Embrace the World

When spiders unite, they can tie up a lion  By Sr. Mercy Ang, RGS, Japan

Regional preparation is a big part of the Beijing +10 review that will be held at the UN in NY in March 05. With our commitment to "make full use of our internationality," Sr. Mercy Ang from Japan participated in the "High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action" meeting in Bangkok. The theme of the gathering was Participation and Cooperation. Excerpts from her report are below.

Women's movement no longer needs to be a lone voice calling for change

For thirty years, since the 1st Women's World Conference in Mexico, a global agenda for women has been shaped. It crested in 1995 when the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted by governments of the United Nations. Regional women's meetings call forth government responsibility related to implementation and clarify the role of NGOs to monitor our own governments on actions that lead to gender equality. The outcome of the Asia and Pacific regional reports will be input for international review in March 2005 in New York. It is a process of linking grassroots with social and political structures.

The government members of UNESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) gave very impressive reports of their accomplishments. How true those reports were and how accurate, well... only God knows! There seems an amazing gap between the high words about programs and strategies while we know that so many countries maintain cultures and systems that are very patriarchal. Still, the fact that the women's issues are now being given more attention is a positive sign of the important role of women in the economic growth and social development throughout the Asia Pacific Region. Many achievements have been made but there are still huge challenges and issues that need to be identified and addressed regionally and globally. A few persistent issues in Asia are: women and poverty, women and economy, education and training of women, violence against women, women and media, women in power and decision-making.

During the four days in Bangkok, I was disappointed not to meet other Good Shepherd Sisters, as I had in Beijing in 1995. It turned out that only Sr. Soledad Perpinan from the Philippines, representing TW-MAEW, was present with me. Nor were there representatives from other religious groups. It could have been a good occasion to establish links and to share approaches and strategies in partnership with the government and other members of the civil society, in the name of a common cause and in the name of our mission. Partnership leads to greater effectiveness and greater efficiency.

As Good Shepherd Sisters whose specific orientation is to girls and women, there is a need to be involved and active in the processes of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) on Women. The sharing and
exchange of strategies and approaches that can lead to the promotion of justice and peace would be of mutual benefit to the Good Shepherd mission and all other groups working for gender equality. Our commitment to reconciliation demands that we promote justice and peace in a world disturbed by sin and conflict (RGS Cons. 6). The BPfA on women (gender equality and empowerment of women) is a fundamental step to the promotion of justice and peace.

Global and regional meetings challenge us in our ministries to look into new approaches that directly address the causes of the increasing discrimination that girls and women face. It is no longer enough to focus solely on the symptoms and consequences of inequalities in the lives of women and girls. We see, for example, a new initiative and strategy in Asia with the engagement and active involvement of men and boys. In our ministry to women and girls, there is a need to address the issues of men because they are always part of the problem and part of the solution. Men are shaped by gender stereotypes in the same way as women. A strong partnership is needed to achieve gender equality because gender relations have impacts on both women and men.

In this time and age, when Government, civil society and NGOs are focusing on the mainstreaming of gender equality and empowerment of women, there is hope for a better future. It will be more effective if religious congregations are part of these partnerships. This is light and life bearing for the poor. ♥ ♥

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Asian Region
To 'Remain Steadfast' In Pursuit Of Gender Equality

Excerpted from the UN information service on UNESCAP Beijing planning. Bangkok, Sept 2004

With one voice, members of the Bangkok-based UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific recommitted themselves to 'remain steadfast' in promoting gender equality and empowering women for decades to come.

Despite many achievements toward gender equality, countries identified persistent gaps such as women's disproportionate representation among the poor, the high prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS amongst women, a low level of women's participation in the decision-making, all forms of violence against women including trafficking in women and children, feminization of migration, gender-negative impacts of globalization and trade liberalization, gender stereotyping, lack of reliable and relevant sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics, and internal political conflict.

The Meeting called for a more holistic approach to understanding the multi-faceted nature of gender concerns. Future strategies include:

- Gender mainstreaming,
- A rights-based approach including economic and social rights,
- Working with men,
- And partnerships.

More than 450 delegates from over 40 countries attended the meeting from 7-10 September 2004. Participants included government representatives as well as participants from numerous civil society organizations (NGOs), UN agencies, and development partners. ♥ ♥
At The NGO office

Poverty Eradication
Each year on October 17, Good Shepherd is an active sponsor of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. This year children shared testimonies of life in poverty and gave us their dreams as a written gift. I received Crystal’s (age 10) dream: "My dream is to get good grades, go to college and be a preacher. I want to make people feel better about themselves. I want to help stop people from selling their bodies and drugs. I want to see the street corners empty and the churches full."

Social Development
In preparation for the Commission on Social Development, a ten-year review of the Copenhagen Social Summit, the NGO office is submitting a statement on gender equality that is directed at the systems that underpin inequality. Here is an excerpt from that statement: "Social gaps in gender equality persist in chronic forms of poverty and violence against women and girls in all parts of the world. There are alarmingly and increasingly severe manifestations of gender inequality particularly in the phenomena of a rising demand for trafficked women and girls for sexual exploitation, the increasing rate of incidence of HIV/AIDS in women and girls, and the widespread suffering of women and girls in conflict situations and situations of military control. Such social gaps are undergirded by the dominance of patriarchal structures that persist in devaluing women in relation to men."

For more information, see website: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/csd/index.html

CSW – Beijing Review
The March Commission on the Status of Women will review the implementation of the Beijing Platform. Good Shepherd will be very active in panels and lobbying. Here is an excerpt from one of our submitted statements: "To work against trafficking without simultaneous work to end the prostitution of women is ineffective and contradictory because it fails to understand the nature of systemic oppression of women."
un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/49sess.htm

CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
Year '04 marked the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. In these 25 years there has been significant progress in the recognition and implementation of human rights for women. Laws have been written to ensure equality. Still, no country in the world has attained equality for women either in law or in fact. Women in many countries continue to have unequal status in regard to laws of marriage, property, inheritance, nationality, and divorce. Traditions customs and stereotypical and patriarchal attitudes on the roles of women and men are major impediments to women’s enjoyment of human rights.

CEDAW action is based in national reports and action. In countries where Good Shepherd is present, CEDAW reports are due in January '05 from Italy and Paraguay; in July '05, from Korea, Australia, Ireland, Thailand, and Lebanon. Consider being active in your country in NGO networks preparing "shadow" reports.
For more information, see:
http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/

♥♥
Women and the MDGs -
Millennium Development Goals

In Year 2000, 191 governments agreed to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a series of time-bound and measurable targets that range from reducing extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS to providing universal primary education for all children everywhere. The goals commit the leaders of the world to an ambitious program for change. Every one of the goals ought to be integrated in the work of Good Shepherd apostolates and advocacy work. If you are not yet familiar with the MDGS, see this website: http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/. In the meantime, here is an encapsulated view of each goal:

Eradicate poverty and hunger
It is generally accepted that poverty persists as feminized phenomena across the globe. Where people are poor, over 70% tend to be women. Poverty encompasses economic policies as well as human social issues such as hunger, clean water, violence, employment and all forms of discrimination.

Achieve universal primary education
The majority of the 121 million out-of-school children are girls. Educating girls, according to Kofi Annan, empowers women economically and translates directly into better family nutrition, better health care, declining fertility, and poverty reduction.
"To educate girls is to reduce poverty." Kofi Annan

Promote gender equality and empower women
Gender equality and empowerment are essential to ending discrimination in literacy rates, social protection, political representation, and legal protections. Equality and empowerment must be applied to end violence against women, harmful traditional practices, male domination of cultures, and global reliance on military solutions to conflict.

Reduce child mortality rates
More than 10 million children die each year in the developing world, the vast majority from preventable causes. Girls suffer additional mortality rates linked to gender-related norms and customs such as infanticide, or fetal sex selection.

Improve maternal health
More than half a million women die every year from preventable conditions and injuries related to pregnancy and childbirth. Maternal health will not improve until the reproductive health and reproductive rights of women are fully acknowledged and legally protected.

Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases
Currently fifty percent of all new HIV/AIDS sufferers are young people between the ages of 15-24. Over sixty percent of these are girls. Since 1985 the percentage of adult women living with HIV has risen from 35% to 45%.
"All over the world, women are bearing the brunt of the epidemic." Kofi Annan

Ensure environmental sustainability
It is girls and women who manage many of earth’s natural resources. Women are the farmers; girls are the procurers of fuel and water. It is women and their daughters who have paid the price for global economic policies which forced cuts in social spending, forced farmers from their land and forced parents to choose between education and employment for their children.

Develop a global partnership for development
UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan notes, “Study after study has shown that there is
no effective development strategy in which women do not play a central role. When women are fully involved, the benefits can be seen immediately: families are healthier and better fed; their income, savings, and reinvestment go up. And what is true of families is also true of communities and, in the long run, whole countries.”

Brief Notes-Around the World

From Columbia, Lay news note of Sept ’04:
The Colombian lay group gave attention to economic policies that hurt the poor. They said that they should be leaders on economics in their communities. For more information, contact Germán Augusto Osorio Zu- luaga: gosorioz@andinet.com

From Ecuador, Lay gathering July 04:
The Good Shepherd Lay Association of the Americas met for 4 days in July to renew their vision and mission. Among their stated objectives are to work in favor of those excluded, especially women; to exercise leadership and action in defense of human rights; and to be inserted in political and social structures so as to build a world of hope, justice and peace. Documents and information can be obtained from María Angélica Rojas at mariarojas@entelchile.net

From Syria, Sr. Marie Claude Naddaf: "We would like to assure you that, as Good Shepherd in Syria, we are united with you in our efforts against the violence against women and child, especially on November 25. To show our solidarity, our community will light a candle to join your efforts. …we will collaborate on that day with many of our partner NGOs at a Child Protection Symposium.”

From Senegal – HIV and Women:
In submitting information to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (VaW) on the situation of HIV/AIDS, Good Shepherd from Senegal notes that women have a growing vulnerability to HIV. HIV+ women face social stigmatization and lack access to medical care. The most critical interventions to remedy the situation are access to job opportunities though Micro-enterprise projects and easy access to medical care and justice.
From USA, GS Employee Karen:  
A Conference Against Human Trafficking in the United States, co-sponsored by the NY province, drew 150 people. As legal and social progress is made on all levels, networking was affirmed as essential to combat this modern form of slavery.

From Lebanon, Sr. Rose of the NGO prayer network:  
"I am always faithful to my involvement with the prayer network. I join with you at our prayer this morning (Int. Day Against Child Abuse). All our day is dedicated to this same intention. We thank you for all the effort that you give in favor of human rights.

From the Philippines JP Team, Sr. Maureen Catabian:  
Good Shepherd has made a commitment to facilitate local and international advocacy on the situation of their indigenous brothers and sisters in the Lumad communities in San Luis Del Sur. This commitment ensures a link between the direct service done by sisters and systemic advocacy. Web for UN Indigenous issues: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/index.html

From Peru, from JP Contact Alicia C.:  
In Lima, Good Shepherd collaborates with 6 other religious congregations in therapeutic treatment and social reinsertion of persons who have been drug addicted. Each congregation offers its special expertise to the multi-faceted problems of drugs.

From Lebanon, Sr. Pascal:  
The prison ministry of GS has been highlighted on a television program. The week of Nov 28 to Dec 5th is the "week of prisoners," which highlights human rights and spiritual values. Each year the day grows, with about 2000 youth participating in '04.

From North America, Conference of Provincial:  
The North American Provincials took a day from recent meetings to visit the UN and NGO office. Along with general orientation, they participated in activities on Trafficking and Poverty Eradication. ♥♥ ♥♥

The Quality of Analysis

"The analysis of reality challenges us to be visible as prophets in our contemplative life." General Assembly Statement 2003

As service providers, leaders, and community participants we must evaluate and analyze the result of our endeavors. Recently the UN Human Development Report of Colombia received a prize for excellence in analysis and evaluation. We can all use the qualities recommended:

- Use participative and inclusive processes.
- Ensure that people are kept at the center of all issues.
- Build consensus across diverse groups.
- Strengthen responsibility of all sectors involved.

Implementing such criteria can assure ex-
cellence in our evaluative efforts and bring
greater expediency to our work and mis-
sion. ♥♥

The Chapter/Assembly documents of 2003 repeat
the word “Peace” at least six times. Such a commit-
ment requires active solidarity with all who pro-
mote peace in our world.

Solidarity / Action for Peace

On Dec 20, ’05, Nobel Peace Laureate
Wangarii Maathai addressed States and
NGOs at the UN Day on South-South Co-
operation, held in New York. It was her
first public address since the acceptance of
her Noble honor. As a woman seeking
peace, as a woman working on grassroots
development, as a woman from the Global
South, as a woman supporting UN efforts
toward peace, Professor Maathai is a
woman worth paying attention to. She is a
woman described by the Nobel Committee
as one possessing a holistic approach to
sustainable development that embraces de-
mocracy, human rights and women's rights
in particular. She thinks globally and acts
locally. She has lived under oppression
and has stood up in defense of individual
situations. She works to change the struc-
tural and systemic. She is a woman with
whom Good Shepherd can easily stand in
solidarity. We can both identify with the
similarities in her approach and the Good
Shepherd approach and we can learn cre-
a-
HIV/AIDS
Facts for Contemplation

December 1 is World AIDS Day. The following figures are from the UNIFEM 2004 campaign.

"All over the world, women are bearing the brunt of the epidemic." Kofi Annan

Among people younger than 24, girls and young women make up nearly two thirds of those living with HIV.

Since 1985 the percentage of adult women living with HIV has risen from 35% to 45%.

Young women are, on an average, 2.5 times more likely to be infected by HIV than their male counterparts.

Up to 33% of girls report forced sexual initiation.

In Africa, married women are at higher risk of HIV infection than their unmarried counterparts.

Only 20% of those who need prevention service receive them.

A Hearty Welcome!

On behalf of the whole congregation, the NGO office offers a hearty welcome to Shalini Podimattam (from the Indian province, from the subcontinent of Gandhi and Tagore) to the role of Coordinator of the Good Shepherd International Office for Justice, Peace and Solidarity (JPS) in Mission.

As a young woman in 1976 Shalini joined the congregation. She worked in her early years with girls and young women with social difficulties. For the past 13 years, Shalini has been involved in the province's Social Action Ministry among the Dalits and indigenous people. Her work has focused on grassroots development and group work with women, youth and children. She has organized State level networks of women and has initiated and managed social work projects.

Shalini has served her province in roles of local leadership and various province commissions; she was a province delegate to the 2003 General Chapter. She has a professional Master's Degree in Social Work and finds relaxation in art, music, nature, and relationships.

News notes prepared by Congregation of the Good Shepherd
See this newsletter on the website at: http://www.buonpastoreint.org/index.htm

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Original in English. Please distribute to all communities and Good Shepherd Persons in your province. Thank you.

See: http://womenandaid.unaids.org/