Good Shepherd Presents its 1st NGO Report to CEDAW, UN

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is a structure of the United Nations through which NGOs can bring the experiences and concerns of national grassroots women to the United Nations for the purpose of promoting systemic and structural change that will benefit all women.

It was coincidence that the Good Shepherd NGO intern from Lebanon, Hiam Baroud, was in New York at the same time that the CEDAW panel of experts were reviewing the report of the government of Lebanon. We saw this coincidence as an opportunity to speak for the issues of women in Lebanon, especially those linked to GS direct ministries. One of Hiam's NGO assignments was to prepare an NGO report to be presented at the CEDAW hearings. There was much nervousness in learning and taking responsibility for a new process but, as Hiam remarked, "I have to think beyond myself and really act for all the women in my country." She informed herself of all the government reports; she gathered experiences and information from Good Shepherd sisters and employees in the ministries in Lebanon; she acquainted herself fully with the articles of the CEDAW convention; and finally, she prepared and delivered a report in early July.

In her report, Hiam focused on her experiential expertise and described problems with education, girls, marital status of women, and violence against women. She offered specific recommendations in the areas of girls' education, honor crimes, citizenship laws, prostitution, and marriage.

The CEDAW panel of experts posed questions to the NGO presenters. Although this was tense for the NGOs, the questions were clear and related to clarifying aspects of the report. In this way, the CEDAW experts were better prepared to question the governments on aspects of the official report. Hiam responded well and spoke for the urgent needs of suffering of women.

If you would like a copy of Hiam's report in French or in English, please email to Clare (cnolan8345@aol.com) and request a copy.

For more on CEDAW, the Convention, the process and schedule of reporting, see: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/(other languages can be linked from here)

If your country is reporting to CEDAW please consider preparing a report, alone or in collaboration with other NGOs. The NGO office can help in your presentation.
Good Shepherd presence was formidable in Rome at the first ‘International Meeting on the Pastoral Care for the Liberation of Women of the Street’ on 20th and 21st June 2005. Six sisters and two lay collaborators were among the 57 participants and Srs. Lalini Gunawardena, Michelle Lopez, and Maria Dutra were among the experts invited to share experiences of pastoral care for women.

Conferences and dialogue were based on an analysis of the reality of women caught up in this delicate sector of human mobility. Listening to each other, the Gospel call, and the social teachings of the Church, the participants prepared proposals for a specific pastoral plan, presented to the Pontifical Council, for the liberation of trafficked and exploited women.

Among experiences shared was the Belgium initiative of GS support to women involved in prostitution by opening the community doors with hospitality to women. At a parish celebration in Belgium Maria Lourdes and collaborators organised an exhibition of GS work with women. In July, Maria Lourdes presented a paper on ‘Prevention and Rehabilitation of Women in Prostitution’ at the International Seminar on Woman in Prostitution, in Belgium.

In Ireland the Ruhama program made National Press headlines when the issues involved in the prostitution of women were highlighted, especially for women who are trafficked. Ruhama called for the setting up of a Police Vice Squad and a shut down of Lap Dancing clubs because of their links to prostitution and trafficking. At the UN CEDAW hearings in New York this summer, Ireland’s government minister cited Ruhama as a leader in presenting statistics and recommendations to the Irish government on the issues of women in prostitution. The Trustees of Ruhama are the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd.

In Lisbon, Portugal, the Institute of Social Solidarity is dedicated to helping single pregnant girls and mothers of small children. The young girls come from diverse, although generally poor, backgrounds. Some girls seek out our Institute because they have become pregnant and do not wish to have an abortion; others bring their children with them. They are faced with the dilemma of how to stay with their children without the means to raise them. Good Shepherd tries to help each mother, offering possibilities for study and attaining skills for parenting and the job market.

"Liberation of women needs a multi-dimensional approach. Unless men and women... know their rights and obligations very little change can happen... The Convention on the Elimination of all Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) defines discrimination against women. Documents like this should be studied in all religious formation institutes and preached whenever the opportunity arises.... This is a very effective pastoral method of helping the women of the street."

Michele Lopez
The 60th session on the United Nations General Assembly in September '05 will be a major event (Millennium+5 Summit) of world leaders. It will commemorate and review the promises made by governments 5 years ago when the world looked to a new vision of peace and prosperity and agreed to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

NGOs had a special opportunity to prepare for the Summit with 2 days of NGO hearings before the governments. NGOs were entitled to nominate speakers who would voice their concerns in relation to the MDGs and the report of the Secretary General, In Larger Freedom by Kofi Anna, which is the base document for the meeting.

In collaboration with two other NGOs, The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) and UNANIMA, Good Shepherd nominated 3 speakers from regions of the "developing world" to address the issue of Violence Against Women, an area conspicuously absent from the MDGs and the Secretary General's report. All three nominations were accepted (and funded) by the United Nations. The speaker who came specifically under the sponsorship of Good Shepherd, Teresa Ulloa from Mexico, was accepted as a speaker on the broad theme "Freedom from Fear."

While politicians speak so much about security and military solutions to make the world free from fear, Theresa raised the refrain of fears that women face across the globe (excerpts):

"We, women and girls of the world, fear war and the violence that warlike acts bring against us: rape; sexual violence; displacement; death; hunger; the humiliation of the defeated mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters... We, women and girls of the world, fear gender discrimination which kills thousands of girls before being born, or which condemns those who are born to a lack of opportunities, marginalization, inequality, and traditional practices harmful to their bodies and their human dignity. .... We, women and girls in developing countries, fear poverty and the rising feminization of poverty that threatens the world.... We, women and girls of the world, fear gender violence, exercised as much in the public sphere as in the private sphere. Women and girls continue suffering violence routinely in their homes where they should be guaranteed the right to life, integrity, and personal security... We fear the purchasers of women's bodies who through the demand for prostitution represent economic incentive for human traffickers with the intent of sexual exploitation..."

Theresa's remarks received much positive feedback and, indeed, were echoed by many speakers who voiced gender equality as a foundation for peace, human rights and all true human security.

Unfortunately, we did not hear these concerns echoed strongly by the governments. The effort for women's rights is an ongoing social, political, economic, and spiritual movement. We must participate continually, wherever/whenever there is opportunity to raise our voices and call governments to fulfill promises and to adapt systems and structures in order to promote the human rights of women and girls.

For more on the Millennium Summit and related topics, visit the Home Page of the UN: http://www.un.org/english/
People on the Move
A reflection by Shalini Podimattam

The Good Shepherd 28th General Assembly/Chapter highlighted the exclusion and marginalization of migrants, trafficked persons, and refugees. Thus I attended with enthusiasm the SEDOS (Documentation and Study Center) Annual Residential Seminar of May 2005 in Rome since its theme was migration and mission. Migration and mobility go hand in hand with modernity as a social phenomenon that challenges pastoral care with a range of issues and a multiplicity of cultures.

The relationship between migrants and their host community is usually one of threat, control and insecurity. There is a diminishment of trust, integration, intercultural dialogue, and supportive interchange. The media often highlights the illegality of migration and increases insecurity among populations. Migration policies differ from country to country but are often not effective. They tend to have shortsighted goals that change according to vested political interests. It is up to pastoral outreach to affirm migrants as, not only a labor force, but as humans with dignity, taking Human Rights issues into account.

Women make up 49% of the 175 million migrants worldwide (2000 estimate). Thus, there is a feminization of migration. Migrant women continue to be burdened by their jobs, their family and childbearing responsibilities. At work, they are discriminated against due to their nationality, their race, and/or their age. They face discrimination within marriage due to complications of international marriages, the absence of supportive blood-family relationships, and because of the prevalence of domestic violence. Women are exploited as migrants when trafficked for the sex exploitation, when forced into labor and/or forced into marriage, simply to survive.

Church, as a pilgrim people, has its roots in the Israelite’s experience of God. They journeyed through life with the memory of God’s intervention for liberation and hope for a greater future. “Christian life is essentially a living through the Passover with Christ, a journey, a sublime migration towards total communion of the Kingdom of God” (Chiesa e mobilità umana 10).

175 million, or 3%, of the global population are international migrants.

Of the 200 countries in the world, the developing 175 share only 25% of the world economy.

Inequalities within countries and between countries cause migration.

As inequality increases, migration increases.

Migration of the skilled and unskilled labor force slows the development of their country of origin.

The “foreigner” is God’s messenger who surprises us and brings those who are far away closer. Migrants experience loneliness, marginalization and meaninglessness because of their disconnection from home and habitation in a strange country. They feel rejected from Church and God. Biblically, justice is God’s desire to restore relationships among the people. The mission of the Church with ‘People on the Move’ is to enhance relationships, inclusion, journeying together, healing and reconnecting. Good Shepherd People – also a people on the move in mission - share this work of the Church with a spirit of compassion, respect, and on-going reconciliation.
UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues: Systemic Questions of Tsunami Relief

The indigenous man from Ache, Indonesia who had traveled to New York, with support from Canadian indigenous organizations, stood up and stated simply: "In the Tsunami I lost my wife, my children, my mother, my brothers, my sisters; I lost 250 members of my family in Tsunami." Despite such tragic loss he came to speak in favor of human rights and structural issues related to government rebuilding of indigenous areas. He also said that four months after world attention came to his land, his people are often still hungry. We saw in a video that the indigenous communities are already, with their own resources, rebuilding. But the bureaucracy has imposed regulations and a state-originated vision of how rebuilding should progress. The indigenous are simply asking for their participation in those things that affect their lives.

Good Shepherd Raises its Voice

As part of the Justice Institute of British Columbia, Sr. Deborah Issacs, Canadian province, addressed the Pacific Northwest Conference on International Human Trafficking in May 2005

On the topic of Successful Models for the protection of child and youth victims she spoke on principles of intervention that:

- Place children are at the center of intervention as key actors/participants;
- Take a holistic view of the child and environment;
- Respond to immediate consequences of trafficking as well as root causes and related factors;
- Use the strengths & resiliencies of the child and involve children in the implementation & evaluation;
- Are inclusive and sensitive to specific culture, gender, geo-political and socio-economic contexts;
- Cross multiple levels to effect change in both country of origin and country of destination;
- Call on governments to be accountable for ensuring and protecting the rights of trafficked children.

Good Shepherd Collaborates on Impacting on Structures:

Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services with Origin Energy in Australia launched a new No Interest Loan program designed to enable those living on low incomes to purchase energy efficient appliances at a lower than market price cost.

The ‘Better Energy Appliance Loan’ will be made available for the purchase household appliances such as refrigerators and washing machines. By helping people manage their energy use the program hopes to make a positive impact on household financial stress and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
Brief Notes – Around the World

From Japan, sent by Agnes Yamamoto
The Conference of Major Superiors of Women Religious, Japan, invited the Leadership Conference of Women Religious USA to share the 60th commemoration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 2005. The Japanese women made a Pledge for Peace and the USA women issued a statement Speaking for Peace. Such international collaboration can support work toward creating a Culture of Peace.

From Atlanta, USA, reported in the Atlanta Journal 05/18/2005
On the 30th Anniversary of the end of the Viet Nam war, Sister Christine Truong My Hanh, of Good Shepherd Services (GSS), hosted a supper event for the offspring of U.S. men and Vietnamese women who met during the Vietnam War. These "Amerasians" are adults now but continue to carry the weight of growing up scorned by Vietnamese society and denied privileges and access of US citizenship. The Amerasians had the opportunity to speak of their plight of marginalization to politicians. GSS works to provide both social services and to force policy changes that would offer justice and dignity to this population.

From Saipan, sent by Stella Mangona
"I am continuing to work against trafficking in women here in Saipan... I was able to intercept the entry of some women coming to work as "entertainers" because of my collaborative work with the Asia Pacific Coalition against Trafficking in Women based in the Philippines (CATW-AP). Thanks to you for helping me to contact the network..."

From Goiânia, Brazil, sent by Dulce Ruv
Recently the Ministry of Justice sponsored a Training Course on International Trafficking. It was directed to Federal Police, State Prosecutors, and NGOs. Already there have been higher arrest rates of traffickers. This is the result when all work together on an issue.

From India, sent by Therese Meera Varickamackel
This past summer, lay staff and sisters in Bangalore had a 5-day training program for those who are involved in grassroots network interventions. The focus was on Children’s Parliaments. This is a model where children from ages 6-18 come together according to their village or neighborhood to create an alternate governance/political system. Participation is key. In Karnataka Good Shepherd is the first to implement the model and it brings much hope. ♥♥

"To shut oneself away from the demands of political transformation of Asia is in a sense a denial of Christian identity."
Cardinal Jaime Sin, Manila, RIP June 21, '05

News notes prepared by Congregation of the Good Shepherd
See this newsletter on the website at:
http://www.buonpastoreint.org/www/?rub=download/download&cat_id=c42bedf6b4b61
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