VIVAT International

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

PG. 2
COMMEMORATING BEIJING DECLARATION
PG. 3
INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL COOPERATION
PG. 3
RELIEF WORK DURING COVID-19
PG. 4
COVID-19 WARRIORS
PG. 5
RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC
PG. 6
INTERNATIONAL DAY- ELIMINATING VIOLENCE
PG. 7
COMMEMORATION - 20TH ANNIVERSARY
PG. 8
EMPOWERMENT PROJECT IN LEMBATA
PG. 9
INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS DAY 2020
PG. 10
CIVIL SOCIETY ON FINANCING FOR DEV.
PG. 11
SEVENTY-SECOND ANNIVERSARY UDHR
PG. 12
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
PG. 13
2021 UNITED NATIONS MAJOR EVENTS
PG. 13
INTERNATIONAL UN DAYS

DEAR READERS,

This issue of the newsletter continues to bring the stories of the Pandemic as shared by the members. They have worked along with the local administration and with other groups. In some instances, their contribution is formally recognized by the local governments.

The issue also covers the UN events in which VIVAT was engaged during the year, such as empowerment of women, Financing for Development, and human rights. VIVAT completed 20 years as an organization. Anniversaries were marked in Indonesia and Brazil, with meaningful sessions on our relevance, human rights, and dignity.

We extend a warm welcome to Sr. Maria Lourdes Santos, SSpS who on 25 January 2021, will take up the responsibilities of the VIVAT office in New York as the Co-Executive Director from Sr. Helen Saldanha.

As we move from the challenging year 2020 sailing through the impacts of the pandemic, may our hopes for life, dignity, and rights be realized for all people in 2021.

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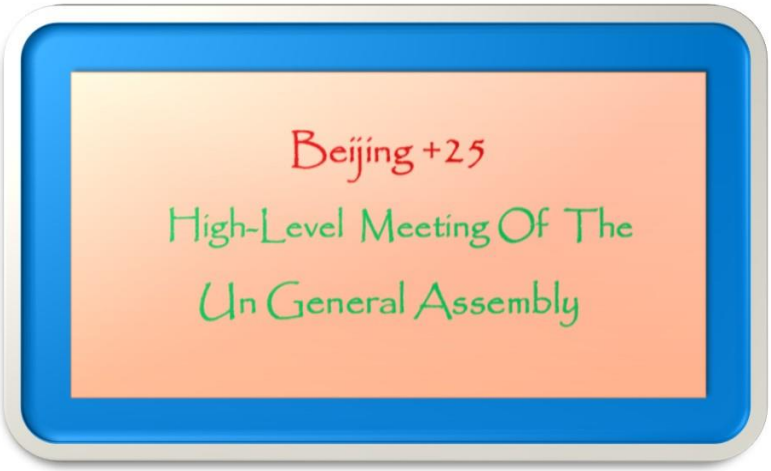
COMMEMORATING THE BEIJING DECLARATION: A JOURNEY OF 25 YEARS



In 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women adopted the Beijing Platform for Action, a comprehensive roadmap for the empowerment of women and girls, with 12 critical areas of concern. These areas are poverty, education and training, health, violence, armed conflict, economy, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms, human rights, media, environment, and the girl child. Every 5 years, UN Women has led a process of periodic reviews during the Commission of the Status of Women. Though there were plans to commemorate this day on a grand scale, with lots of preparations, reviews, and plans, it could not be done because of the COVID-19 Pandemic. On 1 October 2020 during the UN General Assembly, the virtual high-level event was held to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration.

The theme of the meeting was, "Accelerating the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls". UN Secretary-General António Guterres in the opening section appealed for a strong commitment from the member states for affirmative action to increase the representation of women in decision-making places and leadership positions. His report on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, with contributions from 173 countries shows that commitments have not been complemented by action, accountability and investments. UN Women called for actions and unwavering political will and allocation of resources in structures to empower women and girls to bring them to the center of decision-making.

This year also marks the 20 Years of Security Council resolution 1325 on women and peace and security that calls for the increasing the participation of women as well as the incorporation of gender perspectives in all UN peace and security efforts. Likewise, the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other treaties are important.

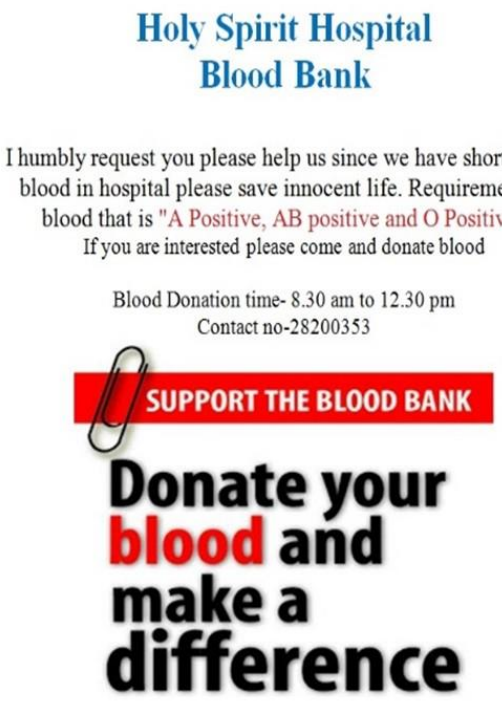
The impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic are worse experienced by women and girls around the world. Violence against women and girls including domestic violence has escalated. Feminization of poverty is increased which makes it very essential to implement social protection measures, wage subsidies, and other benefits that would help gender-specific consequences of the Pandemic. Collaboration with Civil society and faith-based organizations is a step forward.

As a faith-based advocacy organization, VIVAT members work with women and girls. Many members are involved in education, health care, legal aid, community development, and are contributing to the implementation of SDGs. Efforts are made towards strengthening cooperation among like-minded groups at the grassroots to strengthen women's capacities and participation in decision-making processes.

For more information:

UNGA: https://www.un.org/pga/75/event/high-level-meeting-on-the-twenty-fifth-anniversary-of-the-fourth-world-conference-on-women/

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL COOPERATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT IN ADDRESSING SDG 4 DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



Holy Spirit Hospital, a health care institution in Mumbai set up a separate COVID section to treat the COVID-19 patients in collaboration with the Municipal Corporation of Mumbai. It has been a joy to see persons going back home after recovery. The anxiety around COVID-19 was immense as no one knew especially in the initial stages what this emergency was like. One of the success stories shared by the members is the recovery of a pregnant mother, whose respiratory condition was worrisome.

Sneha Joseph, the Executive Director of the hospital is recognized by the state administration for her leadership, more so for donating convalescent plasma to the poor patients in a Government-run hospital, to save the lives of coronavirus patients after she recovered from COIVD-19.

On 1 November 2020 Sneha was honored 'COVID-19 Warrior Award' at an event by Spandan Arts NGO, given away by the Governor of Maharashtra state at his residence in Mumbai who hailed the exemplary service that inspired many to donate blood. As of 1 December, 2020, Sneha has donated plasma five times.

Helen Saldanha, VIVAT International

RELIEF WORK DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC BY JANVIKAS SOCIETY, INDORE

Covid-19 Pandemic has caught us all unawares and the most affected people are the poor and marginalized with whom we work. We have been witnessing a large number of deaths daily all over the world, an increasing number of patients who have been tested positive, deaths of doctors, nurses, paramedical staff, government officials, reverse migration of the distressed migrant workers who have to walk thousands of kilometers to reach their home towns/villages. The poor are struggling to feed themselves and their families. Hunger has increased. Though there are some relaxations in the 4th phase of lockdown, it is painful to notice that the poor and the marginalized who depend solely on daily wages are struggling to survive.

Due to the countrywide lockdown, they do not have any work and as a result, no money to purchase food items. They tried to manage for a week with the little

money and food materials they had, but in the following days, weeks, and months they had nothing to eat. It was a crisis period for them. The heart-breaking stories of migrants traveling thousands of kilometers through the state of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat on foot from the place of work to their villages in the hot sun without any means of food, water, safety measures, etc. were reported in the mainstream media. The situation in the interior villages of Jhabua, Rajasthan, and Gujarat where we

work was no different. It was a big blow for the poor farmers as they were unable to sell the product of their crop as the vegetable and food grain markets were shut indefinitely. The local governments did not immediately address the crisis in reaching out to the poor with relief materials.

It was the need of the hour to respond proactively like the good Samaritan to reach out to the needy with immediate relief materials. Indore city has 714 notified slums where the poor and marginalized (migrant workers) depend on daily wages for their survival and their family members. The most affected due to Covid 19 Pandemic and the country-wide lockdown were the migrant workers, waste pickers, and domestic workers living in these slums. It was at this crucial time of the crisis 'Janvikas Society' initiated the Corona Lockdown Response by providing groceries items (kits) to the poor and the needy. These were the people who were most affected in the slums by the lockdown as they solely depended on the daily earnings through the collection and sale of dry waste. Janvikas was able to reach out to the needy through the network of NGOs in the city, initiatives of our staff, members of our Youth Clubs, and Slum Development Committees. We reached out to 40,849 people with necessary grocery items, cooked food, and masks during the entire lockdown period.

Youth Clubs and Slum Development Committees that are formed by Janvikas in the slums have proactively responded to the situation by collecting grocery items and preparing food and distributing them to the hungry in their respective areas. This was a great inspiration for all of us as the poor themselves volunteered to risk their lives to help their neighbors in need. Thanks to all members of Youth Clubs and Slum Development Committees.

The exodus of migrants returning to their villages from the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat traveling thousands of miles on foot, bikes, and in trucks who had no facility for food and drinking water along the way were supplied with cooked food packets and bottled mineral water in Indore through the volunteers of Janvikas.

Between May and December 2020, Janvikas has reached out with necessities to around 40400 people. They provided around 2000 grocery kits, cooked food to 27000 and 4000 masks. All this was possible with volunteers and donors.

Roy Thomas SVD, India

COVID-19 WARRIORS, MAHARASHTRA INDIA

The cooperation with the Governments to address the pandemic by the members is recognized by the administration.

Urban Community Development Centre (UCDC) Mumbai was facilitated by Honorable Governor of Maharashtra Mr. Bhagat Singh Koshyarij on November 01, 2020, for its timely intervention in the service of the people in migration during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

From its inception in 1971, UCDC has been involved with the poor on the edges (slums), who came to this City fending for their livelihood. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Center took responsibility to reach out to the migrant families in their dire need of food and shelter.

Identification of the beneficiaries (unorganized laborers: daily wage workers, drivers, construction workers, etc.) was done by St. Arnold Youth Group, Women of Self-Help Groups, Hindi Mass Choir, Children's Parliament, and Volunteers. They were the front line 'soldiers' helping Urban Community Development Centre to reach out to 1,681 families with Dry Ration Kits (rice, pulses, oil, sugar, tea powder, salt, etc.) catering to the direct benefit of 8,500 and more people.

As we appreciate the efforts of St. Arnold Youth Group and Volunteers, we gratefully remember 'Sankt Augustin', 'Life Anchor Foundation' and 'UCDC Parivar': friends/benefactors, for their support to this cause during this unprecedented crisis. We greatly appreciate our MLA, Adv. Ashish Shelar and City Corporator, Ms. Swapna Mhatre for acknowledging and encouraging our initiatives.

Our poor were without work, food, and shelter. So, many of them wanted to get back to their respective hometowns at the earliest. UCDC together with the Youth Group arranged 19 Buses and 4 Trucks for the safe return to their villages. 1,150 people got back to their homes safely. Attending to the 'distress calls' from those who had to vacate their houses for nonpayment, we put them up at a shelter of St. Stanislaus High School (of Jesuits) and then sent home by the special 'Shramic Trains'. Present predicament helped us to initiate 'Data Collection of Migrants' for any future eventualities. This will come in handy also for furthering our mission of all-around empowerment of our people.

Cosmos Ekka, India

RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC: WHOLE OF SOCIETY APPROACH

On 15 August 2020, Richard Quadras, Director of Sarva Vikas Deep (SVD), Mangaon, Raigad of Maharashtra State was honored with the 'Corona Warrior' Award by the Government of Maharashtra's Disaster Management Department. This was given away by the Minister of State for Industry, Mining, Tourism in the presence of other dignitaries. The organization is working with the impoverished indigenous communities in the area for the past 14 years.

With the realization of COVID-19 becoming a pandemic there was a panic across the world. To contain the virus the Government of India declared the lockdown. Everyone in Sarva Vikas Deep complied with the guidelines from the local and central governments, which lasted for about 8 to 10 weeks. The businesses, small/big establishments except the essential services were closed. While everyone was affected by the pandemic-led lockdown, those in poverty suffered the most especially the internal migrants from other States, who had left their villages in search of livelihood for themselves and their families. They were people who, being in the unorganized sector were not supported by social security benefits. They lived in poorer conditions, and unemployment meant their families would go hungry too. Added to this, in early June 2020, a cyclonic storm in the area, caused huge damage to the houses of the indigenous peoples living in the suburban villages, rendering several households homeless and without electricity.

This was a crisis that needed a swift response. The organization plunged into action, drew out a strategic plan for timely intervention to reach out to

the affected people with food and other forms of support including listening to their painful stories. They arranged for dry food grains, ration kits, asbestos /cement roof sheets, plastic fiber tin sheets, roof tiles, Solar lamps, and Tarpaulin. Along with that, the organization made efforts to contact the relevant government administrative offices to get their support as well as like-minded groups and organizations. They could reach out effectively because of the cooperation they could build with the government as well as other faith-based and civil society organizations. Amidst the life struggles of those left behind, the impact of networking served as a beacon of hope that got recognition by the State as well as faith-based leaders.

During the quarantine period, the NGO worked along with the government departments to support the government initiative to supply dry ration to 3500 indigenous people affected by the disaster and the pandemic in the presence of the Government officials. They worked for regularizing access to the public distribution system of the government and coordinated community counseling in 90 villages to ease their fears and stigma attached to the COVID-19 virus and related illness.

Alongside they were also able to send over 1200 stranded migrants from other states like Karnataka, Telangana as well as other districts of Maharashtra to their places of origin. This was done by arranging 22 buses for migrant laborers. While they were in waiting their needs were taken care of. On the other hand, the local people working in other States were brought back safely which was possible with the coordination of many State Governments, church institutions, and other NGOs and community-based organizations. It was estimated through several agencies that around 2000 electric poles got uprooted due to cyclones. The electric department from the district head-quarter worked relentlessly round the clock to restore the electricity supply. The staff working on this were provided with accommodation until the work was done.

Helen Saldanha, VIVAT International
With inputs from Sarva Vikas Deep

INTERNATIONAL DAY- ELIMINATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS

On 25 November 2020, Uday Social Development Society Bhopal, under the umbrella of UNICEF Bhopal, Uday Society in collaboration with other NGOs, Police department, Women and Child Welfare Department observed the day 'International Day- Eliminating Violence against Women and girls with Posters Exhibition at 7 Police stations in Bhopal - Ashbagh, Awadhpuri, Piplani, Bagsewaniya, Kamla Nagar, Kolar, and Chunabhatti. It was a collective campaign during the Pandemic times keeping in mind the preventive guidelines while highlighting the need for addressing this problem. People from all walks of life, children, youth, police station in-charge, child welfare police officer, Supervisors of Integrated Child Development Schemes, members from the Municipality, and other officials were present.

In the program leaders of children and women groups shared the issues of violence against women and children, child rights, child marriage, child labor, and COVID-19 through posters and paintings with police officers. They also interacted with the police officers and discussed the issue of violence against women and children in society and sought police intervention to address these issues. The police department assured their support and directed women and children to dial toll-free No. 1098 (child helpline) and 1090 (women helpline) in the time of need.

Lizy Thomas, Bhopal India

COMMEMORATION OF THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF VIVAT INTERNATIONAL: VIVAT INDONESIA

On the occasion of commemorating the 20th anniversary of VIVAT International, VIVAT International-Indonesia members observed it in various ways by focusing on three main activities. These included disseminating VIVAT International information, organizing a virtual seminar on the JPIC's works, and celebrating a thanksgiving Eucharistic virtually.

The JPIC commissions carried out the dissemination of information in many areas of services for VIVAT Indonesia members. Having a common understanding of the VIVAT's vision, mission, and work, the national secretariat of VIVAT Indonesia prepared materials for the presentation. It offered several methods for VIVAT members' socialization in easy ways and provided materials in the form of hard- and soft-copy. Thus, the members can choose the best one based on their work situation without losing each member's creativity. VIVAT members disseminated VIVAT information in schools, formation communities (postulants, novitiates), convent communities, and villages where VIVAT's members work. Based on the final evaluation, all members carried out the VIVAT socialization very well. Besides socialization, some JPIC commissions held seminars on VIVAT. For example, the JPIC Commission of the SVD Ende Province offered a brief lecture on VIVAT International for students of the philosophy-theology course in the Major Seminary of St. Paul Ledalero, Maumere in Flores. Fr. Robert Mirsel, a former executive co-director of VIVAT International, was asked to deliver a lecture on VIVAT International at the beginning of the academic year.

The commemoration of the 20th anniversary of VIVAT International took place amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the VIVAT members held a virtual seminar using a zoom platform on November 9th, 2020. It highlighted the central theme "*VIVAT-JPIC / JPR Networking: Voicing the voiceless from the grassroots and national to the global level."* In addressing the central theme, some panelists shared their JPIC works on the field with various issues, from human trafficking and domestic violence against women and girls to IDPs, migrant workers, indigenous people, and environmental justice. Sr. Eustochia SSpS from the Humanitarian Volunteer Team-Flores (TRUK-F) shared her

experiences to defend victims' rights suffered from Human *Trafficking and Domestic Violence in the Sikka and Ende Regencies in Flores. Simon Suban Tukan, Coordinator of the SVD Ruteng JPIC Commission, talked about Caring and Fighting for environmental justice*. Leo Purwanto SCJ, the JPR coordinator of SCJ Indonesia Province, shared his *pastoral ministry for assisting former Timorese Internally Displaced People in South Sumatra*.

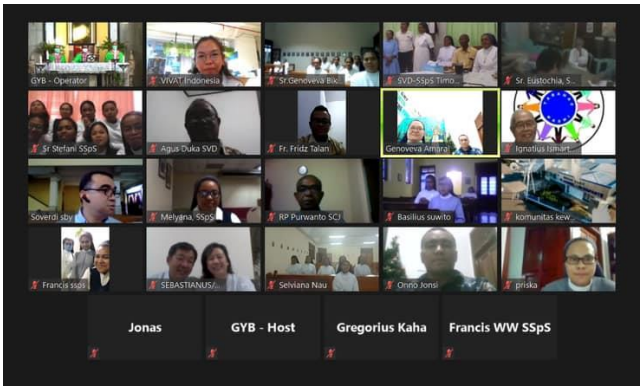
Furthermore, *F*rans Sani Lake from JPIC Kalimantan highlighted advocacy work in *Defending Indigenous Dayak People Rights in Central Kalimantan*. Meanwhile, Paulinus Maryanto OMI presented OMI's ministry for empowering migrant workers. Paul Rahmat SVD from the VIVAT International office shared some perspectives and ways to bring the JPIC issues from the grassroots to the international fora within/through the UN system and mechanism.

The vice president of VIVAT International, Fr. Paul Budi Kleden, made an opening speech on the webinar. He emphasized three main points and hopes in doing VIVAT's mission in the future. First, the congregations' plurality of the VIVAT International membership should be advantageous to build cooperative networks based on each religious congregations' spirituality. Second, VIVAT's work is, in principle, an advocacy work. Therefore, whatever charitable work we carry out at the

grassroots level, we must realize that our primary mission is to advocate. The third is communication and information matter. VIVAT members who work at the grassroots level should share information on their works with the VIVAT International offices. If there is injustice and human rights violation that needs to resolve, VIVAT International can deliver it to the UN forum.

The series of commemorating activities of the 20th VIVAT Anniversary was closed with a thanksgiving Eucharist celebration on November 18th, 2020. The eucharistic celebration was virtually held through a live streaming broadcast from Surabaya and presided by Fr. Gregorius Kaha, SVD, as the Chairperson of the VIVAT Indonesia Foundation. Paul Rahmat SVD delivered a sermon, which was a live broadcast from Jakarta. Meanwhile, other VIVAT members attended eucharistic live streaming from their respective service areas.

Inspired by the Good Samaritan story (Luke 10: 25-37) and the Apostle Paul's witnesses at Areopagus in Athen, Paul Rahmat emphasized in his sermon that the VIVAT - JPIC members must be present and involved in two realities of life. On the one hand, VIVAT members should get involved in everyday life in situations of those who fell into the hands of



"modern thieves" to accompany them and defend their rights. On the other hand, VIVAT members have to get involved in the decision-making process in dealing with the common good, public interests and speak up for the people's rights through public spaces. Shortly, VIVAT members have to bear witness of the Kingdom at the "modern Areopagus."

At the end of all the series of activities for the 20th VIVAT anniversary, Sr. Geno Amaral SSpS, as the Chairperson of VIVAT Indonesia, thanked all VIVAT members, communities, the JPIC/JPR commissions, and the religious congregations that have participated and supported the events

Agus Duka SVD, VIVAT Indonesia

EMPOWERMENT PROJECT IN LEMBATA ISLAND IN INDONESIA

Balai Latihan Kerja/BLK), the SSpS Skill Training Program is operating in Lembata Regency, a small island in the very east of Flores Island. Despite the whole world is being devastated by the Covid-19 pandemic, Balai Latihan Kerja has been holding a wonderful empowerment project through skill training packages. The participants were from diverse backgrounds and included persons with disabilities as well.

In the 2nd semester of 2020, we began the enrollment for the new participants of three packages of training: sewing class, fresh-fish processing, and the English class for both children and adults. Within a month more than 50 people registered. Since we did not have enough room capacity, we could only accept a few. Currently, we occupy the simple house lent by the local people and it is being used for both the skill training site and the sisters' residence.

It took us three months to walk through each package according to the BLK-curriculum standard. The 76-years-old Sr. Simporosa Dora, SSpS as the Sewing Instructor accompanied by the disabled but skillful person, Yakobus Pationa. There are two groups of sewing classes

for beginners and advance. In total, there are five groups of training participants guided by 7 tutors/instructors, including me for the Adults English class. During the training session, we were visited by the local and state government showing their support and respect for this kind of effort regardless of the covid-19 pandemic.

We planned to end the program on December 5, 2020, in a validatory ceremony. However, just a week before, we had to support hundreds of families affected by the Ile Ape volcano eruption. Therefore, we canceled the plan and reached out to the refugees with temporary shelter, food, and medicines. All of them now have gone back to their home after almost two months to the town of Lewoleba.

The BLK first-class closing program was held on January 6 of 2021 attended by the local governments and the participants and their families, opened with a short workshop on the topic of Dengue fever, delivered by a doctor from the local hospital. 41 participants got the Certificate of Competence; 11 of them got what we call 'working capital' for a startup. It was a small amount just to be able to begin a business initiative. Each participant from our Sewing class got a new sewing machine and Rp. 500.000, while those in the cooking program got cooking tools and the same amount of money.

This is a recurring program. The enrollment for the next program will be in April 2021.

Margaretha Ada, SSpS/Lembata

INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS DAY 2020: REIMAGINING HUMAN MOBILITY

Since 2000, December 18 is marked as International Migrants Day this day in 1990 the UN General Assembly adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The theme of 2020 International Migrants Day is Reimagining Human Mobility.

This year like every other meeting or deliberation, COVID-19 Pandemic is in focus when it comes to migrants. Their contribution as front-line workers in every sector is immense and integrating them in the recovery plan is a collective responsibility for building back better.

According to the Global Migration Data Portal, the number of international migrants or people living in a country other than their country of birth in 2019 had reached 272 million of which 48% are women. About 31% of the international migrants worldwide are in Asia, 30%, in Europe, 26 % in the Americas, 10 %in Africa, and 3 % in Oceania. Yet their contribution/role in the countries of destination is often unrecognized. COVID-

19 pandemic has shown clearly to the nations of the positive dimension of human mobility that benefits not only migrants, their families, and countries of origin, but also the countries they live and work in.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres lauded this contribution in his message and said that migrants have played an outsized role on the frontlines of responding to the crisis from caring for the sick and elderly, to ensuring food supplies during lockdowns and they should remain central to the recovery. His message to the countries was to ensure that they receive due attention especially in the areas of health and vaccination programs irrespective of their legal status. International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Labour Organization (ILO), UN Women, and many other UN bodies have given great visibility to the role migrants have played during the ongoing Pandemic risking their lives and safety.

In 2018 the Member States adopted the Global Compact for Migration under SDG 10.7 that focuses on safe, regular, and orderly migration. It is a comprehensive agreement, but not legally mandated. This year due to the COVID-19 pandemic millions have lost the jobs. For those living in poverty, the situation has turned worse. Data shows that the impacts of the COVI-19 pandemic are worse for women and children with increased risks of violence.

From the grassroots, the experiences of our members have been no different either. Migrants suffer the most as most of them are not protected by social protection benefits. The lockdowns though were necessary steps to contain mobility aggravated their vulnerabilities and insecurities. During the Pandemic the European Union has even come out with Pact on Migration that would govern their territories if passed. There are concerns about its impact on mobility.

Weblinks:

https://www.un.org/en/desa/integral-societies-migrants-are-central-covid-19-recovery
https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/migration
https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/12/statement-un-women-international-migrants-day
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=paFgi5dAjfc&feature=youtu.be
https://youtu.be/xE10pxCQp4I

Helen Saldanha, VIVAT International

CIVIL SOCIETY ON FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT (FFD) IN THE ERA OF COVID-19 AND BEYOND, 2 NOVEMBER 2020

Every commitment, if not backed with an allocation of resources is futile. The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has brought every country and region of the world multiple risks concerning public health, economy, social relations, and other related issues. Millions of people are pushed into hunger and poverty.

The civil society on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 pandemic held on 2 November 2020 aimed at integrating civil society voices, which was part of the year-long process initiated by the Prime Ministers of Canada, Jamaica, and UN Secretary-General.

On 28 May 2020, the Prime Ministers of Canada, Jamaica, and the Secretary-General convened a High-Level Event on “Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond” to join forces with governments, international organizations, and other

stakeholders to seek concrete financing solutions to the COVID-19 health and development problems in the light of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This resulted in the draft document, Menu of policy options to survive and build back better from this crisis. It was presented to Finance Ministers at a High-Level Meeting on 8 September

2020, and to Heads of State and Government at a Leaders' Meeting on 29 September during the 75th UN General Assembly (UNGA).

The NGO Committee on financing for development (FfD) has always been an integral part of the process and contributed through inputs in the discussions along with the larger civil society FfD forum. This includes a meeting called by the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General asking for feedback and suggestions to the Menu. An open letter was prepared by the civil society and submitted to the Heads of State which was also signed by VIVAT. https://csoforffd.org/2020/09/25/open-letter-to-heads-of-state-meeting-at-the-un/

The event of 2 November was held to integrate the voices of the civil society organizations advocating for financing for development. Helen made an intervention on behalf of the NGO Committee on FfD that stressed the concrete action on social protection floors to those who are left behind. (https://csoforffd.files.wordpress.com/2020/11/15.-dialogue-2-helen-saldanha-ngo-committee-on-ffd.pdf)

VIVAT also participated in the Special Session of the UNGA in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, 3-4 December 2020. This session aimed at the effective response to the pandemic which is a humanitarian, socio-economic, security, and human rights crisis. The event highlighted the fallout of the pandemic that could have the worst of long-term impact, affecting all especially the poorest and vulnerable people. The session focused on a comprehensive response and recovery process. Other issues taken up were global ceasefire during and beyond the pandemic as well financing for development in the era of COVID-19 and beyond.

Helen Saldanha, VIVAT International

SEVENTY-SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF UDHR AND 20 YEARS OF VIVAT INTERNATIONAL: BRAZIL

The theme of Human Rights Day 2020 was "Recover Better: Stand Up for Human Rights". At the UN Level, both UN Secretary-General and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stressed the call to action to recover better which can be done in togetherness. Their messages reiterated that human rights violations must end and everyone's human rights must be protected. Ending discrimination and widespread inequalities, enhancing people's participation especially of the young people, intensifying efforts to achieve SDGs, and working together will help to build back better.

To celebrate the 72nd Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the 20th Anniversary of VIVAT International in Brazil, organized a zoom conference on December 10, 2020. This two-hour-long session was moderated by José Boeing SVD. The aim was to highlight the importance of human rights in the context of Brazil through shared experiences, achievements, and challenges. Over 200 participated in the event.

Dário Bossi, MCCI, a member of the NGO - Justice on the Rails and the Pan-Amazon Ecclesial Network spoke on the commitment to human rights. He

presented the connection between human rights and the rights of nature, which challenges us in many ways, which is at the heart of the Treaty of Escazú.

Arlindo Pereira Dias SVD, from the NGO Street Network, showed how the pandemic has intensified social and racial inequalities in Brazil and how this reality is reflected in the numerical and worsening increase in the situation of street populations in urban centers. In São Paulo alone, more than 25,000 people are homeless.

Daniel Seidel of the Brazilian Commission of Justice and Peace shared with the participants about the

Campaign, 'Life by a Thread', a movement started by the Synod of Bishops in the Amazon region. This campaign seeks to promote and strengthen nonviolent mechanisms for the defense and self-protection of communities and leaders threatened; denounce at national and international levels the spread of the culture of hatred, threats, and impunity, as well as the recent policies to dismantle the rights acquired by peoples and communities; and defend and promote effective public policies to protect communities and leaders threatened.

Petronella Boonen SSpS of the Center for Human Rights and Popular Education dealt on the theme, Culture of Peace and Restorative Justice. The culture of peace calls for a repositioning in the world and a profound conversion to non-violence, based on the awareness and painful experience of violence itself and in ourselves. She reiterated the importance of opting for nonviolence. Nonviolence needs to be assumed in its various dimensions – from intrapersonal to social positioning. It also calls for a transformation of the Brazilian penal system that is recognized by the Supreme Court as - a state of unconstitutional rule. A possible response to the appeal of non-violence is restorative justice, which aims to build peace by encounters between all people involved in conflicting situations or crimes. Non-violence invites to trans-labor the victim's position, to release energy for peacebuilding so that, in the future, fewer people go through the experience of victimization. The culture of peace requires the rejection of the legitimation of any kind of violence and this posture is only possible with dense spiritual, political, and educational bases. By doing so, it is possible to follow faithfully the proposal of Jesus' life. To achieve nonviolence, Petronella shared about a case of sexual violence that in the criminal system would be answered with a minimum of six years prison sentence. Using the principles of Restorative Justice, it was possible to restore relationships, peace, and reconciliation between two families through dialogue.

In conclusion, Bishop José Altevir C.S.Sp of Cametá in the Amazon region stressed the importance of awakening in the Religious for the issue of justice. In the Amazon region, the cry for justice is stronger in indigenous communities, Quilombolas, riverside people as well as in the very nature's rights need to be respected.

At the conclusion, José Boeing summarized the sessions and thanked the panelists and the participants with the hope that we stand for life.

Weblink:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5XNmlRXgV4&t=7s

Petronella Boonen SSpS, Brazil

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS): GOAL 16- PEACE, JUSTICE, AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

SDG 16 seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. It is categorized into 12 Targets and 23 Indicators. This goal enumerates the needed values and systems to achieve other SDGs. It is important to build communities of peace, justice, dignity, human rights, earth rights, good governance from local to the global levels. Many countries and regions of our world, are thwarted by divisions, violence, crime, conflicts, sexual violence, trafficking, racism, casteism, tortures, exploitations, and human rights abuses despite the international and national commitments to peace, development, justice, and good governance. I consider this goal as one of the most important ones as it gives us the direction for achieving the 2030 agenda which includes all of the social approaches.

Targets of SDG 16:

16.1: Reduce violence everywhere.
16.2: Protect children from abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and violence,
16.3: Promote the rule of law and ensure equal access to justice,
16.4: Combat organized crime and illicit financial and arms flows,
16.5: Substantially reduce corruption and bribery,
16.6: Develop effective, accountable, and transparent institutions,
16.7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, and representative decision-making,

16.8: Strengthen the participation in global governance,
16.9: Provide universal legal identity.
16.10: Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms,
16.a: Strengthen national institutions to prevent violence and combat crime and terrorism,
16.b: Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies,

What can we do?

Study SDGs and explore how they can be applied to our work? For example, SDG 4 deals with Education. How can we apply SDG 16 to SDG-16?

- ✓ We can read the targets and discuss how we can implement them, create success stories. We are working towards it always. The effort is only to link with the existing frameworks and policies as we do with our Congregational/societal policies.

Further reading:

https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16
https://en.unesco.org/themes/education/sdgs/material/16
https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/sdg-16/
https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda
https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/
https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf

2021 UNITED NATIONS MAJOR EVENTS

February - July

a. The 59th Session of the Commission for Social Development - February 8 – 17
b. International Women's Day: 8 March 2021
   https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/11/announcer-international-womens-day-2021
c. The 65th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women - 15 – 26 March 2021
d. The 20th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues - Date: 19-30 April
e. High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) - Date: 6 – 15 July

INTERNATIONAL UNITED NATIONS DAYS

6 February: International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation (A/RES/67/146)
20 February: World Day of Social Justice (A/RES/62/10)
21 February: International Mother Language Day (A/RES/56/262)
8 March: International Women's Day
21 March: International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (A/RES/2142 (XXI))
21 March: International Day of Forests (A/RES/67/200)
22 March: World Water Day (A/RES/47/193)
24 March: International Day for the Right to the Truth concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and the Dignity of Victims (A/RES/65/196)