Dear Readers,
Welcome to the 81st Edition of VIVAT Newsletter.

The last edition of VNL 2019 covers two UN events: the one is about the 25th Conference on Climate Change (COP25) in Madrid, 2-13 December 2019 and High level Event on the closing of ‘International Year of Indigenous Languages 2019’ on 17th of December 2019 held at UNHQ New York. Four other stories come from Rome about Synod of the Amazon; from Paraguay about SSpS Involvement in Defending the Rights of Cava Guarani People; from Indonesia about Celebrating International Day of the Poor with the Poor; and from Timor Leste about VIVAT Workshop on Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

This Edition ends with the 14th Part of Introduction to SDGs, especially SDG 13 on Climate Action.

Thank you for your contributions and please continue support VNL by sending your stories from the ground.

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The 25th UN Climate Change Conference (COP 25)

The 25th UN Climate Change Conference (COP 25) which took place in Madrid, Spain, concluded on 15th December afternoon, 48 hours after the originally scheduled time. There were negotiations, closed door deliberations between interest groups. Likewise, civil society groups constantly engaged in advocacy and making strategic interventions and demonstrations for earth’s rights and people’s wellbeing.

Daisuke Naurui SVD, Pilar Trillo LSA, and Helen Saldanha SSpS participated in the 25th UN Climate Change Conference (COP 25) that took place in IFEMA, Madrid, Spain from 2-13 December 2019 (extended up to 15 December) under the presidency of the Chilean government. Around 25,000 participants from 200 countries including Heads of State and government, business leaders, scientists and, activists attended this global event. Initially Brazil, citing financial reasons, and later Chile, due to unrest, cancelled hosting of this Conference. It was made possible as Spain took up this responsibility making all the preparations within a short period. The conference venue was organized into two zones; Blue zone was for official events, exhibitions and negotiations and green zone was for civil society action.

With each year, climate conference is gaining relevance due to the climate emergency that has taken toll on people’s lives, security and wellbeing. By and large the feeling was that science cannot be ignored. We must act now as we are on a tipping point. The impacts of climate change are threatening. No country or a living being will be spared from the catastrophe that human greed has created. The worse affected the poor, indigenous peoples, women and children, persons with disability. They are driven out of their homes and countries.

The sole focus of the Conference was “Time for Action is Now”. It aimed to address the urgent need to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels by enhancing mitigation efforts of global annual emissions of greenhouse gases. Carolina Schmidt, the Conference President, constantly called upon the delegates to adhere to the ambitious plan given the emergency that could lead to extinction.

The countries negotiated on outstanding issues such as Article 6 of the Paris Agreement towards meeting the domestic mitigation goals through Carbon markets, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), adaptation strategies, Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts, and gender and climate change.
We participated in various side events and joined working groups on human rights (HR and CC WG), Interfaith groups and Women and Gender Constituency Working group (WGC). These groups met daily and held coordination meetings to advocate with country delegations. WGC advocated vigorously to include gender Action Plan which was adopted. The outcome of the conference is considered less satisfactory not only for the civil society but also for many countries involved in the process. It did not achieve the goal that it set out to be.

The negotiations were unable to reach consensus in many areas, pushing decisions to COP26, which will be held in UK next year. Major economies and smaller states struggled to work out outstanding issues. Article 6 which deals with the carbon pricing and carbon markets, that would demand concrete commitments from the most polluting countries was not adopted. There was no consensus on agreeing rules for “Article 6” carbon markets and other forms of international cooperation. This was a pending issue from COP24 and now, it will be negotiated in the next COP. It only shows the disconnect between the people’s voice, scientific knowledge, and policy gaps. Strong human rights language is also missing in the outcome document.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterrez who at the opening plenary had invited the world Leaders to show accountability and responsibility as anything less would be a betrayal of our entire human family and all generations to come tweeted at the end of the COP25, “I am disappointed with the results of COP25; The international community lost an important opportunity to show increased ambition on mitigation, adaptation & finance to tackle the climate crisis”.

A strong sense of commitment and solidarity among the civil society groups - indigenous peoples, workers, youth, feminists and activists was heartening. It has set a goal for the future. There was one message at the end of each statement by the civil society groups during the closing plenary, People Power, Climate Justice! It only reiterates the change comes from the ground.

Around 15 VIVAT members participated in the Climate March on 6 December. On the same day, in the morning, VIVAT España members under the leadership of Pilar Trillo LSA organized a parallel event, “Migration, mobility and climate change: Faith based experiences on Rebuilding lives” which was held in Puente de Esperanza. The panel consisted of 6 persons, three climate refugees and three VIVAT members. They shared their stories of struggles as they are rebuilding their lives in this country. 42 members were participated in this event. Impacts of climate change affect the poorer population the most and leads to homelessness. Initiatives that VIVAT members in Spain have taken rekindles their hope for living a life of in dignity.

By Helen Saldanha, VIVAT International
High level Event on the Closing of ‘International Year of Indigenous Languages 2019’ at UN, New York

On 17th of December 2019, High level Event on the closing of ‘International Year of Indigenous Languages 2019’ was held at UN New York together with His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande President of the General Assembly, ECOSOC, UNESCO and Other UN agencies together with Indigenous Leaders across the world.

In the meeting the delegates opined their experiences, involvements, commitments, activities and on the future of Indigenous Languages, Cultures and their holistic development. The IPs delegates clearly see that if the UN and all members States, Indigenous peoples and different institutions. In the thematic section of the IYIL five topics that are being discussed for implementations are Indigenous Peoples’ i. Languages, ii. Education, ii. Health, iv. Sustainable Development and v. Justice.

In the steering committee members meeting the UNESCO secretariat presented that within 10 months there were around 900 conferences in 77 countries, which it self is a record and it shows the enthusiasm and interest of the member States, Indigenous peoples and different institutions. In the historical and painful past because of
All the members present demanded that UN to Declare ‘A Decade of International Year of Indigenous Languages, for conservation, revitalization and continuity of the Indigenous Languages and cultures.

At the end Grand Chief Wilton littlechild and Mr. Craig Ritchie had given their concluding remarks and Mr. Luis Montalvo had performed traditional worship and H.E Tijjani Muhammad- Bande, President of the General Assembly declared the year and the conference closed.

Nicholas Barla, SVD  
Steering Committee Member for organizing IYIL for Asia region/VIVAT India

SVD involvement to the Amazon Synod

Some VIVAT member congregations have been actively participating in the Amazon Synod, a world wide conference of Catholic Church.

Outside the synod hall of Vatican, VIVAT was active addressing various issues through side events. On 8 October, VIVAT co-hosted a seminar which introduces the advocacy commitment of religious NGOs at UN. On 15 October, Mr. Samuel Drempetic from Steyler Bank talked about the economy and ethic at a seminar of CIMI. On 20 October, there was a private gathering of the Synod participants, including some VIVAT members, at the Catacombs of Domitilla, which the participants made a pact to work on environmental issues.

During the Synod period, St. Maria in Traspontina church was set as an “Amazon Tent”. Many events were organized and exhibitions held.
VIVAT presented a small panel which introduces the work of grassroots members.

Civil society commitment on indigenous and environmental issues through advocacy at UN

On 8 October, the titled seminar was organized in Rome. The seminar was co-hosted by VIVAT International, Franciscans International (FI) and Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary (RSHM), three UN accredited NGOs run by religious congregations. Sr. Veronica Brand from RSHM, Mr. Budi Tjahjono from FI and Fr. Robert Mirsel from VIVAT spoke how their NGO address the issues of indigenous and environment through advocacy and awareness raising actions both at grassroots and at the UN in New York and Geneva. By introducing the concrete cases in Brazil and Indonesia, they shared the importance of the collaboration of the grassroots religious and the NGOs at the UN. They insisted that the issue should be addressed by the affected indigenous people themselves, and religious NGO should support and accompany the effort of indigenous people. For this, the three NGOs often invite indigenous people to come to New York and Geneva to express their concerns. The seminar was a good opportunity to learn the better approach to the issues and the UN mechanism which we can utilize for our mission in relation to indigenous people and environment.

Lobby, Economy, Finance and Ethical Banking.

Multinational Companies and Exploitation in Amazon.

This seminar was organized on 15 October in Rome by the Conference of the Missionary Institutes in Italy which SVD Italian province is a member. Mr. Samuel Drempetic, the Director of Ethic and Sustainability department of the Steyler Ethik Bank and Mr. Emanuele Isonio, the editor of a magazine “Valori” introduced how the multinational companies systematically destroy the nature and violate the human rights of indigenous people, and how civil society like religious congregations could address the issue. Mr. Drempetic introduced the work of Steyler Bank, which is established by SVD as a “missionary bank”, and its ethical investment approaches to the companies and investors. According to him, there are more investors who consider ESG (Environmental, social and corporate governance) as important criteria for investment, and the market for ethical investment is growing. He said particularly young generation is getting more sensitive to ESG. “Ethical Scouting”, a unique mechanism of Steyler Bank, SVD and SSpS which utilize our missionary grassroots information for financial advocacy is a good tool for us to tackle the problems caused by multinational companies.

Daisuke Narui, SVD, Executive Secretary of VIVAT International, Rome
The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) workshop

in Timor Leste, Dili 7 – 12 October 2019

From 7 – 12 October 2019, over 40 participants gathered in Dili, the capital of East Timor (officially: Democratic Republic of Timor Leste), to attend the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) workshop organized by VIVAT International. Most of the participants are the members of Catholic Religious Communities based in Timor Leste and belonging to VIVAT International. There was also a number of delegates from NGOs and the JPIC diocesans commissions.

This workshop was the positive response of VIVAT International to the request from the VIVAT Indonesian branch to help them be engaged in the UPR process in Timor Leste and Indonesia. VIVAT members and other partners on the ground, in Timor Leste and Indonesia, are
willing to be involved in this process. Fr. Andrzej Owca, CSSp, VIVAT representative from Geneva was responsible for preparing and conducting the workshop, and Brother Tino, from Edmund Rice International, was invited to be part of the process.

One could ask: what the Universal Periodic Review is (UPR)?

The UPR is the United Nations mechanism, which reviews the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States. It also gives all States an opportunity to present to the Human Rights Council what actions it has taken to improve the human rights situation in their State. In addition, it gives also the UN a chance to address human rights issues and to help States deal with human rights challenges and reminds States of their responsibility.

To begin, we clearly laid out some objectives, which were very helpful for the participants in the workshop process. We intended that the participants would gain knowledge about the UN system and the HR mechanisms, with a special focus on the Universal Periodic Review. We also hoped that they would understand the role of the Human Rights Council in Geneva and become familiar with the UPR process.

At the heart of the process, is the role of civil society in raising awareness and promoting human rights at the national and international level (UN) by engaging with the UPR process.

One of the most fruitful inputs during the workshop was the visit of the Minister of Justice of Timor, Mr. Manuel Carceres da Costa who visited us twice. As a learning process, his second visit was very important when he participated, as a panelist, in one of the panel discussions. All participants became aware that in the UPR process and human rights approach, the government is our partner and we have to learn how to engage and collaborate with it.

The third UPR cycle of Timor Leste will take place in 2021 and the UPR report from civil society should be submitted at the beginning of 2021. We are expecting to hear about the next step from the Timor Leste group.

A big THANK YOU to the Organizing Committee who did a great job and everything was foreseen and prepared. Thank you very much.

Andrzej Owca, CSSp – representative of VIVAT International in Geneva
PUTTING THE LAST FIRST

STFK Ledalero Students Celebrated World Day of the Poor with the Scavengers

Putting the last first is a humanitarian term which means placing the minority (in any sense) as a priority. The poor is one of the minority groups, for whom we should apply what is written in Psalm 9:19: that “the hope of the poor shall not perish forever.” This passage has inspired Pope Francis as he set the World Day of the Poor in 2017, since when the Roman Catholic in the world has been celebrating November 17th as the World Day of the Poor. This year of 2019 is the third year of the World Day of the Poor which will be celebrated on Sunday November 17th. Pope Francis set that day in order to offer the Church a World Day of the Poor, so that the Christian communities throughout the world can become an ever greater sign of Christ’s charity for the least and those most in need. Putting the last first in a real action is an exquisitely evangelical fullness, that is, Jesus’ preferential love for the poor.

As a part of the Christian communities, along with 47 the SVD seminarians of St. Paul’s Major Seminary of Ledalero, Maumere-Flores, Indonesia I took this opportunity of the World Day of the Poor spending one day with the poor on Saturday, November 16th, 2019 to reflect upon how our lives and mission witness Jesus’ preferential love for the poor. Early in the morning of that day (Saturday, November 16th), we left the community in order “to be with” and “to be for” the Scavengers in Watuwoga, about 20 km from Ledalero. There were 16 Scavengers who welcomed us when we arrived there in Watuwoga. After greeting each others, we worked together collecting garbages and sort them out for about two hours. After that we gathered together for lunch and for offering some gifts for them. At that moment, on behalf of the Seminarians, I offered my full gratitude to the Scavengers for their welcome and hospitality and for their open hearts in accepting the planning of working together. Besides words of gratitude, I also em-
phasized that the Scavengers were a part of our lives and were our great teachers who taught us about many values of life. “You (Scavengers) are the part of our lives. You are the other sides of our lives. We are being here with you not to disperse charm but just because we love you as Jesus has loved the poor. We would like to learn from you about hard working, diligence, patience and optimism...”.

Mrs. Laurensia Meti, the leader of the Scavengers said that they were so happy for such a great opportunity meeting and working with the Seminarians. “We have nothing to give to you. We just have a word, ‘thank you’ for visiting us here in this very dirty place. We love you very much in our ways. We will keep your names in our works and prayer. May God bless you”, She said.

After saying farewell to the scavengers the seminarians and I left Watuwoga at about 3 o’clock in the afternoon. Thanking Pope Francis for such an inspiring initiative of having November 17th as the World Day of the Poor, as it was further emphasized by our General Superior of SVD in the last edition (November 2019) of the SVD Nota (Arnoldus Nota).

*by: Father Henrikus Maku, SVD, STFK Ledalero/VIVAT Indonesia*

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**The SSpS walk with the Avá Guaraní Indigenous of Paraguay**

The Congregation of the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit has more than 42 years experience of working with the suffered villages of the Avá Guaraní Indigenous people of Alto Paraná and Canindeyú States. The motto of this mission is: "May all have life and life in abundance.” (Jn 10,10) This is the goal of the mission. Our presence and service is that the language, traditions and faith of the Ava Guaraní People are respected, defending the rights to
The indigenous people have suffered irreversibly, the expulsion of the 36 communities on the banks of the Paraná River due to the construction of the Itaipú Binacional Hydroelectric Dam, which has forced the Avá Guarani to abandon their way of life. They are also victims of the invasion of foreign agro-livestock companies and other landowners who have stripped them of their territories, usufructing their lands, whose consequence is extreme poverty and the loss of sovereignty, remaining in small islands surrounded by soybean monoculture for Agribusiness. They have lost their forests, their traditional way of feeding, their land, their territory, their rivers and streams, their pure air, and now they are in danger of losing their language, their memory, their rites, their sacred songs, which is what only is left. For the Guarani, the land is not properly a commercial factor but a place to live their “teko”, their culture, their beliefs, their spirituality which is part of the Guarani being.

Faced with this situation, the spirit of this Indigenous Mission is to fight for the improvement of the living conditions and human dignity of these peoples through: struggle for land, education, health, agroecological agriculture, interfaith dialogue, elaboration of materials didactics in their own language, and formation of associations.

Education: From the beginning the sisters have accompanied the territorial assurance process of 29 communities. All efforts have been made since the Pastoral with their legal advisor, supporting and empowering indigenous people and their leaders, so that communities live safe and quiet in their ancestral territories. Nothing was given away, on the contrary everything has been achieved with many struggles, dangers, death threats and in some cases it has taken human lives. Until today, several properties have been made in the name of Avá Guarani communities.

With the presence of the SSpS Missionaries, school education has been incorporated, above all...
they have fought for a differentiated education by founding 28 schools, and developing the teaching materials according to their culture as part of the defense of their identity and their territory. Education is currently being carried out by the indigenous themselves who have started their formation promoted by the sisters. Today all the teachers of the 28 schools, the area directors (except one) and the supervisors are the indigenous themselves.

Development of teaching materials: The mission continues to support education through the development of reading books for children and manuals for teachers in the Ava Guarani language, namely Ayvu tee, which means the word that is born of the soul or the sacred word.

Health care: health promoters from different communities were systematically trained with the oporafa (religious leader) and a non-indigenous nurse. Then the training courses were continued permanently with officials of the Ministry of Public Health and the academic training of nurses. In addition, ethnomedicine has been strengthened so that they continue to transmit their ancestral knowledge of medicinal plants. However, until today, we continue to fight so that these prepared and trained people can count on a state item.

Associations: the formation of several Associations for the struggle for their land, health and education has been accompanied. In all these dimensions, the role of women plays an extremely important role.

Agriculture: before a consumer and predatory society where monoculture (soy, corn and wheat) is considered a great economic progress sweeping thousands and thousands of forest with indiscriminate logging regardless of the consequences of these deforestation that has a negative impact on the environment, especially in the indigenous communities who are victims, and keeping in mind the motto of the mission “I came so that they have life and life in abundance”, the SSpS sisters accompany strongly to resist this system, promoting the rescue of the people's knowledge Ava Guarani in terms of production strengthening sustainable agriculture, agroecological cultivation, fish farming, beekeeping, reforestation with native and fruit tree species, incorporating innovations according to their culture. They also promote the breeding and care of minor and major animals for the sustainable development of families.

Interreligious dialogue: with a contemplative, attentive and respectful look, the SSpS has always promoted sharing in ecumenical spirit the faith in the God of life. Interreligious dialogue with this people is one of the very significant dimensions of the mission. The encounter with the Shamans “Religious Leaders” of the communities is very important because it allows them to be in communion with God and with each other. From a deep spirituality of the Ava Guarani, he continues to encourage his people to maintain their cultural values in the face of the consumerist pressure of the surrounding society. These meetings with spiritual leaders is a sacred and privileged space for mutual enrichment between the Sisters and the natives. At the same time it is a meeting where they communicate their messages to families, and in this way they continue to transmit orally the culture and spirituality that identify the Ava Guarani.
As SSpS we want to continue widening our circles and tents next to the excluded, sharing the risks and dangers that they live on a daily basis, their stories become ours and ours theirs, recognizing the mystery of God’s passage revealed in all the Experiences lived with this town.

Sent by Sr. Gretta Fernandes, SSpS, Mission Secretary of SSpS Generalate

Introducing Sustainable Development Goals (Part 14)

SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate and its impacts

TARGETS AND INDICATORS
13.1. Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries
13.1.1. Number of deaths, missing persons and persons affected by disaster per 100,000 people
13.1.2. Number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies
13.1.3. Proportion of local governments that adopt and implement local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national disaster risk reduction strategies
13.2. Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning
13.2.1. Number of countries that have communicated the establishment or operationalization of an integrated policy/strategy/plan which increases their ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change, and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development in a manner that does not threaten food production (including a national adaptation plan, nationally determined contribution, national communication, biennial update report or other)
13.3. Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning
13.3.1. Number of countries that have integrated mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning into primary, secondary and tertiary curricula
13.3.2. Number of countries that have communicated the strengthening of institutional, systemic and individual capacity-building to implement adaptation, mitigation and technology transfer, and development actions
13.A. Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly $100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible

13.A.1. Mobilized amount of United States dollars per year starting in 2020 accountable towards the $100 billion commitment

13.B. Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities

13.B.1. Number of least developed countries and small island developing States that are receiving specialized support, and amount of support, including finance, technology and capacity-building, for mechanisms for raising capacities for effective climate change-related planning and management, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities.

PROGRESS IN 2019

- Increasing greenhouse gas emissions are driving climate change. In 2017, greenhouse gas concentrations reached new highs, with globally averaged mole fractions of CO2 at 405.5 parts per million (ppm), up from 400.1 ppm in 2015, and at 146 per cent of pre-industrial levels. Moving towards 2030 emission objectives compatible with the 2°C and 1.5°C pathways requires a peak to be achieved as soon as possible, followed by rapid reductions.

- As indicated under Sustainable Development Goal 1 (see para. 22 above), during the period 1998–2017, direct economic losses from disasters were estimated at almost $3 trillion. Climate-related and geophysical disasters claimed an estimated 1.3 million lives.

- As of April 2019, 185 parties had ratified the Paris Agreement. Parties to the Paris Agreement are expected to prepare, communicate and maintain successive nationally determined contributions, and 183 parties had communicated their first nationally determined contributions to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, while 1 party had communicated its second. Under the Agreement, all parties are required to submit new nationally determined contributions, containing revised and much more ambitious targets, by 2020.

- Global climate finance flows increased by 17 per cent in the period 2015–2016 compared with the period 2013–2014.

- As at 20 May 2019, 28 countries had accessed Green Climate Fund grant financing for the formulation of national adaptation plans and other adaptation planning processes, with a value of $75 million. Of these, 67 per cent were for least developed countries, small island developing States and African States. Proposals from an additional seven countries,
with a value of $17 million, are in the final stage of approval. In total, 75 countries are seeking support from the Green Climate Fund for national adaptation plans and other adaptation planning processes, with a combined value of $191 million.


UPCOMING EVENTS

- **10-19 FEBRUARY 2020**: 58th Session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD58), New York, USA.
- **25 – 27 MARCH 2020**
  The Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, Bangkok, Thailand
- **01 – 02 APRIL 2020**: Youth Forum, UNHQ, New York

UN CALENDAR OF INTERNATIONAL DAYS

**January:**
27: International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust

**February:**
1 - 7: World Interfaith Harmony Week
6: International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation
20: World Day of Social Justice
21: International Mother Language Day

**March:**
1: Zero Discrimination Day
3: World Wildlife Day
8: International Women’s Day
20: International Day of Happiness
21: International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; World Poetry Day; International Day of Forests
21 - 27: Week of Solidarity with the Peoples Struggling against Racism and Racial Discrimination
22: World Water Day

**April:**
22: International Mother Earth Day