Another World is Possible!
Let us build it!

Reports and Reflections from the World Social Forum (WSF), Mumbai, India January 2004

Good Shepherd presence at the WSF included 24 sisters and 15 co-workers from India, two sisters from the Philippines, one of whom was accompanying farmers from her region, two Sri Lankan sisters who are studying in India, and the Good Shepherd NGO representative.

An Overview on the WSF Mumbai
by Sr Colette RGS, Monteiro, India

The WSF was an event with over 100,000 participants from all over the world. Farmers and Nobel laureates testified to the ill effects of trade liberalization and called for equitable alternatives to the World Economic Order. Anti-war protests and human rights causes dominated the Forum. The growing power of multinationals and the absence of corporate accountability was a central concern, with local peoples talking about loss of control over development projects and loss of democracy in general. Dalit organizations representing India’s most marginalized people, were a prominent presence at the Forum and spoke loudly and from direct experience against caste and racial oppression.

The Forum helped build alliances. There was a common feeling that people are eager to build Another World: one characterized by Peace, Justice & Harmony. People came to listen, learn, see, communicate, to be involved and to make a commitment to the cause of the poor and marginalized. The WSF in India offered the possibility for large number of “grassroots” people to participate through marches, seminars, conferences, demonstrations, street plays, mimicry, puppet shows, and exhibitions. Every opportunity was used to full advantage.

Appropriately, a large number of children were present to speak for themselves about injustices to children, how they are being denied basic necessities such as food, education, and health. They spoke eloquently of children's plight in bonded labor and of gruesome atrocities at work places including sexual assaults. As one of the children said, “The future is in our hands, we decide to build another world.”

Unfortunately, environmental issues did not receive adequate coverage. Minimal attention was given to issues such as global warming, pollution, gas tragedies, and sustainable use of resources.

While there were serious discussions and analysis, it was the scenes of color, culture, dance, music, drums, and celebrations, that exhilarated all – adding richness to the event, and stimulating a strong awareness that “We are all sisters and brothers of the wide human family stirring to build the new heaven and a new earth.” Of course, it is not enough to say "another world is possible." Our challenge remains to find ways to build it. Surely Good Shepherd mission has a vital place in this challenge of today and tomorrow.

Get Involved! Get ready!
Year 2005 is the ten-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action for Women.

How is your government implementing its promises?
Are you involved in local/regional advocacy for women’s issues?
I came home from WSF to the Philippines pleased that so much networking had happened in the meetings, workshops and talks we had planned under the sponsorship of APPRA (Asia-Pacific Peace Research Association, for which I serve as Secretary General) and TW-MAE-W (Third World Movement Against the Exploitation of Women, of which I am founder and president). The Anti-trafficking workshop was a great success (see accompanying article) and in the Peace arena I spoke on creating awareness in women, always emphasizing the extensive suffering of women in conflict situations. I was able to offer methodologies used in dealing with people affected by armed violence.

Aside from events that our organizations sponsored, there were over a thousand events to choose from; I am satisfied with the experiences and re-meeting of old friends that I could savor. Along with all the activity, I took quiet moments to allow the needed time and space to let all the "BIG NOISE" of passionate marchers sink in and take root in my being.

One delightful afternoon was the cultural event organized by the Philippine delegates. It was a joyful gathering attended by peoples of all races and countries. We used Jubilee South space to dance and sing progressive songs to the guitar. How we sang and danced our message!

I am particularly pleased with the interest shown by our own Good Shepherd family. Our sisters of India serve in different parts of South Asia and in missions abroad. We shared experiences and spoke of ways to share skills across the Global South and learn from one another. I am hoping Good Shepherd might be interested in the TW-MAE-W South-to-South Training Program to enhance work with victims of sexual exploitation.

It can never be all work and no play! After the Forum, I accepted the invitation of a befriended co-traveler to Mumbai. This gave me the opportunity to see the other side of Mumbai where the affluent live. The contrast between areas made my heart ache.

“At the conclusion of this Forum we, Good Shepherd Sisters in India, felt invited and challenged:

- to develop a system of efficient communication within the Province / Congregation;
- make our ministries known to the public and seek the assistance of lay collaborators and volunteers;
- to train / prepare ourselves for quality dialogue and listening, and networking with other like-minded movements / organizations.”

An Anniversary within an Anniversary

In August 2004 the province of India will close a year-long remembrance of their 150-year presence in India. Within this anniversary they are also completing 25 years of Social Action Ministries (SAM), which were begun after the 1973 congregational statement on Justice. The sisters have developed numerous urban and slum outreach programs that involve women's empowerment, support for girls education, empowerment of Dalits, initiatives to change harmful traditional practices, and other responses to locally defined needs.

Additionally, the formation program requires that each sister have a period of immersion-living with the communities where the sisters serve, not only in the convents but also outside the convents within the larger community.
Good Shepherd Systemic Work Against Trafficking for Sex
by Clare Nolan, NGO Office

On Jan 20, 2004 a successful 3 hour Anti-trafficking-prostitution workshop, Combating Prostitution and Sex Trafficking, was held at the World Social Forum in India. The workshop was sponsored by Third World Movement Against the Exploitation of Women (TW-MAE-W) founded by Good Shepherd Sr. Soledad) and jointly conducted by Soledad, a group of Korean Students, STAST (Student Team Against Sex Trafficking Korea), and myself, Clare, NGO rep for Good Shepherd and active member with The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW).

The workshop content included: An overview of the Korean reality of trafficking; An overview of student activities against trafficking in Korea (with Power-Point, great T-shirts, and a booklet written in Korean and English); A report on service delivery by Third World Movement, including references to Mary Euphrasia and John Eudes; a personal witness of a woman survivor of sexual exploitation, now on staff with TW-MAE-W; an overview on international perspectives and activities by myself; and group discussion and networking outreach. Additionally 2 male students spoke on their attitudes against prostitution and exploitation of women. Mail-order bride issues were also raised.

In our tent-venue we had an audience of over 100, including several Good Shepherd sisters whose smiling faces dissipated any "stage fear" we presenters may have had. Some folks stood at the crowded doorway, not moving during the 3 hour session. The audience was attentive and participatory. At the end many came for questions and discussions after the formal closing. They seemed in accord with our philosophy of human rights and dignity, reassured to hear it stated so clearly. There had been big signs on the Forum grounds to the effect: “Sex work is WORK” - so we weren't sure what to expect. Often there are clashes with groups who regard "sex work" as an acceptable form of labor and favor legalization.

The youth and enthusiasm of the student group cannot be underestimated. Evidently Sol made the connection with them through the urging of Good Shepherd in Korea. Including youth in Good Shepherd networks and collaborations is a powerful witness. We should replicate this model whenever possible.

The email for the student group, if you may want to make contact is stast@jinbo.net. Contact name: Adriana

Clare speaking at Trafficking workshop, World Social Forum

Hospitality as Justice
A reflection by Clare Nolan

As a Westerner inserted into Eastern reality for a month of travels in India, I found many unfamiliar things: food, climate, languages, posture of prayer and customs of eating. One overwhelmingly familiar aspect was the gracious hospitality that I received from our sisters and all Indians. I have thought about this often since my return home; I have had such similar experiences in many Good Shepherd provinces and communities. I think it is something profound. I think it is one of the most joyful expressions of justice that we can engage in.

If justice equals inclusion - in the way the Old Testament covenant included the orphan, the widow and stranger, the way Jesus included Magdalene, the Samaritan, and tax collectors - then I can say that the hospitality of Good Shepherd is a form of inclusion for the stranger. When I did not know how to eat or what to do next, hospitality became a warm embrace of acceptance. When I made mistakes or misjudged situations, hospitality became a soft smile that assured me our common mission was the most important thing.

Just as we offer hospitality to visitors, so too, each day Good Shepherd people offer hospitality to the scared child, the beaten down women, the
enthusiastic youth group, the co-worker who needs to talk, the person unsure of prayer…and so on, in many ways, in many less dramatic settings. May we never take these actions of hospitality for granted but may we have the grace to know them as justice in action and continue our mission and duty to bring the blessings of justice to this world marked by Jesus’ incarnate presence.

♥♥♥♥

NGO Office in ACTION

Women:
With grassroots presence, Good Shepherd made a particularly strong presence this year at the UN Commission on the Status of Women during the first weeks in March:

- On the theme of The Role of Women role in Conflict Management, Good Shepherd Mediation program from Philadelphia, USA, presented a 2 hour workshop: Untangling the Knot: Empowering Women through Community Mediation.
- On the themes of The Role of Men and Boys in Gender Equality, Good Shepherd nominated and hosted Luis, a young man from Venezuela who participated (UN funded) in a workshop Ending the Demand for Prostitution/Trafficking.

See NGO statement E/CN.6/2004/NGO/13 on Trafficking and Demand at:

International Debt:
Debt Cancellation continues to be an issue of NGO office advocacy within UN processes on economic development. The G-8 leaders who are meeting June 2004 in the USA have failed to meet their promises of the Cologne summit of 1999 to cancel the debts of the world’s poorest nations.

We seek unconditional debt cancellation for all impoverished countries. Please continue active efforts on local levels.

Indigenous:
- At the May 2004 meeting of the Permanent Forum on the Indigenous, Good Shepherd made a statement urging full attention to the rights of the girl-child within indigenous communities and in all UN systems.
- An indigenous person, Joan Hendriks, who works with Good Shepherd in Australia will be in attendance.

♥♥♥♥

Brief notes from around the world

Malta: from Sr Margaret Gonzi
Our ministry is focused with abused women and women and children in difficulties. We work hand in hand closely with the Laity as volunteers and employees. Recently we had two programs on the media to raise awareness on the danger of domestic violence.

Bogotá, Colombia: from Fabiola Tapasco
The Commission of Justice and Peace in Bogotá has developed a program on Women's Rights (see insert on page 5), used for education, consciousness raising and empowerment of women.

Peru from Alica Corvacho Levano, JP Contact
The province of Peru has reflected on violations of human rights that have occurred in their country. During the coming year they will teach how to speak out against violence and they are working toward the re-formation of human and non-violent values in their culture.

Senegal from Yvonne Bambara, JP Contact
The Good Shepherd Commission for Justice Peace of Senegal participated locally and collaboratively in the International Day of AIDS Awareness (December, 2003). With groups of laborers and with groups of women in prostitution they worked to strengthen AIDS awareness. This also strengthened Good Shepherd mission within local groups.

Batam, Indonesia from Cathrine Patmi
On Global Day of Action, March 20th, we organized a silent candle light prayer for peace and we used the day for fasting in solidarity with those who go hungry in war. We are collaborating with the parish, where we have a new apostolate since August.
Lebanon from Sr Pascal El-Arid
At the prison in Lebanon, Good Shepherd speaks up for the rights of the prisoners, advocating to assure they had religious services for Holy Week as well as a party for Easter. Additionally, they have brought officials to witness the inhumane conditions and they support conferences to inform on issues such as the death penalty.

Syria from Sr Marie Claude Naddaf
Sisters of the Good Shepherd helped plan a regional conference on Women in Society. Attention was given to CEDAW, Islamic family law and Human Rights. It was an opportunity to gain knowledge as well as collaborate with the public processes that promote dignity of women and girls in the Mid-East region. It also emphasized the need to work for changes in structures that exploit women.

Recife, Brazil from Marie Jose
On Good Friday 500 children walked the Stations of the Cross in the Capital city. Among them were the girls of our Good Shepherd Institute. In this way we make a public cry for justice because the laws for children's rights are not adequate.

Research on Education Issues for Asylum Seekers
Roberto Morales, a refugee originally from El Salvador, and now resident in Australia, has completed a research project on how refugees who are on “Bridging Visas” can have access to education. Roberto has personal experience of the struggles of being a refugee. His research was directed at an area that he believes is vital if refugees are to resettle well in a new country – access to education. During an internship with the Good Shepherd Social Justice network in Australia, Roberto worked on the research as part of his two-year Diploma in Community Development. In Australia people who have a “bridging visa” are not eligible to any government funding, welfare payment, education or housing subsidy. They are completely at the mercy of charities and welfare organizations that are often church-based. (from “Life and Justice”, April 2004)

Asylum Seekers Feature in Festival of Food
In March 2004, in Melbourne, Australia, Sr Caroline Price and Sr Joan Raper attended an evening of Food and Storytelling at the Brunswick Asylum Seeker Centre. The evening was based around traditional foods prepared by asylum seekers and refugees who shared their stories of flight from tyranny and violence. One man from Sri Lanka spent his first three months in Australia living on jam sandwiches until he learned how to cook some basic recipes. He is now an accomplished cook of Sri Lankan traditional dishes. Another woman from had spent many years in refugee camps after fleeing war in Iran, and shared her story of an epic journey through Asia to Australia.

The stories have been woven into a photographic exhibition at the Melbourne Immigration Museum, with the aim of highlighting the stories and the unique contribution that refugees and asylum seekers bring to a new country and a new life.

2004: UN International Year of Rice
Rice is a global symbol of life, fertility and abundance.

Almost a billion households in Asia, Africa and the Americas depend on rice systems for their main source of employment and livelihood.

But across the globe, land and water resources for rice production are diminishing.

Of the 840 million people still suffering from chronic hunger, over fifty-percent live in areas dependent on rice production for food, income and employment.

"How would history judge a generation which had all the means to feed the population of the planet, yet, with fratricidal indifference, would refuse to do so?"
John Paul II, Address at Ouagadougou

THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN ARE:

- Right to an autonomous personhood, independent of reproductive functions.
- Right to salaried work under decent conditions, without discrimination of any kind.
- Right to guarantees of labor and civil justice.
- Recognition and protection during maternity functions.
- Right to free time.
- Right to decide about their body, their sexuality and their reproduction.
- Right to honor and dignity.
- Right to freedom of decisions about their life.
- Right to demand equal sharing and distribution of domestic work.
- Full civil and political rights.
- Right to education, health and recreation appropriate to female gender.

(Good Shepherd Commission, Justice and Peace, Bogotá, November 2003. (translated from Spanish))

International Campaign to Stop Violence Against Women

“With a critical-contemplative perspective, we have analyzed this reality, characterized by violence, poverty and exclusion…”

Good Shepherd General Assembly 2003

- In North Africa, 6,000 women undergo genital mutilation each day.
- More than 15,000 women will be sold into sexual slavery in China this year.
- A woman is raped every 6 minutes in the USA.
- More than 7,000 women in India will be killed in family disputes over dowries. (figures from Amnesty International, 2001)

Amnesty International has launched a worldwide Stop Violence Against Women Campaign, calling for urgent action by every man and woman to end this human rights atrocity.

Get involved locally, more information:
English: www.amnesty.org/actforwomen
Spanish: www.amnesty.org.ar/manos.shtml
French: amnesty.org/actforwomen/index-fra

Use resources for formation, discussion, and actions.

♥♥ ♥♥

News notes prepared by Congregation of the Good Shepherd
Clare Nolan, NGO Representative
Fax: 1-212-599-2712
Email: cnolan8345@aol.com

Caroline Price, Coordinator, Good Shepherd International Office for Justice, Peace and Solidarity in Mission
Fax: 39 06 6641 8864
Email: icjpc@buonpastoreint.org

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