The 16 Days Campaign occurs each year, beginning November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and ending on December 10, International Human Rights Day. This year, the 25th year of the 16 Days of Activism, the Good Shepherd NGO office, in partnership with the Sisters of Mercy NGO office, hosted a daily Twitter Teach-In, based on Sister of Mercy Angela Reed’s research at the Good Shepherd Welcome House in Cebu City, Philippines. The Good Shepherd/Mercy #16Days16Stories campaign featured 16 videos, presenting the stories of formerly-trafficked women in their own words, along with questions for reflection and facts and analysis about the experiences of women and girls and the international laws and obligations that exist to protect them. The campaign highlighted the human rights violations and cumulative disadvantage over the life cycle that these women and girls have experienced, as well as their resilience and activism, and aimed to galvanize action. During the last day of the campaign, participants had the opportunity to take part in a Q&A with the women at Good Shepherd Welcome House, to engage with them more directly, and to learn what recommendations the women have regarding how to end trafficking and empower women and girls. You can find our tweets and videos on Twitter and 16days16stories.online.

The 55th Session of the Commission for Social Development took place February 1-10, 2017, with the priority theme “Strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all.” The Civil Society Forum, organized by the NGO Committee for Social Development was held on January 30-31, and focused on social protection, including social protection floors as one such strategy. The Civil Society Forum provided an opportunity for participants to share perspectives and best practices of social protection policies in order to promote people-centered social change and development. It also created a space for participants to develop concrete recommendations for the Commission, leading to the presentation of the Civil Society Declaration to Member States and the UN. During the Commission, a number of side events were organized, highlighting the importance of innovative financing, grassroots and migrants to the eradication of poverty, among other topics. The Good Shepherd statement to the Commission, available in English, Spanish and French, examines the disproportionate effect that poverty has on girls and women, and puts forward social protection floors as an effective, human rights-based policy for the eradication of poverty.
On October 13, 2016, the General Assembly appointed the former Prime Minister of Portugal, António Guterres, as the next United Nations Secretary-General. He began his tenure on January 1, 2017, succeeding Ban Ki-moon. Mr. Guterres was Prime Minister of Portugal from 1995 to 2002, and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees from June 2005 to December 2015. He is a practicing Catholic.

The selection of a new United Nations Secretary-General was decided behind closed-doors by a few powerful countries, but for the first time in history, the selection process involved public discussions with each candidate. The candidates presented their 'vision statements' and answered questions on how they would promote sustainable development, improve efforts to create peace, protect human rights, and deal with huge humanitarian catastrophes should they be selected to lead the UN. Still the members of the Security Council had the final power to nominate a candidate for selection. Many NGOs and governments were disappointed that a woman was not selected. Out of 13 candidates, seven were women, and in August Ban Ki-moon said it was "high time" for a female head, after more than 70 years of the UN and eight male leaders.

On September 16, 2016, in connection with the UN celebration of the International Day of Peace, Nobel Peace Prize nominee Nadia Murad Basee Taha - who survived trafficking at the hands of ISIL (Da'esh) - was formally appointed UNODC Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking. This designation marks the first time a survivor of atrocities is bestowed with this distinction. Ms. Murad, a 23-year-old Yazidi woman, briefed the Security Council at its first-ever session on human trafficking in December 2015, and briefed the Security Council again in December 2016, as well as the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016 and the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants in September 2016. She described being rounded up with fellow Yazidis in Iraq in 2014 and witnessing ISIL fighters shooting men and boys in cold blood. She was subject to grave abuses at the hands of ISIL fighters and was bought and sold various times. As Goodwill Ambassador, Nadia's main goal is to focus on advocacy initiatives and to raise awareness around the plight of millions of victims of trafficking, especially refugees, women, and girls.

On September 19, 2016, the United Nations General Assembly hosted the first ever High-Level Summit to Address Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants. This was a historic opportunity to strengthen governance of international migration and a unique opportunity to create a more responsible, predictable system for responding to large movements of refugees and migrants. The 'New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants' was adopted at the opening of the Summit, and is available in 6 languages. A ceremony that morning marked the formalizing of the relationship between United Nations and the IOM (International Organization for Migrants) also took place. The webcast is available HERE.

Civil society has made a scorecard to evaluate the New York Declaration, and has urged world leaders to take 7 actions to make a new deal for refugees, migrants and societies a reality. This document was endorsed by the Good Shepherd NGO office, and is available in English, Spanish, and French. ‘The real and immediate test is whether the Summit will be able to make a difference on the ground for the millions of refugees, migrants and internally displaced people in need of protection, safe passage, solidarity, inclusion, decent work and livelihoods, and for the societies that host them.’

The follow-up processes to this Summit have already begun to develop a Global Compact for Responsibility Sharing for Refugees and a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, to be negotiated and adopted by 2018.
The Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd joined the new Portuguese Refugee Support Platform (PAR) initiative by signing an agreement between the St. Anne Home and PAR.

The St. Anne House is a "Welcoming Community for Women at Risk", located in the Sintra area. Its main objective is to host women, or mothers and their children temporarily, providing them the essential basic conditions in terms of accommodation, food, hygiene, laundry and linen room and providing them a safe family environment and welfare, as well as training in personal, professional and maternal skills. The refugee family was housed in a separate house in the backyard of the same property.

On June 29 a family arrived in Portugal: a mother of 39 years and her four children, including two boys aged 14 and 11, and two girls aged 7 and 8 years. Originally from Iraq, their desire was to get to Germany. The father has been missing for three years. Passing through Turkey, they entered Greece and there were relocated to Portugal.

Upon arrival at the airport they were received by the Immigration and Border Service and the Refugee Support Platform, directed the mother and children to us. Soon they started learning Portuguese. The communication is very difficult, because they speak Arabic and the eldest son speaks a little English.

They came with health problems, but without any medical report: the mother suffering from pain in her leg and teeth. We were also informed that the oldest daughter is epileptic and younger diabetic, neither having received any treatment. The mother also told us that the eldest son has psychological problems and needs monitoring. They soon began medical care.

A month after their arrival in Portugal, the family was granted a residence permit by the Immigration and Border Service, a tax number and Social Security.

This family, like all refugees who are arriving to the receiving countries, has major challenges: language, school, health, work, housing... We are united with the words of St. Mary Euphrasia: "How fortunate we are, we collaborate with Christ in his mission of love and friendship to the people."

The second Mission Spirituality & Justice workshop was held on August 20th at the IEP. Santa Maria Eufrasia in Lima, Peru, organized by the Commission for Mission Justice and Spirituality, with Training Facilitator Sr. Clare Nolan as the speaker. 72 people from the communities of Huancayo, Cajamarca, Chimbote and Lima participated.

Sr. Clare Nolan, with the spirit and passion for the mission, began by pointing out that times and circumstances have changed, but the situation of women is the same; the same dangers of violence and abuse remain.

She highlighted the changed mission of the Life Project, which evolved from the Good Shepherd vision. She invited us to make a journey from within to meet the Good Shepherd and address the central difficulties of justice, mercy and solidarity, asking us reflection questions: What does this mean in our mission? What do we have in common with St. Mary Euphrasia? What do we have in common with St. John Eudes? With Sister Agustina Rivas?

What we have in common: Spiritual orientation, love of the people, we are driven by the mission, compassion and reconciliation. These are the main elements of the Foundation. We are encouraged to promote more participatory action, to address issues from the Good Shepherd Chapter which identifies the new priorities: 1. Poverty: Promoting the empowerment of excluded populations. 2. Trafficking in persons: Fighting this scourge. 3. Refugees: Expressing solidarity with this population. 4. Gender inequality: Promoting their equity and justice. 5. Violence against women and girls: Protecting and promoting their rights. 6. Religious intolerance: Looking mercifully toward other ecumenical practices.

As a group we worked out an outline of an Integrated Mission Development Process that allowed us to recognize phases, strengths and weaknesses in the mission.

"The Vision and Mission of Good Shepherd is to take all that we have in a joint and integrated way," between Justice, Mercy and Solidarity.

Thank you, Sister Clare, for urging us: "Let us use our voice to fight against exclusion and inequality."

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Refugees in Portugal – By Sister Fatima Pires, Province of Portugal

Mission Spirituality & Justice Workshop – Province of Peru
Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand has launched an initiative to illuminate how government policy fails women in multiple ways. The Women’s Policy Action Tank provides a space for academics and other thought leaders to analyse policy using a gender lens, demonstrating how policies converge in unhelpful ways to entrench disadvantage for women across the lifespan. This included hosting the Putting Women at the Centre: A Policy Forum in August, where a gender lens was placed over power and voice, economic security, and the criminal justice system.

A full house listened to experts tackle these issues from differing perspectives. The first panel, Working the Spaces of Power, included an academic, a popular blogger, a feminist network convenor, and a bank executive. Together they explored how women can insert their voices into conversations where they are excluded, through a range of individual and collective actions, as well as metrics-driven targets (such as in a corporate environment, to increase diversity in leadership). This panel also discussed how many women experience multiple identities that can further silence them – for example, Aboriginal voices are often missing from feminist discourse in Australia.

The second panel, the Power of Money, explored how policies converge to reinforce the gender pay gap and create an economic disincentive for women to work full-time following children. Further, working norms of a dedicated breadwinner in the family who is expected to overwork means that men are also losing – neither partner has healthy work-life balance. These pre-existing conditions result in entrenched disadvantage for women that makes them more vulnerable to all forms of domestic violence including economic abuse. This panel was facilitated by Good Shepherd’s Tanya Corrie, a prominent researcher on economic abuse in Australia.

When women interact with the criminal justice system, justice is seldom the outcome. This panel agreed that women should almost never be jailed; their crimes were most often misdemeanours and were almost always linked to experiences of violence in their own lives. Additionally, the criminal justice system fails to protect women or provide them justice against perpetrators; the room was shocked to be told that 99 per cent of sexual assaults do not result in a conviction.

The highlight of the day was the opening Keynote. In the spirit of collaboration and support, this was designed as a Keynote Conversation. The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner and the Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People were joined by the Chief Executives of McAuley Community Services for Women and Jesuit Social Services. This open, questioning ‘dialogue across difference’ highlighted the failings of fractured responses to what are considered niche ‘women’s issues’ (such as domestic violence). The conversationists agreed that putting women at the centre of all policy creation would result in more holistic and coordinated policy responses not only for women but children and men as well. Good policy for women is good policy for everyone.

Dimity Fifer, the Chief Executive of Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, provided context for the day in the opening address, reinforcing the importance of multiple identities for women and that privilege must be acknowledged and used to create space for less-heard voices.

The Women’s Policy Action Tank builds on years of advocacy work conducted in this area by the Women’s Research, Advocacy, and Policy (WRAP) Centre at Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand (ANZ), and has been co-developed with the Power to Persuade, an initiative for informing the social services sector on how to more effectively influence government policy. (The WRAP Centre is also a co-director of this initiative.) In addition to the Forum, the initiative is facilitating accessible policy analyses, articles and opinion pieces, and ongoing discussion to increase women’s voice and presence in the policy process. All content is available online; we are also active on Twitter @PolicyForWomen and @GoodAdvocacy (WRAP Centre).
The Latin American meeting of the anti-trafficking network was held from August 24 to 31, 2016 in Lima. Approximately 36 people participated, including Partners and Sisters who are in charge of shelters in different communities in Latin America: Paraguay, Mexico, Chile, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Brazil, Argentina and Peru, and who have direct contact with people affected by trafficking in persons. It was a meeting of mutual feedback, to learn about and discuss the best practices being carried out by the communities and the problems they face in order to welcome people affected by trafficking.

In August we have seen the presence of God in the growth and the blessing that have been given to the group of women we are accompanying. During this month, four of the women have been able to begin with their business plan: sale of meat products, a restaurant and sale of clothing. They have shown their desire to get ahead and are responding to the process initiated in their lives. The accompaniment, follow-up and preparation continues, which is why with great joy two of the women who started their business plan in the first cohort graduated last August 28. They earned a diploma in Business Training with the support of the Amanecer Foundation. It was an effort that they pursued for more than three months and now their commitment and responsibility are reflected.

For the Foundation and Good Shepherd, spiritual growth, prayer and recognition of the love of God in our lives is the basis of all change and success in life. That is why this month a Spiritual Coexistence event was organized. The group of women who participated assiduously manifest to have a thirst of God and the desire to look for it and to know it more every day. They participated with their sons and daughters, as they are trying to link their families in the processes of training and accompaniment. The psychosocial and accounting training continues, and the women are increasingly participatory and empowered in their individual and collective processes, manifesting their commitment and responsibility. We are grateful and praying to God for continued spiritual and corporal progress and we continue offering our prayer.
“I learned that we’re all equal. I used to think that some people are higher than I am but now I know that we’re all equal. We all have dignity in the eyes of God.” This was how one participant of Caminos de Esperanza (Paths of Hope), responded to the question “What did you learn during this time of formation?”

Caminos de Esperanza, our new micro-credit project of interest-free loans in El Salvador, is an outcome of the Strategic Plan of the Province of Central America which we, Sisters and lay Mission Partners, developed last year. Under the direction of Heidy Hochstatter, Regional Manager of the Mission Development Office Latin America, we engaged in a process that helped us to identify 3 specific areas of concern on which to focus during the next five years: Economic Injustice, Human Trafficking, and Children and Adolescents at risk.

Sr. Digna Rivas and I had been working with the children of market and street vendors since December, 2014, when we arrived in San Miguel in the Eastern zone of El Salvador. This year, the Mission Development Offices in Latin America and Rome enabled us to receive grant money to start Caminos de Esperanza for the vendors themselves.

Before Caminos de Esperanza, the only way that those who are impoverished could get loans was through individuals who charge 10 or 20% monthly, sometimes weekly, in interest. One of our participants had borrowed $10.00 and was repaying $2.00 a week but was never able to save $10.00 to repay the entire loan. At that rate he would have been paying $2 forever and still have a $10 debt. Another participant had paid in interest more than she originally borrowed but still owed the original loan.

Needless to say, our Caminos friends were initially incredulous that anyone was offering them interest-free loans but now, through the relationships that developed and their willingness to risk, our group is forming community and their skepticism has been replaced with trust. Other people told us that they would like to participate but they fear that improving their financial situation will attract the gangs who will then extort money from them. Unfortunately, their fears are based in reality.

Our hope is that, through Caminos de Esperanza, the participants will be able to recognize their own talents, articulate their dreams, achieve financial stability and work toward a better future for themselves and their families. Before receiving their loans, the participants had 16 hours of formation which included sessions on leadership, self-esteem, community building as well as classes designed to help them better manage their money, learn how to save and to make better choices about spending money.

Our loans are small, less than $200, but they have 10 months to repay it at the rate they choose. Once they repay the loan within the 10-month period, they can borrow again and again and again for up to 2 years. During this time, they will continue to meet with us as a group for monthly formation (4 mission partners collaborate with us) as well as individual monthly “check-in” meetings. They are also being encouraged to open a bank account and start saving money even if it’s only one dollar a week. Our other expectations include improving nutrition for the family and sending the children to school.

Home visiting is an integral part of this project; it allows us to get a better understanding of the challenges the families encounter and to offer them support and encouragement despite these challenges. One young family (3 children ages 5, 3 and 1) had to make an emergency move from where they had been living and spent 3 nights sleeping under a tree until they could build their own little home which is basically a shack made from sheets of zinc, unbearably hot under our San Miguel sun. Another family of 7 lives in a tiny 2-bedroom house with holes in the ceilings and no running water but the landlady says that if they don’t like it, they can move elsewhere. If they repaired the ceiling at their own expense, it’s likely that the landlady will charge more than the $50.00 that they currently pay for rent.

Caminos de Esperanza is springtime every day as we watch our new friends emerge from the bleakness of so many winters, sprout fresh buds and open themselves up to new adventures and renewed hope. It has given us the opportunity to share sacred space with them and their families and it challenges us to reflect more deeply on our own use of resources and how we contribute to the economic injustice in our world. Good Shepherd Mission Development Offices and the OAK Foundation made this possible and we are deeply grateful to them for our own springtime of new growth.
Sister Jane Nway Nwy Ei of Myanmar and Sr. Yvonne Clémence Bambara were the two sisters of the Congregation to participate in the international conference on trafficking organized by Caritas Internationalis and the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People from 5 to 7 September in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria. The theme of this meeting was: "One Human Family, One Voice, No to Trafficking in Persons". There were about 130 people from 47 countries on all continents. Cardinal Luis Tagle, President of Caritas Internationalis, Msgr. Robinson Wijesinghe, Director of the Office of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, Cardinal Sorondo of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Anna Bartosova, anti-trafficking coordinator for Caritas Slovakia, Professor. Joy Ngozi Ezeilo, former Special Rapporteur on trafficking, as well as senior representatives of the Catholic Church of Nigeria and the African Union were present.

The objectives of the conference were:

1. Raising awareness about human trafficking in Africa and from Africa, with an emphasis on trafficking in children, trafficking for sexual exploitation and labor, trafficking in crisis situations and trafficking in the maritime industry.

2. Connecting different stakeholders and strengthening cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination, in order to study strategies for collaboration to prevent human trafficking in Africa.

3. Promote Church actions in cooperation with other organizations to help victims, with the aim of combating trafficking and slavery.

4. Contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through actions to combat trafficking and slavery.

According to Caritas Internationalis, in 2015, 60 million people were either refugees or forcibly displaced. In Africa, thousands of adults and children are forced to flee conflicts, poverty and persecution, and are particularly vulnerable to traffickers.

Driven by a desperate need for survival and rebuilding a better life elsewhere, they are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, both sexual and labor.

During the conference we had discussions on the following themes in groups according to our interests and interventions: A. Trafficking in children; B. Trafficking in persons in crisis; C. Trafficking in the maritime industry; D. Trafficking for exploitation in labor, including domestic servitude; E. Trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Some thoughts touched us during this meeting:

- Cardinal Tagle, President of Caritas Internationalis, said in his opening speech: "Slavery begins when people do not respect their own humanity, their bodies and their spiritual potential. They see themselves and therefore see others as mere instruments or objects in pursuit of an objective, including money, profit, influence or power."

- Father Bruno Ciceri, of the Apostleship of the Sea, said: "You can buy boxes of tuna on which we read that they were caught without harm to dolphins or turtles - What about fishermen?"

- Ndese Udongwo of Caritas Nigeria said: "Victims of trafficking are members of our communities, our parishes, sometimes even our families."

- "One victim is one victim too many," said Kevin Hyland, the UK anti-slavery commissioner, in his speech at the conference.

Let us act like ‘one family, one voice’ and say 'no to human trafficking.' One human family, One voice, No to human trafficking.

We shared our experiences in the field, discussed and sought to create bonds to fight together against the hideous face of our humanity which is the exploitation of our brothers and sisters.

Many speakers at the conference pointed out that poverty is one of the major factors driving people to trafficking. Fighting this root cause is essential to reducing people's vulnerability to trafficking. We should focus on strategic areas such as education and reducing social inequalities. Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is an issue that we discussed in plenary as it is an essential way to combat trafficking.

One point was made clear during the conference - trafficking in persons is a crime that cannot be eradicated by any single government, institution or organization. Traffickers are organized and coordinated in their systematic abuse of the most vulnerable people in the world. It is high time that governments, civil society and churches, of whatever type and at whatever level, are united to put their forces and energies together to combat trafficking with one voice."
Editor's Note: “Embrace the World” can be published, thanks to each of your contributions with articles, stories and other news concerning justice peace issues in the world-wide Good Shepherd Congregation. We continue to count on you for the next editions of the journal. Share with us your activities, news and events in your Units and countries. Thanks to all who were helping with translations and proof reading and especially to those who sent articles for this edition of February 2017.

High Level Political Forum Reviews Early SDG Implementation

The 2016 meeting of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) took place in New York from 11-20 July 2016. The HLPF is the central platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. The meeting focused on the theme of “Ensuring that no one is left behind.” The session included voluntary reviews of 22 countries (China, Colombia, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Madagascar, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Norway, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Switzerland, Togo, Turkey, Uganda and Venezuela) and thematic reviews of progress on the SDGs, including cross-cutting issues, supported by reviews by the ECOSOC functional commissions and other inter-governmental bodies and forums.

Civil society was active throughout – making statements and asking questions where possible. Of note are the reports from Together 2030 (Good Shepherd groups from some countries contributed to this report), and the Grassroots Subcommittee of the NGO Committee on Social Development. The Grassroots Report was also highlighted in a Global Sisters Report article about the role of Catholic sisters at the HLPF. Many voices from civil society called for the HLPF to become a much more ambitious, accountable and dynamic forum for genuine and honest conversation between and among member states, civil society and other stakeholders about progress made, challenges ahead and ways to overcome them.

Coming Soon at the United Nations

- 13-24 March - The 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women. This year’s Priority Theme is “Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work.” Read our statement to CSW61 here.
- 5-9 June - The Ocean Conference

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Working to end poverty, human trafficking & gender-based violence

Advocating with women & girls, migrants & refugees

Recognizing our interconnectedness with the whole of creation, we seek to realize the rights of all and achieve gender equality

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Please distribute to all communities, programs, and Good Shepherd Friends in your Unit.

Thank you