Refugees, Migrants, Displaced Peoples - Good Shepherd participation in Vatican Congress

Across the globe, peoples are on the move in search of better lives. For many there is little choice – they are fleeing violence, political repression, ethnic division and discrimination. Many are fleeing from extreme poverty. They seek new opportunities for themselves and their children. Often what awaits them in a new country is exclusion: laws that prohibit legal status, bureaucracies that make refugee or asylum applications a nightmare. They fall prey to unscrupulous operators who exploit their vulnerability. A particular vulnerability is the risk of being trafficked.

Good Shepherd sisters, co-workers and volunteers work with refugees, migrants and asylum seekers, the undocumented and internally displaced in many parts of the world. This work is in accord with our General Chapter/Assembly directions, which remind us: “… women and children are exploited and trafficked; migrants, refugees… and many others are excluded and marginalized… We have analysed this reality, characterized by violence, poverty and exclusion, and by events that have disrupted world peace.”

“The God of Life becomes visible when those on the margin become the Centre”
(quote from Fr Timothy Radcliff, OP)

One notable example of Good Shepherd involvement that give our direct service a broader link with systems is the participation of Sr Supaporn Chotiphol, RGS, from Thailand, in the 5th World Congress for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees. Supaporn spoke about the work of Good Shepherd in Thailand, in Pattaya City, with women who are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The Good Shepherd program at Fountain of Life Centre, Pattaya, works with women through services of education, counselling and advocacy.

In a conference that was heavily laden with speeches, and that spent a lot of time looking at the “big picture” Supaporn focused on the stories of the women, sharing with the conference the experiences of the pain and trauma they endure. She spoke of the way the staff at Fountain of Life centre accompany the women. For example, she said that one third of women who come to the Centre have had abortions and suffer terrible guilt related to this. Psycho-spiritual healing is necessary for these women. These stories, she said, touched many people at the conference. Supaporn recognised the need to keep the whole picture in mind, and to keep the women in mind. Good Shepherd was invited to the conference because “we are well known for our work in this field,” Supaporn said. Sr Michelle Lopez, RGS, also from Thailand, had attended an earlier World Congress.

Of a panel of 5 people directly involved in working with migrants and refugees, Supaporn was the only one to talk about trafficking in a conference of 350 delegates. She said that many people do not realise the link between refugees, migration and trafficking. A final draft summary of the Conference did not initially mention trafficking as an issue affecting many migrants and itinerant peoples. But after some questions, the draft was to be modified.
Supaporn said she was pleased that the Church was focusing attention on migrants and refugees and was open to listen. She felt there was a lot of good will, but at the same time, she was unsure how much would be implemented. When she thought of the Church in Thailand, she was not sure how much would be achieved. She went home determined to create opportunities to share among religious in particular, because they could keep the issue alive. However, she was also hopeful, saying: “If we know the problem, then we know where to begin!”

“My parents took 3,000 baht (approx 67 Euro) from a bar owner… I am the one who has to pay it back.”

(13 year old girl in Thailand)

**The Sexual Exploitation of Women**

The 4th General Assembly Direction Statement says, "We live in a globalized world marked by disparity and inequality, whose victims are most often women and children." The 28th General Chapter Direction statement says, "...we commit ourselves to... make a preferential option for the poor giving priority to women and children who are exploited and trafficked."

Women’s needs are not new to us, but exploitation through trafficking is a growing phenomenon that calls for clear new responses. Working through networks and working for structural and systemic change may be a new challenge for some projects. The initiatives summarized below show that Good Shepherd is seeking to meet these challenges in a variety of ways and places.

Contact information is provided for those of you who want more details; you can network directly with the project or persons involved.

**Senegal: Tourism conference**

In September 2003, Sister Yvonne Clemence Bambara, Good Shepherd Commission for Justice and Peace in Senegal and Sister Jeanne Ndene attended the World Tourism Organization (OWT) conference in Dakar. The conference was an African Regional Consultation on the sexual exploitation of children in tourism. More than 200 participants came from various countries in Africa.

During this consultation, the OWT sought the engagement of African governments in the fight against sexual exploitation of children in tourism. They promoted establishing networks and partnership to strengthen efforts. A training scheme for travel agents was also presented since they are an important element in this fight.

Governments in Africa have been among the first signatories of International Conventions but they often lack specific national laws that would ensure implementation.

As Sisters of Good Shepherd, we took part in the conference with a spirit of collaboration with others who share our concerns about the sexual exploitation of children. We were encouraged with the linkage to our local efforts where, since 2000, we have worked with two other NGOs to set up local reporting in Mbour, a big tourist city. We have also launched advertising campaigns on the beaches, in schools, and in neighborhoods.

Contact: Sr. Yvonne (French or English) at: srycb@yahoo.fr
Soeurs du Bon Pasteur, Route de Ouakam, Km 2 Av. Cheikh Anta Diop, B.P. 5096 Dakar – Fann - SÉNÉGAL

**Damascus: Networking - Highlighting Violence Against Women**

Sr. Marie Claude Naddaf tells us: “…the House of the Good Shepherd in Damascus, has been active in working to eliminate violence against women. On the 25th November we organized a meeting between
the women activists and some victims of violence. We shared about the International Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and listened to women who are victims. We spent time working on strategies for the future and ended with prayers.” (The meetings included Muslims and Christians.)

In December 2003 Sr Marie Claude and other sisters in Syria participated in a regional congress with the theme: “Women and Society”. Sr Marie Claude says that this congress has helped the sisters to strengthen their different apostolates to women, in particular by giving them a broader view and understanding of the status of the family in the Middle East. The congress suggested a number of ways to strengthen networking and regional cooperation of groups working with women.

**Bangkok, Thailand: A National Debate in Progress**

In December 2003, Good Shepherd Sisters in Thailand attended a national ‘public hearing’ on prostitution held by the Ministry of Justice. They spoke against the legalization of prostitution. As provincial Sr. Ramini says: "Our Sisters have the convictions in their blood. We have to sail against the strong current. We are reminded that David used only one stone to fight Goliath even though he had 5 stones in his possession. God's presence and action with us will give victory. Let us make it our firm HOPE."

**Lebanon: A Prayer commitment to stop Violence Against Women:**

Sr. Marie Rose Abou Jaoudé wrote: « … from the day when I made a commitment committed to the NGO prayer network, I am faithful to offer Mass, all my work, and the Rosary every day. My aged and sick sisters in our infirmary offer as their prayer and their suffering for this same intention. The information about “The 16 days of Gender Activism Against the Violence to Women” was sent by e-mail to all our communities in Lebanon and in Syria. One of our young sisters broadcast it on the Christian radio…”

**Austria: Prayer and Justice and Peace**

The Contemplative community in Innsbruk writes: “We came to an agreement as a community to offer our Sunday Adoration and Evening prayer for the NGO prayer network and for the issues, known and unknown, on justice and peace in our world. We took up the issue of Violence against Women and we invite other to join us in prayer on Sundays. Our prayer on November 25th 2003 was offered for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.”

**Palermo, Italy: A Good Shepherd collaboratotive Project**

In Palermo, Sr Guiliana and Maria Rita Ribaudo and co workers with the Association Buon Pastore Onlus, have linked up with a local Methodist pastor to help women who are trafficked. Through this network, a small program has begun in Nigeria, staffed by local people, for women who have been deported from Italy. One goal is to set up a micro enterprise project that will help the women earn an income.

Meanwhile in Palermo a young Nigerian woman dreams of beginning a support group for women like herself, who have been trafficked, so that they can help and support each other in their freedom

Contact: Ms Maria Rita Ribaudo (Italian)
Fax: 39 091 660 04 47
E-mail: buonpastoreonlus@libero.it

**Australia: Conference on Trafficking**

Six Good Shepherd people from Australia and Thailand participated in the conference “STOP THE TRAFFIC 2”, in Melbourne, Australia, in October 2003. Themes of the conference included dealing with the trafficking of women for prostitution as a human rights issue and as a gender issue.
The conference highlighted that actions on trafficking require a seamless co-operation between responsible departments in government, including international cooperation. Governments need to actively engage with civil society. One challenge to cooperation is that those attending the conference spanned diverse ideological backgrounds. To find “common purpose” is not always easy in the practical sphere. The bottom line is that efforts need to be about protecting the women.

The joint efforts at the conference between Good Shepherd in Thailand and Good Shepherd in Australia affirmed our mission to support the dignity of all women caught up in trafficking. Good Shepherd from Thailand brought a deep understanding of the complexity of women’s individual stories and the need to look to the underlying and structural themes of poverty, violence and shattered self-esteem.

Contact: Ms Christine Carolan, Executive Officer, Good Shepherd Social Justice, PO Box 182, Abbotsford, Vic 3067, Australia Fax: 61 3 9419 4472 E-mail: c.carolan@goodshep.com.au

Rome: Counter Trafficking in Women and Children

Over the past year, Caroline Price has collaborated in the publication of an “Information and Workshop Kit on Trafficking in Women and Children” with the Rome-based JPIC Commission’s Working Group on Trafficking in Women and Children. The Kit is available in English, Spanish, French and Italian.

To order copies, contact Caroline.

Training For Religious Women - A Collaborative Initiative:

A recent initiative in Rome has brought together collaborators with experience in working with refugees, migrants and trafficked persons. A series of workshops that has been prepared that will raise awareness and train religious women to work with women who are trafficked. Collaborators in this project were the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the United States Embassy to the Holy See, the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), the Italian Conference of Women Religious (USMI) and Migrantes, (the Italian branch of Caritas). The first workshop was held in January/February 2004 in Italy. Others are planned for Albania, Romania and Nigeria.

NGO Office at the United Nations

Throughout the year as part of her work as NGO Representative, Clare Nolan is often asked to speak on the issue of Trafficking. She always connects the phenomenon of trafficking to the reality of prostitution, the globalization economy and structures of male dominance. In November 2003 she spoke to an international ecumenical service group, International Partners in Mission (IPM) and in February 2004 to the academic community at Jesuit Gonzaga University in northwestern USA.

If you want more information, contact: Clare Nolan, (info at end of this publication)

It is a fundamental right to be free of sexual exploitation. The ever-increasing scale of trafficking or prostitution is supported by economic policies which disproportionately victimize minority women and women in developing countries. (Extract from The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, CATW, mission statement)
WHAT IS ECONOMIC GENDER ANALYSIS?

Gender analysis evaluates the economic roles women and men play in any society. Policies may discriminate according to these differences. Work done by women in the home and community is needed but unpaid and undervalued, making much of women’s contributions invisible. Gender analysis considers men’s and women’s roles in:

- Reproductive Work – informal activities (often unpaid) that sustain the family, household and community
- Productive Work – Formal work in family, household and community that produces a monetary income

Adapted from Women's International Coalition of Economic Justice: www.wicej.org

Understanding NEO-LIBERALISM

Neo-liberalism is a set of economic policies, often referred to as the “Washington Consensus,” that establish global resource distribution. It is capital-driven and attempts to remove any barriers to the movement of products, services, or money. Policies are strongly influenced by the wealthy economies. Key aspects of the neo-liberal agenda include:

- Privatization of public services
- Tax favors for corporations
  - Dismantling of protections to local economies in favor of foreign goods
- Adaptation of national law and constitutions in favor of foreign investors over local citizens
- Creation of incentives for foreign investors over local labor, e.g. the creation of free trade zones
- Diminishment of the role of government and democracy in favor of the private sector
- Strengthening global institutions that are accountable to corporations, but not to the democratic will of citizens

Economic Justice: Financing for Development (FfD)

The “Monterrey Consensus” is the agreement of world governments that gathered in 2002 in Monterrey, Mexico in an effort to ensure adequate resources and political will toward human, social and economic development. The Consensus was developed after a five-year process of dialogue between governments, with NGOs, and with business sectors of civil society.

Since 2002, the UN, through ECOSOC, continues the process of Finance for Development, looking toward implementation and progress on the Monterrey Consensus. The Good Shepherd NGO office continues to be involved with these processes, particularly on issues of International Debt and of gender economics, through the Women's Caucus.

These are slow, grinding, long-term issues that have integral links to trade and finance policies of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO), and bilateral trade agreements such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

At dialogue sessions in October 2003, the NGO community actively critiqued the Cancun WTO ministerial meeting, and supported the need to include the voices of those who live in poverty, particularly rural agriculture laborers, women, and indigenous populations.

These issues require the attention and action of every Good Shepherd person in your local or regional sphere. Such policy issues as funding for public health and HIV/AIDS, privatization of water supplies, agricultural policies that favor rural communities, family support and poverty reduction strategies, Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitments, and gender analysis, all require a spiritual commitment to the dignity of the human person and a political commitment in defense of human rights.

For more on FfD: http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/index.html

Let us know what activities your province or region is involved in! Send information on your activities to Caroline Price and Clare Nolan. We can strengthen and encourage each another.
Quotes for contemplation...

The ecological crisis is a profoundly religious crisis. In destroying creation we are limiting our ability to know and love God.

- Ecological problems are enmeshed within social structures that serve the interests of the few at the expense of many, especially those marginalized and in poverty...
- ...aspects of Christian theology and tradition are implicated in the Western capitalist development model which has led to so much ecological ruin...

*Canadian Bishops pastoral letter
4 Oct 2003
http://www.ccb.ca/Files/pastoralenvironment.html

We wish to integrate justice, peace and the integrity of all creation in our life and mission.

General Assembly
Direction Statement, 2003

Brief notes from around the world

Let there be no more war!
Caroline writes from the Generalate:
November 18th 2003 was a sad and reflective day for the people of Italy. The State funeral was held at the church of St Paul Fuori di Mura, Rome, of the 20 young Carabinieri (police) who were killed in Nassariya, Iraq. Here at the Generalate we joined the nation in prayer and in solidarity with our lay staff, many of whom have friends who are in the army. They organised a prayer that was a reflection on Psalm 23.

Supporting each other through the tragedy and loss of war is not easy. And yet our faith in a living and loving God and belief in a world free from conflict, urges us to be the hands, hearts, eyes, ears and feet of Jesus. We are the “channels of Peace” that St Francis of Assisi talks of; we are the “bearers of peace”.

“Lord, make me a means of your peace…”

Peace and Human Rights: From the Philippines, Sr Maureen Catabian writes:
For Peace Day Activities, I joined a Peace Journey organized by an Ecumenical and Youth Group of 57 participants. It was also a fact-finding mission on the massacre of an indigenous family (Mangyan-Hanunuo Tribe) by the Military. It was a meaningful opportunity to pray and reflect on the issue of Human Rights violation, Justice and Peace. The Journey resulted in a Dialogue with the Local Government officials on the issue of militarization in the island. We have made concrete suggestions and challenges for advocacy work against "All-Out War" and Terrorism in the Philippines.

Peace and non-violence: from Senegal Sr Yvonne tells us:
On World Day of the Peace, our commission encouraged pastors to preach on Peace. In our three parishes homilies challenged parishioners on the question of peace. In our own communities (3 in Senegal) we organized a celebration on the themes "Let's Promote a Culture of Peace and of No Violence." This theme was written on panels and displayed at the entrance of our Churches, remaining there through the week.
Global Solidarity: from Paraguay, Good Shepherd Volunteer Jessica Nelson, USA, tells us:

The most difficult thing for me has been getting used to the poverty all around me. Nearly everyone is struggling to put food on their table. People are malnourished and unemployed – it is the reality here due to the country's economic crisis and underdevelopment... At night I get flashbacks of eye contact with kids on the streets who are barely dressed and matted with dirt. I think how this is the reality for millions of people around the world. It is uncomfortable to see, but I am glad that I am here; it is making me a more conscious human being.

Prayer for Immigrants: from Mexico, Sr Alejandra writes:

Our sisters in El Paso, Texas, USA participated in the annual Eucharist that takes place on the border between the USA and Mexico, with the Bishop presiding. On the other side of the fence, in Juarez, Mexico there were several priests, lay and religious joining our prayer. It is the 5th year that a Eucharist for migrants has been celebrated. It is very profound, as the situation of migrants gets more and more difficult. It is very profound, as the situation of migrants gets more difficult.

NGO Office Supporting Gender Equality

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) - The annual UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will meet the first two weeks of March 2004 in New York. Themes for attention are

- The role of Men and Boys in Gender Equality
- Women’s Equal Participation in Conflict Prevention, Conflict Management and Conflict Resolution and in Post Conflict Peace Building.

As every year, Clare is active in the preparation. Also attending this year will be Good Shepherd staff from the Global Women's Exchange and the Good Shepherd Volunteers in New York. Additionally, two staff members from the Good Shepherd Mediation Program, Philadelphia, USA will be presenting a "side-event" workshop: "Untangling the Knot: Empowering Women through Community Mediation"

CSW information can be found at: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/48sess.htm

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
The UN Panel on the CEDAW meets every January and June in New York to review national reports on the status of women. As part of preparation, Clare, in conjunction with the Working Group on Girls, made visits to the UN Missions of Ethiopia and Nepal, whose reports were heard in January. The visits focused on the needs of girls. Both Ethiopia and Nepal give attention to girls in their reports, but as with all countries, it is important that they know that NGOs are watching the implementation, both nationally and internationally.


News notes prepared by Congregation of the Good Shepherd

Clare Nolan, NGO Representative
Fax: 1-212-599-2712
Email: cnolan8345@aol.com

Caroline Price, International Secretariat for Justice Peace
Fax: Fax: 39 06 6641 8864
Email: icjpc@buonpastoreint.org

Original in English. Please distribute to all communities and collaborators in your province. Thank you.