UN Millennium Summit / NGO Conference
Good Shepherd Activity at the UN by Clare Nolan

The UN General Assembly of 2005 commemorated the 60th anniversary of the UN and the five-year anniversary of the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals.) 120 major world leaders came to the UN to recommit to peace and development and to stimulate reform.

Just before the convening of the General Assembly, 2,000 NGO delegates came together to rededicate efforts for peace, development, and justice. Good Shepherd had three attendees at the conference: one GS Sister, one GSVolunteer, and a volunteer staff from a GS program. The conference is a time of learning and stimulation. It is a time for strategizing and inspiration.

NGOs were stirred by Wahu Kaara, of the All Africa Conference of Churches, Kenya: "...the transformation that is taking place is at the level of individual citizens in Africa. The people of Africa are refusing to accept a life of bondage, poverty and injustice. And our message to our governments in Africa is loud and clear - no more excuses, no more poverty. Meeting the MDGs... has to be a top priority. We will not tolerate corruption and inefficiency from our leaders anymore."

And Kofi Annan, humbled by the recent Oil for Food scandal, told us with much feeling: "...please keep making your voices heard, loud and clear enough to lift the sky. And keep raising your voices after that, to hold governments to their promises and to help translate those promises into action."

Good Shepherd had its own inspiring voice in Phyllis Molle of GS Handcrafting Justice, a micro-enterprise project. She raised her voice at a Roundtable on Poverty, giving the following message:

"In reflecting on my experiences with marginalized women from a number of countries, I hear their voices. I humbly speak for them, until the day when they can be here to represent themselves. They cry out:
- Help us develop systems that will protect us and our daughters and sons against the violence of sexual exploitation.
- Assure us of education and skills training so that we can find ways to earn an adequate living for ourselves, but also, respect the knowledge and experience that we already have.
- Dissolve trade barriers that keep us from selling our products at fair prices in foreign markets.
- Fulfill the promises of basic sanitation and health care. When you turn on a faucet for your glass of clean, safe water, REMEMBER US.

How can we get the world to listen with hearts as well as ears, the women who live in conditions of poverty and strive to educate our children and feed our families?"

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Women’s QUILT - Window on Woman’s World

A reflection by Clare Nolan

Window on Woman’s World was presented on the International Day to End Violence Against Women, November 25th 2005 to Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director, UNIFEM, New York.

Thanks to GS women who contributed!

Good Shepherd contributed women’s pieces of cloth from all over the world to be used for the commemorative quilt. The quilt is now completed and is touring at various Women’s events. It has been displayed in schools, a State capitol building and will be displayed by NGOs in the UN for the Commission for Social Development.

The quilter and those displaying the quilt are now designing a way to include the women’s stories with the display. Each time the quilting group speaks to NGOs, they tell about the beautiful cloths and heart-rending stories contributed by Good Shepherd.

From the shirting mills of Northern Ireland where the women now suffer the effects of unemployment to the tribal woman in Senegal who attempted suicide due to sadistic abuse; from the suffering women of Lisbon Portugal to the hand-weaving workshop in rural Sri Lanka; from the Santa Ana mothers restarting lives for the sake of their children to the women of Chimbote, Peru whose handwork promises new life, the Good Shepherd offerings arrived most often with notes of “thank you” for the work that UNIFEM and NGOs do on behalf of women victims of violence and, more importantly, with promises of unity in prayer so that all women of the world can realize freedom and wholeness.

When I first saw the beautiful quilt, I wanted to be able to identify each Good Shepherd piece. Indeed, I was able to identify the typical Andean women and the Ñandutí cloth from Paraguay. But some of the African and Asian designs are less familiar to me. I soon realized it was not important to claim “our pieces.” Rather, I reflected that Good Shepherd is, like the quilt itself, one small part of a composite of desires and an intermingling of collaboration with so many people of good will. It is together with all that our own mission of mercy and reconciliation will be realized.
The JP Contact Network – Web of Growing Strength

By Shalini Podimattam, JPSM office

St. Mary Euphrasia states: “…in the circulars we receive, a delightful panorama unfolds: a family whose members, scattered over many different countries, are closely united in the bonds of true love; and who are all aiming at the same object – the spiritual regeneration of the sheep…” (Chpt. 35, Conferences and Instructions) thus we see networking is not a new concept in our Congregation.

SME showed us how to work together based on relationships among sisters as well as with links within the Church and secular institutions. In the face of modernization and exacerbated change we seek creative dynamism in our internationality, to develop more flexible and inclusive structures in our lives and in our work. Increasingly, we share our vision and link services within and outside of Good Shepherd groups for the benefit of the persons we serve.

The Good Shepherd International Office for Justice, Peace and Solidarity in Mission (JPSM Office), seeks to support and assist the implementation of our Congregational Directions for Justice and Peace. From a meeting last June with Clare of the NGO Office and the Congregational Leadership Team, I would like to share the current vision of the office and highlight the importance of the JP Contact network that is re-newing its activity.

Our vision:
“…that justice may reign universally.”
(2003 Chapter)

Our goals:
- To contribute to the transformation of society, by promoting a culture of peace, non-violence, inclusion, solidarity, and reconciliation.

Our objectives for the next two years are:
- To support an active Justice and Peace Contact Person (JP Contact) in each unit;
- To organize workshops for JP Contacts in the Americas, Asia-Pacific, Europe and RIMOA;
- To develop four continental regional Justice and Peace Teams.

Since the role of the JP Contact is so vital to developing our vision and goals, I would like to share some details of the role of the JP Contact with you: (And a big “Thank you!” to past and new persons serving in this role)

Role of JP Contacts: (in brief)
- To take responsibility for local coordination, animation and distribution of JP issues and material consistent with the Assembly/Chapter Directions as appropriate to local goals and the apostolic works of the unit.
- To participate in local church structures, inter-congregational groups, JP commissions, and local/national networks related to apostolic works and systemic structures (children, refugees, ecology, women, etc.).
To participate with other GS regional units on issues of common concern.

To keep the JPSM and NGO offices informed of unit goals, activities and apostolic works, especially those related to structural and systemic change.

To support and coordinate contributions and participation from the unit to the JPSM / NGO offices when information is requested for activities, reports, or news items.

To submit an annual report to their own unit leadership team and to the JPSM Office on the status and activities of JP in the unit.

From the local work of JP Contacts we hope to see the network form into stronger regional networks. This will depend on the support and the participation of all. The JP Contact is only a part of the whole Good Shepherd network that consists of all our sisters, collaborators, and friends. Our task is to constantly learn, share and communicate. We seek to be interlinked, open and supportive, and to empower each other in promoting justice, peace and solidarity in mission.

We are witnessing change of huge proportion in our world. Holding the poor in our hearts, we accept these as challenges and opportunities. Our motivation is our shared vision of a transformed society. May our Shepherd God enable us to see beyond what we see, to give us the capacity to dream dreams, and so become architects of a new humanity.

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Signs of the Times - for Contemplation:

Catholic women meeting in East Asia about women’s status in the Church concluded: “Asia needs a feminine and mothering church, hence the needs to foster qualities of compassion, caring, gentleness, hospitality and warmth. The church needs to become inclusive and embrace people in a non-judgmental way.” They recommended making space for women to come together for mutual help and support. They called for aid women to in situations of domestic violence and working against unjust economic structures.

_Reported in Japan Catholic News, Oct 2005_

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Make full use of NGO status - for Women

As one effort to “make full use of our NGO status,” the Congregational Leadership Team has sought regional representatives at the UN Regional Economic Commissions. To date, Srs. Winifred and Saba will serve the Africa region in Addis Ababa and Sr. Hiam will serve Western Asia in Beirut. Shalini is named for UN Geneva, where the Human Rights office is located. The work (very part-time) will be to explore ways to collaborate and raise our voice on systemic issues in order to strengthen GS mission. We hope to become active in Eastern Asia, Europe, and Latin America in the coming months.

March 8 - Int. Women’s Day

The NGO office will be participating in the UN Commission on the Status of Women during the first two weeks of March. Deborah Zanke, Manager of Development and Communications, Marymound, GS Canada will present an interactive workshop on their program’s innovative approach to advocacy for Sexually Exploited Youth.

_(MAISEY program)_
Good Shepherd Raises its Voice

Good Shepherd direct service programs have contributed to United Nations studies in the past months on the topics of Violence Against Women, Trafficking, and Violence Against Children. The NGO office is grateful to those direct service workers who make use of our NGO status to link the structural and systemic issues and to raise a voice in favor of the marginalized. Here are short excerpts from various reports:

The Justice, Peace & Solidarity for Mission Committee of the Good Shepherd Sisters, Province of Singapore – Malaysia said:
“The level of awareness among the Malaysian public in respect of human rights issues especially women’s rights and principles of CEDAW remains low.”

Centro Amar in Lima Peru reported:
“The laws in our country are given, but there are deficiencies in their application and in other cases their regulation is not adapted to the reality…”

Sr. Maria Juana of Senegal who works with women in prostitution submitted:
“The purpose of this report is to stress that prostitution should be categorized as violence against women… Prostitution needs to be eradicated as it has a devastating effect on a woman’s sense of self, self-regard, and all aspects of her life.”

Catherine Mutindi, Kenya JP Contact person says:
“In Kenya, almost 99 per cent of the women in prostitution would quit if they had an alternative way of earning a living. We have experienced this desire and commitment to dignified livelihood through our working with women who were involved in prostitution and have changed when given options. We cannot remain indifferent to the unfortunate position of women in society… It is time that governments, leaders, and all together joined hands in building a better world for women, a better world for all.”

The NGO office submitted:
“The naming of male violence against women… is to clarify the nature of what we are talking about so as to change the current paradigm of gender relationships.”

Ethiopia reported:
“The children have a lot of domestic work such as bringing the cows to water, collecting the fire wood, and fetching the water. The children are exploited - their energy gone in work, not for their development and their need to grow as children.

Social Worker Debbie Schnell from Collier Services in USA reported:
“One of the most pervasive problems is sexual abuse of children… The statistics are overwhelming… Our group services are a strong support.”

Clare O’Mahoney reported from Brussels, Belgium:
“Violence against women is an ongoing reality here in the area of street prostitution. There is increased evidence of violence experienced when they are victims of trafficking. Key Issues are: Implementation of existing laws; regrouping of families; resource and fund-allocation; the need for harmonization of the law across the EU.”

Yvonne in Senegal said:
“The situation of economic and social crisis that appeared in Senegal in the 1980s, with policies of structural adjustment, resulted in family dislocation and the crumbling of traditional solidarity with disastrous consequences on the most vulnerable population, notably children.”
Brief Notes - Around the World

From Madagascar, News notes 9-05
"Recognize that the laity who live the Good Shepherd charism are a gift for the Congregation, the Church and the world." (General chapter 2003)

After 20 years of service Sr. Lucy said farewell to the Fihavanana Center. She took the farewell opportunity of prayer and celebration to bestow an Award of Service to the women who helped found, develop and sustain the project. She remarked that the seeds planted through these dedicated women would assure the continued development of the Center.

From Ethiopia, Cheryl O’Brien, former GSVolunteer, current employee of Gaia:
The Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Addis Abba are working with Project Gaia to create income-generation for women. Consistent with the UN Millennium Development Goals, and focused on the environment as a central women's issue, the GS association will be distributors (sellers) of ethanol, a clean cooking fuel, benefiting the economy and the environment.

From Syria, Sr. Claude:
In relation to Violence Against Women, Good Shepherd works with The Arab Council for Childhood and Development in efforts to change laws regarding honor killings against women.

From China:
Sisters in China express concerns about the lack of religious freedom in the society as well as the evil of abortion. They seek justice work on these themes.

From USA, Handcrafting Justice:
Women’s NGOs sponsor an annual luncheon, “Women who make a Difference” to honor women UN ambassadors. This year, Good Shepherd was invited to provide table centerpieces purchased from the Handcrafting Justice program. The women’s artisan work was a big success and several of the ambassadors and Mrs. Kofi Annan all left with items from Good Shepherd projects, from our own women who make a difference!

From Indonesia, Flores:
Since May '05 groups of Sisters and Friends of the Sisters have been meeting and training in order to upgrade their services. The first step is to gather the women and listen to their needs and their dreams to “change the cultural structures which oppress them." They are studying the new national Law on Trafficking against Women and Domestic Violence. When women dare to raise their voices and speak from their own experiences on the domestic violence, it is a powerful agent for systemic change. All initiatives make use of networking with nurses, doctors, police, lawyers, social departments, courts, and religious from different congregations.

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

Clare Nolan, Good Shepherd NGO Office
Email: cnolan8345@aol.com

Shalini Podimattam, Int. 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, programs and Good Shepherd Friends in your province. Thank you.

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