JP contact regional workshops began in Asia-Pacific, November '06

By Clare Nolan

The first regional JP Contact workshop was held in Thailand in November 2006, developed and sponsored by the JPSM office in Rome, supported by the NGO office, and hosted by Good Shepherd Sisters in Thailand.

The workshop highlighted the importance of the role of JP Contacts in their units and regions, while reinforcing that Justice and Peace commitments are the responsibility of each sister and GS person.

Highlights of the workshops included:

- Input from Dr. Irene Fernandez on Globalization, Women, and Social Analysis;
- A panel of Good Shepherd Contact persons describing current GS JP actions. Topics included advocacy writing, networking and collaboration, development of a local JP team, and linking national and international events;
- An evening of exposure to the sexual exploitation of women with reflection guided by our Sisters from the Fountain of Life Center;
- A women’s Eucharistic liturgy;
- Discussion and activities to explore current commitments and develop specific planning.
While meeting each other and working in group sessions, we confronted the reality of congregational restructuring; we were often confused and unsure if we were Provinces, Units or Countries!!!

In the last days we did a group advocacy final writing project that confronted both unity and differences – very good practice.

Global breads, Work of women offered to God

Indonesia shares its JP history

Circles within circles of dialogue

The next workshops scheduled are:
The Americas, May 14-19, Guatemala
RIOMA, July 21-26, Egypt
Europe, late 2007

**NGO Events and Resources:**

**CSW 2007**

The “elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child” is the theme of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The CSW is held every year in early March to review the progress on Women’s equality, as outlined in the Beijing Platform of Action, 1995.

The NGO office is excited to have two Good Shepherd Youth who will be GS delegates at the Commission. Three Good Shepherd youth applied for a travel grant in order to directly raise the voice of the girl child. Jakline from Kenya and Mekdes from Ethiopia were 2 of 11 girls awarded travel grants. Sunitha from India was thanked for her good application but was unable to be selected among so many applications.

The issues raised by these girl delegates range from Rape, Early Marriages, Lack of Education, Discrimination, HIV/Aids, Female Genital Mutilation, Sexual Exploitation, Poverty, Work Overload, Cultural Domination, Harassment, Lack of Job Opportunity, Early Marriages and Abduction. Both girls are particularly conversant in the areas of rape, early marriage, and female genital mutilation.

*More information on CSW: (Primarily English):*
http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/51sess.htm

**INDIGENOUS RIGHTS:**

*A dream still deferred*

In December ’06 approval of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was blocked by a group of African countries, supported by Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Russia.
The Declaration, a result of 24 years of discussion at the UN, recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples to their land and to live as they wish. It also affirms that, for example, they should not be moved from their lands without their free and informed consent.

The new UN Human Rights Council recommended that the General Assembly approve the Declaration. This was great hope but the current opposition will delay and possibly weaken the Declaration. Indigenous peoples have already waited far too long for their rights to be recognized. Governments, however, seem to fear that Human Rights will erode State control.

For more information:  
http://www.survival-international.org

New Secretary General at UN

Ban Ki-moon of Korea has been sworn in as the new Secretary General. But the NGOs have been more concerned to say “Good-Bye” and “Thank-you” to outgoing Secretary General Kofi Annan who, with moral force, always gave priority to human rights.

This transition reminds us that the responsibility of the UN is in the hands of “we the people” and each of our national governments. While the person in office is surely important, their hands are tied unless citizens demand that national politicians implement human rights and work cooperatively in the UN structures.

Migration –  
On the UN Agenda

The NGO office participated in a “High-Level NGO dialogue” with governments in July ‘06. This was the beginning of heightened attention to the issue of migration within the UN structures.

There is a definite tension between governments, who measure macro-economic effects of migration, and NGOs who are concerned with human rights, break up of families, sexual exploitation and marginalization of migrants in both home countries and host countries.

NGOs have formed a new committee on migration and understand this as a long-term issue requiring policy advocacy. In NGO travels to Indonesia, Clare heard first hand from a women’s group, how they are abandoned by husbands moving to Malaysia for work and are left with virtually no social protection for themselves or their children. Clare will use the women’s stories for advocacy efforts in New York.

The NGO office welcomes information on national level advocacy done by GS people. Watch for more news on an International Conference in July 07 in Brussels, Belgium.

Documents on Migration in all UN languages can be located:  
http://www.un.org/esa/population/hldmigration/

Explore the UN on your own:

Browse and learn more about the UN and NGOs: http://www.un.org/english/

Don’t forget about the Cyberschoolbus - a child-friendly resource for Justice and Human Rights:  
(All UN languages available)
Different Cultures; Same Discrimination

Good Shepherd in Germany and in Ethiopia contributed to a UN report on early and arranged marriages.

In response to a request from the NGO office, GS Ethiopia (Sr. Saba Tensaew) and GS Germany (Sr. Roswitha Wanke) submitted reports (November 2006) to the UN on the situation of forced marriage in their countries. This material will contribute to a report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking. Thanks to Saba and Roswitha for their powerful voices on behalf of girl children. Below are notes from their contributions.

Ethiopia has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world, even though national laws prohibit the practice. Arranged and forced marriages are traditional practices that damage the girl child. The United Nations estimates that 70 percent of marriages in Ethiopia are done by way of abduction, mostly in rural areas where the majority of the country’s 71 million population resides.

Forced marriages commonly occur because families, struggling to survive, marry their daughter to secure her future. Parents hope to protect their daughters from premarital sex, including rape, by finding a husband who can serve as a guardian. Forced marriage also occurs through kidnapping when a girl child refuses the proposal of marriage. To avoid being jeered at by his peers the male kidnaps the girl. Girls are also kidnapped so that the paying of dowry can be avoided. In these situations the girl has no voice, no opinion - she is merely an item to be bought and sold.

Arranged marriages occur where friendly families would like to be related to one another. Even before the birth, family promises of giving the child in marriage will be exchanged. Another example is where a wealthy male approaches a family to request their daughter for a price, without the knowledge of the girl child. The girl child is dressed up for the day and is unaware that she is being given in marriage to a stranger. She is subject to rape and torture if she refuses to submit to what is asked.

Legal and constitutional protections are in place but in practice the law and custom permits, enforces, and condones forced and arranged marriages. These traditions are rooted in the psyche of society even though the act is against the law. In the report Good Shepherd makes recommendations, both legal and social that can help remedy this injustice.

In another culture, European society, women suffer similar fates. In Germany, forced marriage is widespread among Moslem families. Originally it was an immigrant issue but now generations of women who have grown up in German society bring the practice into the mainstream. As an immigrant issue, the distinction between arranged and forced marriage is imprecise.

Normally an arranged marriage occurs between a young Moslem man who has grown up in Germany and a young Moslem woman who has grown up in her home country. They get married in her home country, and she enters Germany, as a “import bride”, not knowing the language and culture, living inside the house, totally dependent on her husband and mother-in-law, without any contact with outside people. Her residence permit is dependent on her husband.

Forced marriage has not been a subject of Germany’s national law; it is handled in court as a serious case of constraint, and the penalty is from 6 months to a maximum of 5 years. However, some regions of the Federal
Republic of Germany have launched an initiative to make forced marriage a statutory offence, punishable by imprisonment from 6 months to 10 years.

GS is among networks of counseling offices for women. They run protected apartments and many women have received police protection and assistance to move to another city and to change their name to escape the family. Recommendations are made in the report for Germany to change migration practices and trafficking laws to allow the woman respite and a chance to overcome trauma.

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Brief Notes – Around the World

From Good Shepherd, Malaysia:
Celebrating International Peace Day, Sept. 21, the children of Mariaville & Maryvale kindergartens made pinwheels of all shapes, sizes and colors. In this activity they expressed their feelings about peace, war, love, unity and joy. After songs of peace and happiness and a meditative walk on the school grounds the children ‘planted’ their pinwheels in the ground where they danced with the wind.

From Indonesia, Sr. Delfia:
The Justice Peace Commission in Jakarta Indonesia sponsored training for teachers in the primary school. Sixty-three lay teachers and three GS sisters participated. The focus was on self-awareness and empathy as an antidote to abuse. The group learned about legal aspects of abuse but also focused on methodologies and communication skills that build empathy and creativity with children.

From NY Province JP team:
The New York Province of Good Shepherd and the New York City Good Shepherd Services Agency are working with the New York State Anti-Trafficking Coalition to pass effective legislation to deter trafficking within the State of New York.

From Canada, Vancouver:
Good Shepherd Sister Deborah Isaacs was a witness on the issue of human trafficking before the Standing Committee on the Status of Women of the House of Common of Canada, November 2006. In an active dialogue and question session, Deborah emphasized the special needs of children and spoke for the need for financing of holistic services. She also recommended that NGOs who are competent in the field be part of ongoing policy planning for victims of trafficking.

From Ireland, Clare O’Mahoney:
In August, Sr. Clare O’Mahoney addressed a session of the XVII World Congress of the International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates. Her remarks followed a speech by Irish President Mary McAleese. Recommendations from the gathering were forwarded to the United Nations, in the context of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols, the guiding international human rights instruments for policy formation.
From Indonesia, Agatha Ngadinah RGS:
In May ‘06, Good Shepherd People in Jakarta shared activities and a meal with 52 poor children as part of Fight Hunger: Walk the World. Combined with the feast of Maria Droste, games, dance, prayers, and the meal made for a great day. The meal, a practical substitute for a symbolic walk, will be well remembered by the children as the practical goodness of God.

From Canada, Vancouver:
Two Good Shepherd sisters were part of a social service team that supported women who were arrested in a massage parlor raid. A massive police raid brought over 100 women into custody; up to 80% of them were trafficked. The sisters worked to build trust so that the women could receive services and protection.

From Philippines JP Contact Team:
In September ‘06 GS Philippines participated in fact-finding missions with other national Human Rights groups. The data resulted in comprehensive “shadow report” to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, October 2006.

From Good Shepherd, Singapore-Malaysia, JP Team:
For International Human Right Day (Dec 10 ‘06) the GS Singapore-Malaysia JP Team collaborated with Amnesty International in a 24 hour letter writing marathon. The province contributed 121 letters to the total 2511 letters from over 100 groups gathered by Amnesty. Other Human Rights activities included a charity dinner and a street vigil with banners.

From Belgium, JP Contact, María Lourdes Orihuela E.
To commemorate the International Day of Peace (Sept 21, ‘06) and the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (Oct 17, ‘06), Good Shepherd, with Pax Christi in Belgium, was involved in a week of local activities directed to fight against injustice, violence, and poverty. A main objective was to sensitize both youth and adults on respect for human dignity.

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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 Translated in Spanish by Victor Carasco Please distribute to all communities, programs and Good Shepherd Friends in your province. Thank you.

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