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Please send your articles on or before 5th of
January, March, May, July, September and November.

JANUARY- FEBRUARY
Central South US
Peru
Eastern Central Africa
(Kenya, Congo, South Sudan, Uganda)
Italy-Malta
North Mexico
Indonesia

MARCH- APRIL
West Africa (Senegal, Burkina Faso)
New York-Toronto
Europe-BFMN
(Belgium, France, Hungary, Netherlands)
Southeast Latin America (Brazil, Paraguay)
Great Britain
Egypt-Sudan
Ecuador
Colombia-Venezuela and Cuba

MAY- JUNE
Montreal, Canada
Philippines-Japan
Angola-Mozambique
Central America
(Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala,
Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Puerto Rico)
Argentina-Uruguay
South Africa

JULY- AUGUST
Mid-North America
Lebanon-Syria
West Mexico
Australia/Aotearoa-NZ
Eudist Family
East Asia
(Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam)

SEPTEMBER- OCTOBER
Bolivia-Chile
Northeast Asia
(China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, South
Korea)
Germany-Albania
The Isles (Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion)
Portugal
Austria-Switzerland-Czech Republic
Singapore-Malaysia
Spain

NOVEMBER- DECEMBER
South West India
Central East India-Nepal
Ireland
Sri Lanka-Pakistan
Transformative Communities Series:
Generative Designers of the Future

From Community Works, INC Website

By Mark Clarke.

“To live you must choose, to live you must encounter, to grow you must suffer.”

--Viktor Frankl

The world is dancing between rapid societal breakthroughs in all sectors and extreme polarization. Society has entered a process of redefining cultural assumptions while simultaneously, issues like environmental catastrophes of all varieties, and economic destabilization are impacting migration within countries and beyond traditional borders. These fluctuations are asking transformative communities to define their role with greater clarity of purpose, leading to action. Thus transformative communities are being asked to engage in creating visions and direction through collaborative ventures that lead to a just and compassionate society.

For these groups, planning is a vehicle to continually identify and decide how they will live a life of discipleship spreading the “good news.” Pope Francis regularly calls us to become a culture of encounter.

In the book, “The Heart of Pope Francis,” Diego Fares S.J. writes, “to foster encounter, the most useful tool is dialogue to create the capacity for dialogue. When a person enters into an encounter, he begins to dialogue, and dialogue means not simply hearing but listening. One must foster the capacity for listening.” Transformative Communities thus create a planning process that engages the internal community and stakeholders, including those they wish to impact. This manner establishes a foundation for becoming dialogical activists in solving society’s most pressing needs.

Collective planning is a profound, spiritual experience of exploring God's call. It demands an honest assessment of the current direction and seeking to understand how God's movement to share the gospel is evolving in these times. Planning requires opening the collective heart/soul to review one’s culture, mental models, and current course in light of emerging realities. It is often not easy because of the various group perspectives and understandings within the community. Thus contemplative prayer and reflection, as well as seeking the common good, are essential in the creation of a shared direction and action.

The word planning is often portrayed as corporate, business-like, while we are about ministry and relationships. Yet, planning is a sacred path that allows the community to choose a visionary direction that aligns with its timeless charism. The process sets the context and character as to how a transformative group desires to impact society’s emerging questions. Planning does not have to be the static, rigid framework that many of us have experienced in the past. Instead, it can be an organic and evolving process that invites the group to engage in being open to the divine call as it unfolds in real-time. God's call is about listening and responding to the messages as they evolve on a daily, monthly, and yearly basis.

To continue the reading Click here
Non Violent Communication Can Be a Blessing

By Sr. Juliana Devoy

How Sr. Rosanna Hung RGS Discovered that NVC Can Be a Blessing for those Who Learn and Practice It.

NVC is the abbreviation of “Non Violent Communication” the Masterpiece Of Marshall B. Rosenberg, Ph.D. so rightly subtitled, A Language of Life

Sr. Rosanna first read the book in 2005. It so captured her heart and her imagination that the first thing she did was translate it into Chinese. Many have called it “life changing” and this was Rosanna’s experience.

Before reading Rosanna said she was basically living in unhappiness I’m wrong” was how she saw herself. But the others are wrong too So she had a very negative perspective of life and people. But the book opened her mind to see things differently. What she learned was that needs are part of the human condition and are essential for human life so we shouldn’t always be judging them as right or wrong.

In 2010 Rosanna gave her first workshop to a group of women in Beijing and In 2011 her first workshop in Taiwan. These workshops were to people in different churches. Doing these workshops also helped to confirm and broaden her new perspective on herself and others. She became so convinced of the value of NVC she asked her provincial and obtained permission to go to the US and be trained as a certified an NVC trainer.

Over the years Sr. Rosanna has given NVC workshops to the people in church, to students and teachers in schools, to NGOs, to prisoners. In 2017 after she was assigned to Macao she started to have workshops for Catholics, Nuns, youth, teenagers and families in China. In 2019 she started to have workshops for priests too. Her plan for 2020 is to offer a package of training workshops to Nuns and priests who have shown interest in being trained to share this valuable way of living with other people.

It is impossible in one short article to share all the riches but as another Good shepherd Sister who had a life changing experience thanks to NVC, I would like to add a few words.

Before learning NVC I always considered myself superior to others because of my superior reasoning. I could come up with the best reasons for or against something. But NVC taught me that my reasons frequently did not convince others and didn’t help my relationships with others. Therefore, I began to shift my way of dealing with issues and began to sincerely ask the other person or persons involved what she was “feeling” and how did she see the issue, the situation. Needless to say, other people appreciated discussing things with me after my change much more than they did in the past.
This is the story of the spring from a source, from the Heart of ROME… from the Assembly of International General Superiors (UISG) … A spring that extends its hopes to the Mediterranean Basin.

Is it possible to undertake an adventure of hope in this Middle East, bloodied by so many wars, violence and the theater of this Arab Spring? This Middle East, the crossroads of civilizations, has unfortunately become the crossroads of "inhuman traffic", an appalling scenario of recruitment, abduction, transport and transfer of the most vulnerable people, particularly women and children, who have been intercepted by ruthless traffickers who have had the audacity to expose them on a low-priced market. It was in the midst of such a puzzle of misery that the Wells of Hope project took root, with a favorable reception and with the support of the Assembly of Major Superiors of Lebanon. Groups of women from different religious denominations (Catholic, Orthodox, Sunni, Shiite Druze and Alawite from the countries of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan) united for the cause of a noble task.

TOGETHER: Christian and Muslim women made public their membership in this Network during the Regional Assembly, July 21-24, 2019. They are courageous, expert and very professional women who desired to contribute their expertise to giving substance to this project through their respective activities while recognizing the culture and political realities of each country.

During the 10th anniversary celebrations of Talitha Kum in Rome, September 21 to 27, 2019, Sr Gabriella Bottani questioned the possibility of developing a Documentary Film for <Wells of Hope> one more gift that expresses all the love and support of Talitha Kum International for Middle-East region.

Three participating sisters (Sr Laudy Hobaika, a Besancon Sister from Lebanon, Sr Annie Demerjian, Congregation of Jesus and Mary from Syria, and myself), had the joy of meeting Dr LIA GIOVANAZZI BELTRAMI, President of “AURORA VISION”. She is a woman with a heart of gold and communicator par excellence who let us enter into perspectives of anticipation. We wondered - Make a Documentary Film for Wells of Hope? My God! a new adventure? are we going to be able to do this? Dr Lia knows how to scrutinize history and make cultures speak! With her approach, so respectful of our cultures, she later produced a masterpiece which has been presented to the assembly.

Do you think our adventure has ended? Surely not. We have in our hearts and memories the call of Sr. Patrícia Murray: Extend the space of your tent! Let’s roll out the covers of your home! Don’t hold back! Extend your ropes and strengthen your stakes! Yes, our adventure is intended to cover all the countries of our Middle East and our eyes are directed towards Egypt where we recently held a workshop to make Wells of Hope known. We received a very warm welcome from public authorities and the civil society.

"Gratitude is the memory of the heart; a heart that is not grateful is a poor heart." St Mary Euphrasia Pelletier.

We extend deep gratitude to all those who accompanied, supported, encouraged, and funded this project and to those who made our dream come true, we offer our deepest GRATITUDE.
The 22nd February 2020 marks a historical milestone for our Congregation. In the chapel of our House “Saint John Eudes”, close to the Generalate in Rome, Sister Ellen Kelly, our Congregational Leader, received officially into the Congregation 4 candidates for the Inter-Province Novitiate, in the presence of 40 Sisters. The neo-novices are: Ana Pepaj from Albania, Delphine Pafadnam and Lucie Sebgo, both from Burkina Faso and Lana Lama from Jordan.

Countless efforts had been exploited to bring together 8 candidates from four countries who had been waiting to be accepted as novices. The Italian Province generously offered the House, previously belonging to the Sisters of O.L.C. whose ministry was geared towards serving women and their babies.

On February 4th, 2019 a CLT decision was confirmed that the House of S.J.E. would serve the Pilot-Project where candidates to the Novitiate would be accepted. Why Rome? In these last years a number of Congregations had established their International Novitiates in Rome in an Inter-Novitiate Programme in English.

English classes started immediately sustained by Sisters and Mission Partner coming from U.K., U.S.A., the Philippines and Malta. They generously offered their time, teaching English, taking turns from March until the end of October. Sister Florence Soe. who currently was working in the Finance Department at the Generalate, was appointed Novice Directress and officially took up her mandate on the 3rd of November.

On the 3rd November the Inter-Province Novitiate was officially established, sustained by a Formation Community composed of: the Directress, Sr Florence Soe, from the East Asia Province, Sr Frances Lynch, from the Irish Province, Sr. Annunciata Gatt from the Italy-Malta Province and Sr. Marcelina Nascimento from the Angola-Mozambique Sector. It was the CLT’s desire that this new Community be prepared for their new mission. It was important that the community members, coming from different cultural realities get to know one another. A week’s retreat, guided by Srs Brigid Lawlor and Angela Fahey, three days of intercultural formation guided by Fr Tim Norton, SVD and “Community Building” by Sr Pauline Darby, HSJ facilitated building meaningful relationships.

On November 9th the 8 candidates returned home for a time of discernment and further contact with their respective communities. In the meantime the Formation community took the opportunity to prepare “the Novitiate”. On January 25th and 26th, the four candidates ready to enter the Novitiate arrived, radiant with joy. A loving welcome was awaiting them. They settled down and went right into a diligently prepared programme for their canonical year. A Novitiate environment was created. This allowed the Novices to enter more easily into their retreat given by Srs Brigid and Angela. The long- awaited day had arrived. It was decided that the other 4 candidates continue to develop their English-language skills in order to benefit from the Inter-Congregational Novitiate Programme.
On the 22nd of February, beaming with joy, Ana, Delphine, Lana and Lucie entered the Chapel beautifully decorated where Sr Ellen Kelly with members of her Team were present. Individually, they answered the question: “What do you ask of us?” They expressed their ardent desire to belong to Christ in our mission. They were then given the Constitutions, a copy of the Conferences of St. Mary Euphrasia, the Lectionary of St. John Eudes and the symbol of the Congregation.

St. John Eudes and St. Mary Euphrasia must have smiled with great satisfaction to see new daughters joining the Novitiate. It seemed as if Mary Euphrasia were addressing you when she was talking to the Novices, recalling the words of Psalm 16: “You have made known to me the path of life, you fill me with joy in your presence.” And she continues:

“Never be ungrateful or you will cease to be happy. On the contrary, let gratitude be the motive of your actions…. Tell Him how happy you are to be His chosen ones…. Oh, how happy we are, dear daughters, to be so united to our God for ever. Thank Him continually for a gift that, even in this life, brings us such consolation! There is nothing more noble than to be bound so closely to Jesus…. That is what I want most and it makes me happy to see that you love and you are happy in your vocation.” (Ch.51)

*Let us rejoice and be glad with you as you start this blessed and special time of your Formation: The Novitiate!*
Our goal: To know and deepen the Spirituality, Charism and Mission of the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd as experienced from the Contemplative lifestyle.

The beginnings of our beloved Group, "Euphrasian Disciples of the Good Shepherd", was very close to the table of the Lord. We met as we approached as friends in the Eucharistic celebrations of Sunday with the Contemplative Community. There each of our families shared the Eucharist and other celebrations and solemnities of the Church.

The genesis of organizing the Group to share the Spirituality, Charism and Euphrasian Mission with the Laity arose from Sr. Berta Campos, an 88 year old Contemplative Religious who has been in the community for 69 years. This initiative grew out of a community reflection on Congregational documents at the provincial level. Then, after a Eucharistic celebration, Sr. Reina Escobar, another contemplative Sister, echoed this dream of Sr. Berta and invited us to live the experience. As a group we agreed to meet Friday evening as with our work and student responsibilities, this was the most appropriate time.

During our first meeting on July 26, 2019, we shared wishes and aspirations for our group as a community. Our initial aspirations were diverse: learning to pray, deepening contemplative prayer, discernment about the will of God, understanding the Contemplative life, coming to know the founders and others. We have known the beginnings of the Congregation since the birth of Saint John Eudes in 1601, the life and mission of the Contemplative Sisters of the Good Shepherd, St. M. Euphrasia and her part in the historical context; the complementarity between Contemplative and Apostolic life; and, praying in four ways according to Saint John Eudes. Our weekly experiences have always had a beautiful and often surprising response to feel like big and small sheep in our flock of the Good Shepherd.

What we admire in St. Mary Euphrasia is that she knew how to translate into two lifestyles her own experience of God. This now extends to a third lifestyle with Laity. What we are experiencing and learning, we try to experience and share in our places of work and study. We have lived beautiful
moments of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, being close to the Virgin Mary, prayerful reflection of the Word, a retreat that focused on "meeting with life" and many more gifts from God. Another important point as a group has been the experience of our identity by sharing as families: from babies, young children, adolescents, young adults and, of course, older people. Although we have had important differences in our life journey, we are all welcomed as the Good Shepherd welcomes all the sheep without distinction and with tenderness. We are an open group where we joyfully share with people from other religious denominations.

During meetings we feed on the wisdom and experience of our elders, their life stories and the freshness of children's inspired words. Thus, in reflecting on the Essential Element “Spirituality of Creation or Spirituality Ecology”, we have felt excitement in how the Word of the Lord arises from the lips of the little ones. Seven year old Felipe, in his own reflection and awareness of the care of creation said: "You have to take care with love of Mother Nature that is our world and my world that I must take care of is my family." It was very surprising to listen to him, we were amazed and deeply touched. Other children also had amazing reflections. Our knowledge of documents of the Congregation is helping us to grow in the understanding of the spirituality of human ecology, learning the urgent need to care for "our common house", and, committing ourselves to reflect in a better way the tenderness and mercy of the Good Shepherd in our life, in our whole being and in our work.

We have begun to share friendship, brotherhood, prayer intentions and also share modest agape. During the week we continue contact via WhatsApp. Our group is growing with new families joining us. We feel very grateful to God. We hope to be transmitting agents of this spiritual wealth and to be promoters of new vocations that continue with the mission of reconciliation from a life of prayer lived in community and working with Zeal for humanity.

*With Saint John Eudes and Saint M. Euphrasia we say*
*"GOD BE BLESSED"*
We are happy to share these few lines that express our joy to have celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Good Shepherd Congregation's presence in the islands, and more precisely in Reunion Island. The first missionaries landed in Reunion on January 20, 1970 to work with young girls in difficulty in a reception center run by the Sisters of Cluny at Plaine des Cafres. From there, the sisters went to St Denis where the first Good Shepherd community on the island is now located. Forty (40) years later, a second community was born in the Port and for the past 6 years, a third community has been in Domenjod-Ste Clotilde. There are 13 sisters of four nationalities working in the three communities.

The celebration took place on February 09, 2020 at St Joseph the Worker - Caméliais Church in St Denis, where our first Community is located. Sisters from the three islands came to participate in this event: Sr. Isabel and the four Sister Councillors from Madagascar, Sr. Nicole from Mauritius, Mission Partners of St Denis and the Port as well as many friends honoured us with their presence. The liturgy was animated by the choir of St Joseph the Worker church and the sisters joined them. It was a beautiful liturgy, simple and prayerful.

In the absence of our bishop, Mgr Gilbert Aubry, Father Pascal Chan-Teng the Vicar General, presided at the Eucharist with Father Brice, parish priest and two Spiritan confreres concelebrating. The Gospel spoke of "salt" and "light". When Father commented on this passage, he turned to the younger members of the assembly and invited them to "take the taste of the Lord and bring it to others as the Good Shepherd Sisters do for the people to whom they are sent.

At the end of the Eucharist we shared a pot of friendship with the assembly to mark the joy. Many Congregations came to surround us with their prayer and their presence, but we also know that, from far and near, many joined us for this great day. We thank you all for your fraternal presence and your prayer.
Good Shepherd Institute for Mission

By Sr. Debbie Drago

This reflection was written for the staff at Collier school in Wikatunk, NJ at the beginning of the school year. Thanks to Sr. Debbie Drago for its submission.

Zeal: “One town, one program, cannot satisfy your zeal - it must continue to embrace the whole world.” (St. Mary Euphrasia) We are constantly being called to “enlarge our tent” to respond to the needs of the times and the one who is at risk of being lost. The prophet Isaiah said, “Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.” This image speaks of both flexibility and rootedness, unbounded hospitality and secure identity. We are invited not to hold back, to stretch wide but at the same time to “strengthen our stakes,” by ensuring that what holds the tent in place goes down deep. How are we being called today to stretch, enlarge and deepen our services in response to emerging needs and best practices?

Innovation: Creativity is a sign of life. Though old stars burn out and die, look to new horizons and even beyond. “The most ardent desire of my heart is this – go and extend the mercies of God.” (St. Mary Euphrasia) Have discernment. You must know how to adapt to circumstances, doing the best you can. How are we adapting to our new circumstances? Circumstances that stretch us to be creative and innovative?

In the face of Challenge: “Don’t let anything discourage you. Do not be afraid of a few trials. Fear is not made for you. The zeal you have for helping others hinders you from seeing obstacles. You will find enough of everything if you trust.” (St. Mary Euphrasia)

Excellence: Use excellent judgment to do worthy things. Act toward all persons with nobility of soul. Know how to accommodate yourself to the different characters of people. Look for the good and positive in each person. Let your every step be marked by some great act of compassion. Let the most exquisite cordiality be the rule and principle of all your thoughts and actions. Use much respect and gentleness, emphasizing the good of others in private and in public. Raise a person’s self image whenever possible. Let persons in need find in you comfort in trials and help in troubles. Always be kind and compassionate, never condemning.

Always remember, your mission is one that is grand, noble and divine. Just love!

Reflection:

❤️ What in the reflection and St Mary Euphrasia’s own words speaks most to your heart and your participation in the mission in your agency?

Closing:

We are all longing to go home to some place we have never been — a place, half-remembered, and half envisioned we can only catch glimpses of from time to time. Community. Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Someplace where we can be free. - Starhawk

Let us cultivate that space of true belonging as we begin this new year!
Together, Let us act for a better world

By Elodie Fraboulet

The exhibition of the cribs of the world, organized by the Congregational Spirituality Center held at the Good Shepherd Museum, was a great success this year, gathering more than 2,500 visitors between December 1st, 2019 and January 12th, 2020. In addition to the 120 Nativity cribs from around the world on display, we had chosen a theme for the exhibition "Together, Let us act for a better world". This theme was not chosen at random! It was a continuation of the conferences that the Spirituality Centre had organised last year in September, with the conference of Sr Winifred Doherty, main representative of the Good Shepherd NGO at the UN, on her role and functions, and then in October, with the conference animated by Sr Marie-Hélène Halligon on the theme "Human trafficking: does it concern me?"

During this exhibition of the cribs, we welcomed about thirty groups of children aged 3 to 12, that is to say around 750 children. This was an opportunity to introduce them to the Congregation and its commitment to some of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) defined by the UN through videos and campaigns carried out by the UN, such as the fight against poverty, gender equality, quality education and climate. We were pleased to discover that children were already well aware in their daily lives of all the climate-related issues of our world today. We wanted to make them reflect on the actions they could take, at their level, in terms of ecology and climate for a better world. Furthermore, it was also our desire to make them conscious of human values they could cultivate that are necessary for living well together. We then posted all their ideas on large boards. Here are some extracts: "Don't waste water or food", "More sharing and generosity", "Sort waste", "Protect the Earth", "Fraternity", "Tolerance", "Respect", “Caring”, "Speak kind words", "No pollution", "Build schools in other countries...". Full of messages of hope and expectations for a better world for this new generation!

"I issue an urgent invitation to a new dialogue on how we build the future of the planet. We need a conversion that unites us all, because the environmental challenge we face, and its human roots, concern and touch us all." - Pope Francis (Laudato Si)
2020 at the UN: A Year of Commemorative Events

By Sr. Winifred Doherty

The big one is the UN at 75 – yes 75 years since its founding. It seems like yesterday when we celebrated the UN and 70 and yet much has happened in the last five years to weaken the position of the UN within the global arena. The continual disfunction of the security council in brokering peace, the breakdown of multilateralism, the inability to get consensus and action in the face of the emergency crisis, gender equality running on parallel tracks within the UN at CSW64 and outside the UN in Generation Equality and the almost invisibility of the social pillar are all reasons to be concerned. Yet, there is positive engagement around the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Global Compact for Migration and the Compact for Refugees and the monitoring mechanism on implementation of the Palermo Protocol. The curtailing of services and events at the UN due to budget constraints resulting from member states not paying their dues has a direct impact on civil society access to the UN.

To mark its 75th anniversary in 2020, the United Nations will launch the biggest-ever global conversation on the role of global cooperation in building the future we want. Starting in January 2020, the United Nations will hold dialogues around the world from classrooms to boardrooms, from parliaments to village halls - it will place special emphasis on youth and those whose voices are too often marginalized or not heard in global affairs. The aim is to build a global vision for the year 2045, the UN's centenary; to increase understanding of the threats to that future; and to drive collective action to realize that vision. Will you engage in this conversation? For more information see https://www.un.org/en/un75/join-conversation

While the big commemoration will be UN at 75 we have other landmark achievements to commemorate – The World Summit for Social Development, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at 25. UN Women is celebrating 10 years and the Sustainable Development Goals 5 years. The World Summit for Social Development and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action have been taken up for annual review within the Functional Commission of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations within which we have engaged with written statements, oral statements, side events and parallel event. This year of 2020 is no exception. One specific effect of the budget constraints is that our NGO statement are no longer translated into the 6 languages of the United Nations. They are posted in the language in which they are submitted.

Social Development has always been a focal point of the United Nations and is addressed specifically in the Copenhagen Declaration for Social Development. The three pillars – poverty eradication, social inclusion, and decent work are at the core. 2020 is a crucial year for the accelerated realization of inclusive societies and reducing inequalities everywhere for people of all ages. The main theme this year is ‘Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness.’

Each year the Secretary General publishes a report on the priority theme. To understand more about homelessness read the report


Homelessness and unaffordable housing are structural issues resulting from the commercialization and financialization of housing around the world which in turn drives inequality. An affordable housing policy, SDG 11.1 while essential, is not sufficient to end homelessness. It should be accompanied by other measures such as social protection policies including social protection floors SDG 1.3. Addressing inequality SDG 10 demands implementation of concrete policies to leave no one behind and to reach the
farthest behind first. The Commission is for the 9th to the 19th February, 2020. Other issues addressed by the Commission have an impact on specific groups of people – older persons, youth, indigenous people, people with disabilities and families.

There is also an emerging theme for the Commission - “Twenty-five years of the World Summit for Social Development: addressing emerging societal challenges to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” Visit the Commission website to see new posting, follow on Facebook or Twitter if you have an account.

English:  https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020
French:  https://www.unwomen.org/fr/csw/csw64-2020
Spanish:  https://www.unwomen.org/es/csw/csw64-2020

The Commission on the Status of Women March 9 – 29, 2020 will focus on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted 25 years ago ‘Realizing Gender Equality and the Empowerment of all Women and Girls.’ There are some interesting papers posted on the website in English only under Expert Group Meeting. Good Shepherd have taken part in the following UN Regional Commission meeting in preparation for CSW 64 in Europe, Addis Ababa, Bangkok and the Mena region. The meeting in Santiago is re-scheduled for the end of January 2020 due to political unrest earlier in Chile.

In parallel with the Commission on the Status of Women is Generation Equality with two meeting one in Mexico in May 2020 and one in France in July 2020.

Currently there is an ongoing process of discussion and conferencing calling to develop a small number of action coalitions to be resourced and implemented.
Faith Based Organizations Called upon to Adopt Advocacy Role in Beijing +25 Regional Forum

By Sr. Donatus Liti Regional designate Africa to UNECA

The 1995 Beijing declaration identified 12 critical areas of concern regarding women and girls. These areas paved the way for religious institutions to not only remain at service provider role but also assume an advocacy role to promote the rights of women and girls in collaboration with African States and secular Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

Twenty-five years later (Beijing +25) an evaluation is being conducted in regional consultative meetings by CSOs to reveal what has been achieved as well as what yet needs to be addressed. The CSOs compiled a position paper and presented recommendations for adoption by the regional meeting at Addis Ababa at the African Union headquarters in October 2019. It was later to be known as the Addis Ababa Declaration.

**Thematic areas:** Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation: While minerals are meant to be source of blessing to any individual country, African leaders have adopted neo-colonial projects manned by developed states and, consequently, are evicting families with little, if any, compensation. These circumstances increased the trafficking of women and girls into mining fields, which then became breeding grounds of prostituted women and girls. The CSO’s urgently called upon African states to adopt stern measures to review land laws and policies concerning compensation. Faith based organizations do not deviate from their stand on sexual exploitation and violence against women (now known as commercial sex workers). African states, under all circumstances, ought to eliminate these breeding grounds. Mining is viewed both as economic development but also as ecological degradation. Environmental assessment needs to be done before any mining takes place as pollution affects the health of women and girls.

Freedom from Violence, Stigma and Stereotypes: CSOs and Faith-based organizations (FBOs) identify these conditions as the worst forms of harmful cultural practices despite, in many cases, being linked to religious practices. These organizations advocate that urgent measures are needed to combat these situations while States also need to review judiciary systems that do not convict and penalize perpetrators.

Poverty eradication, social protection and social services in the context of Faith Based Organizations was addressed by me, from the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd. She had a window of opportunity to showcase both ministries of the Congregation and general social protection services undertaken by interreligious organisations across Africa. She swiftly associated Historical and current Injustices as root causes of extreme poverty in Africa based on three effects:

1. Gaps that still exist across Africa raising levels of inequality in the post-1995 Declaration;
2. Weak currencies, minimal access to social Protection (SP) and services; and,
3. Colonial heritage of mines and the Neo-colonial projects do not generate economic growth for African States but rob minerals, violates the rights of women and girls - land evictions, illegal mining, lack of land compensation, children bribing State agents to work in mines are situations that accelerated poverty in Africa.
Faith-B based Interventions to End Inequality

I demonstrated how FBOs have pioneered humanitarian services over the years as they helped alleviate poverty in Africa through women empowerment programs and providing quality education for girls, health facilities, and water and sanitation and infrastructure.

Among the outstanding engagements demonstrated by FBOs are county dialogues conducted by the Interreligious Council of Kenya (IRCK) with county governments in Kenya.

Another is the fight against human trafficking with sensitization forums conducted by the Catholic Church across Africa including the recently concluded 2nd conference in Nairobi organized by Santa Martha group.

These services have been benchmarked on social protection and services for providing a road map to decent jobs for women and girls other than prostitution. The forum had minimal representation from FBOs. When a CSO member sought her stand on legalizing prostitution and abortion in Kenya stating that prostitution is among the first of careers since the creation account of the Bible, I swiftly responded about the faith of the Catholic Church pertaining abortion as a crime and violence against women and, in this matter, murder of the innocent. She also alluded that prostitution is a crime against women and girls; hence, demanding the supply needs to be addressed as crime against women and girls who should be in school. She illustrated these as contagious issues in the sense that if women and girls were not exploited to vulnerable conditions, there would not be prostitution with abortion as result. Again, she expounded that prostituted women and girls are victims of an unjust patriarchal society that wishes to abuse and exploit the rights of women and girls.

Within the principle of ‘leave no one behind’, FBOs, though applauded for the best service delivery, are left behind in advocacy - an absence that witnesses issues adopted by Member States. Mentioning another principle, “be present and challenge beats the rhetoric stay behind and blame unjust structures,” I called upon African Member States to walk the talk and thus both adopt and implement the Universal Social Protection for the aged and vulnerable persons stating that many aged persons have no access to social protection or health coverage. She also called upon all FBOs to adopt the new trend of advocacy in collaboration with other CSOs where their voices can be loud to counteract the most discussed abortion and prostitution legalization in Africa.

Additional thematic areas were Inclusive development, share prosperity and decent work, Peaceful and inclusive societies and Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions.

The process was open, with a ministerial committee of experts engaging representatives from the CSOs who drafted the final statement.

Lessons learned

• Some corporates are heavily demanding legalization of abortion and prostitution in Africa. There are few FBOs engaged in the Beijing consultations as we advance towards generation equality. the process is vigorous, long and costly in terms of materials, personnel and planning time

• It makes a difference to represent FBOs in Africa.

Recommendations

• Need to be present in all CSO consultation meetings to voice our views pertaining abortion and prostitution as some corporates and CSOs are urgently lobbying African governments to legalize these. To show case our ministries in future opportunities
From an institutional model to a community-based approach to protect children.

As a country, Sri Lanka’s traditional approach to addressing vulnerability of children at risk is to remove them from the situation of possible danger and place them in shelter homes and care institutions. Recently a consciousness about the negative, and often lasting, impact that institutionalization has on children has grown, and the local government together with NGOs and faith-based organizations are looking at alternative care approaches to better protect the most vulnerable children.

The Good Shepherd Sisters Sri Lanka have been working to uplift the living conditions of the most marginalized families in fishing villages and tea estates for years. They decided to review existing practices, adopt a different approach, and extend its services to children who are vulnerable and at risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation, by starting community based child protection programs.

These programs adopt a comprehensive, holistic and systemic approach to child protection has proved to be more effective in addressing the root causes of abuses against children and the lack of family care and community support, shifting from traditional charity/needs based approach of providing residential care to a right based approach of systemic intervention based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the laws in the country.

With the support of the Good Shepherd International Foundation and other partners, the Good Shepherd Sisters in Sri Lanka started in 2018 a pilot project in 3 tea plantations in Walawe and Waleboda Estates in Balangoda and Hallina Estate in Kahawatta to address children’s rights violations such as early termination of school, child labour and early marriage by creating child friendly safe spaces where children are protected and supported to develop their full potential.

Besides having a safe environment to study and play, children also learn their basic rights and responsibilities and are provided with counseling and psychological therapy in the form of art, play, music and dance.
This pilot project aims to strengthen the ‘circle of care’ and rings of responsibility for child protection, from immediate primary care givers (parents and family members) to the wider community at large including teachers, educators, district and estate officers, engaging the entire local community to build a strong child protection mechanism by strengthening social ties.

In 2019 in partnership with the Good Shepherd International Foundation and the support of the GHR Foundation, a short video to document the progress and the early results of these innovative community-based programs in Sri Lanka was produced and presented in international conferences and meetings, focused on alternative models of care for vulnerable and at-risk children.

“The sisters and the staff of the programs have worked with the families to bring them to positively care their children, while motivating the community regarding the protection and well-being of the children” said Cristina Duranti, GSIF Director. “They are working also with women to train them to start small business activities that can supplement the family's income and so prevent children from being sent to work. For every child to grow and thrive, the child needs a safe and supportive environment that can only come from a strengthened community.”

“As Good Shepherd sister, I strongly believe that a child has the right to grow up in a family” – Sr. Mary Niluka Perera, former MDO Sri Lanka Project Manager and International Coordinator of UISG Catholic Care for Children International Desk, points out. “The Community Based Child Protection Program initiated by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Sri Lanka aims to empower right holders to enjoy their rights and to make the duty bears responsible in fulfilling their duties towards creating the culture of care for children. Keeping the child at the center, the program consists with different approaches; Self Help Group (SHGs) to empower women economically, socially and politically, educating children on their rights, working with estate management, schools and local government, strengthening and working with the existing child protection mechanisms etc. I am happy to say that we as Good Shepherd Sister Sri Lanka have begun the journey to support children and parents to prevent separation due to numerous reasons. Our aim is to strengthen families and communities so that children are better cared and safe”.

Echoes from GSIF Office
Earlier this week (24th and 26th of February) we delivered the first two webinars globally to introduce the Congregational Child Safeguarding Policy. The webinar was delivered by Maryam Ehsani, the Congregation Child Safeguarding Advisor.

We are very pleased to announce that we had more than 100 participants who joined the online webinars. Each webinar included a Q&A session which opened many discussions and queries on how to fit the Child Safeguarding Policy into regions and province’s context.

Please see below some of the key learnings from the webinars:

1. The Child Safeguarding Policy is based on the current values of the congregation and it will help to add more accountability and good practice

2. The understanding and the differences between Child Protection (external) and Child Safeguarding (internal)

3. The Child Safeguarding Policy has been set up to bring together all Units to develop clarity and unity when it comes to the complex subject of child abuse and the roles and responsibilities of each individual such as sister and all associated people.

If you missed the live webinar, you can access the recording of the webinar and the materials. To access the recording, please contact Valentina Picco.

Please feel free to reach out to either Maryam or Valentina if you have more questions in regards to the Child Safeguarding Policy.
Good Shepherd Newsletter

Thank you to the translators, and the proofreaders

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