ensure enhanced representation and voice of developing countries in decision making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions.
10.7 Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.
10.a. Implement the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in accordance with WTO agreements.
10.b. Encourage ODA and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to states where the need is greatest, in particular LDCs, African countries, SIDS, and LLDCs, in accordance with their national plans and programs.
10.c. By 2030, reduce to less than 3% the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5%.

SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

PROGRESS OF GOAL 10 IN 2018

Some countries have made efforts that have been made in some countries to minimize income inequality, enhance zero-tariff access for exports from less developed countries (LDCs) and developing countries, and give additional assistance to LDCs and small island developing States (SIDS). However, progress will need to be accelerated to reduce growing disparities within and among countries.

- Between 2010 and 2016, in 60 out of 94 countries with data, the incomes of the poorest 40 per cent of the population grew faster than those of the entire population.
- In 2016, over 64.4 per cent of products exported by LDCs and SIDS faced zero tariffs, an increase of 20 per cent since 2010. Developing countries overall had duty-free market access for about 50 per cent of all products exported in 2016.
- In 2016, receipts by developing countries from member countries of the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD, multilateral agencies and other key providers totalled $315 billion; of this amount, $158 billion was ODA. In 2016, total ODA to LDCs and SIDS from all donors totalled $43.1 billion and $6.2 billion, respectively.
- Based on provisional data, among the $613 billion in total remittances recorded in 2017, $466 billion went to low- and middle-income countries. While the global average cost of sending money has gradually declined in recent years, it was estimated at 7.2 per cent in 2017, more than double the target transaction cost of 3 per cent.