The first-ever “Shine the Light” Human Trafficking Conference was held on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018 in Washington DC, co-hosted by the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd with the District of Columbia Baptist Convention. Good Shepherd sisters and mission partners were among the over 50 participants, who joined to discuss human trafficking globally and in the United States and to meet with congressional representatives to advocate for two pieces of legislation. The Protecting Girls’ Access to Education in Vulnerable Settings bill urges the consideration of the educational needs of vulnerable women and girls in designing and implementing U.S. foreign assistance programs, and the Savanna’s Act / Close the Information Gap to Reduce Number of Missing and Murdered Native American Women strengthen the U.S. government’s ability to respond to high numbers of missing and murdered Native American women, many of whom have endured shocking levels of violence, including sexual abuse and trafficking.

Winifred Doherty was among the presenters at the conference, emphasizing that trafficking happens everywhere, even close to home, and that human trafficking for sexual exploitation is a “debasement of the human person,” which is “rooted in the structure of society, and more so today.”
The sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 12 to 23 March 2018. CSW is the single largest forum for UN Member States, civil society organizations and other international actors to build consensus and commitment on policy actions on gender equality and the rights of women and girls. This year the CSW focused on the empowerment of rural women and girls. More than 4,300 representatives from over 600 civil society organizations, and 170 Member States attended this year’s Commission. These figures represent a steady increase from previous year’s participation showing a growing strength and unity of women’s voices around the world, and showcase the potential for civil society to leverage the agreed conclusions in their mission to hold governments accountable.

Ahead of and throughout CSW, Winifred Doherty co-convened the NGO CSW/NY Zero Draft subcommittee and followed the negotiations of the CSW Agreed Conclusion very closely, leading civil society efforts to coordinate and submit recommendations to strengthen the draft to the members of the Commission. The last time the theme of rural women was discussed at the CSW, there was no consensus, so there was a sense of excitement that this year an agreement was reached, but there were quite mixed reactions to the final outcome document. After two weeks of engaging in political rhetoric and safeguarding cultural and religious positions there was little progressive commitment to address the daily realities that rural women and girls experience, including threats to food security, lack of social protection, discriminatory exclusion from land rights, scarcity of clean water, lack of provision of health care, education and decent work. All of these, coupled with the effects of natural disasters and climate-induced displacement are features of the feminization of poverty. Read the Agreed Conclusions here, and read Winifred’s reflection on the negotiation process here.

This year Good Shepherd co-sponsored a side event with Mercy International Association, Society of the Sacred Heart, The Arise Foundation, Women@TheWell, Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, UNANIMA International, the National Board of Catholic Women (UK) and the Holy See Mission entitled “Widsom, Water and Rural Women: Unmuting Women’s Voices for Integrated Water Policy.” The panel presented some of the challenges and discrimination in water policy, highlighted the traditional technical expertise of rural women in water management, and promoted the participation of rural women and girls in the design, implementation, and evaluation of solutions. Water justice was a central theme for the presenters. Ensuring that people have clean water demands that we examine the politics of water, including the commitment of governments to providing access to clean water for all and the control and commodification of clean water by private industries. Panelists also examined issues including the disproportionate responsibility that women and girls have for ensuring that families have clean water, the role of women at the forefront of water issues in rural economies, and the weaponization of water in conflicts. As water plays a central role in the achievement of all the SDGs, it is vital to listen to the wisdom of women in developing, implementing, and evaluating water policies and projects. To watch the event in its entirety, click here.

Good Shepherd also co-sponsored a parallel event with the Mission of Peru, Mercy International Association, Salesians of Don Bosco, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, Loretto Community, Society of the Sacred Heart and the Sovereign Order of Malta, entitled “Preventing Human Trafficking among Rural Women and Girls: Integrating Inherent Dignity into a Human Rights Model.” The event, attended by nearly 600 people, featured a moving keynote address from survivor-advocate Mely Lenario, who described her experience of growing up in a rural village and being lured into the big city by the false promises of traffickers and forced into sex slavery in the Philippines. When Mely escaped her traffickers, she found shelter at the Good Shepherd House in Cebu City. She is now studying social work and serves other trafficking survivors as an outreach worker and advocate for Good Shepherd House. Other panelists discussed the factors that contribute to vulnerability of rural women including lack of access to adequate employment, education, healthcare and sanitation, and the need to end demand and the commodification of human beings. Preventing and ending the exploitation of rural women involves reducing the root causes and structures that make a woman vulnerable to trafficking throughout her entire life, by providing access to services that correspond to her human dignity, such as eradicating poverty and hunger and ensuring healthcare, quality education, and decent employment. To watch the event in its entirety, click here.

To watch the event in its entirety, click here.
The 56th session of the Commission for Social Development in January I joined the Good Shepherd’s International Justice Peace Office, to experience a six-month hands-on training period in New York before I would go to Geneva to serve as the main NGO Representative to the UN in Geneva. In the meantime, four months have passed in which I have had a lot of experiences and learned a lot.

Right at the beginning, from 29 January to 7 February 2018, the Commission for Social Development met. The Commission is the advisory body which is responsible for social development within the overall global development. I immediately became acquainted with a working method of the UN, which I later encountered more often and will certainly encounter in Geneva often:

When a commission comes to an end, the theme for the coming year is usually decided and announced. During the year, long before the next meeting, experts will develop a draft document that will address the Commission’s theme. This draft document will be discussed, modified and then adopted by the Commission. These final documents are accepted unanimously, or not at all. While they are not legally binding on the individual member states, by their unanimous assumption these documents have a high moral value, and this should influence the legislation of the countries.

An essential part of the work of NGOs is the work with these draft texts, which we seek to influence through contacts with country delegates and through written and oral statements, which is not easy, and which can only bring little progress and success. This process is very tiring and requires a high concentration on individual words and on changes in the text that point to political movements. When I heard about this process during this first commission at the very beginning of my experience here in New York, it was very overwhelming for me and I still needed time to understand what it was all about.

This year, the Commission for Social Development concluded with the adoption of measures, which shall promote social protection floors, to help millions of people living in poverty, particularly the most vulnerable. Our GSJP office was very committed to work to promote social protection floors, and Sr. Winifred spoke as a panelist on several so called ‘side events’ during the Commission on the subject. These side events are designed by member states and NGOs and serve to inform and advocate about the topic. You can also get in contact with the delegations of the individual Member States.

The same working method I found later on in the Commission on the Status of Women from 12 to 23 March 2018. This year’s Commission has been particularly dedicated to improve the situation of women and girls in rural areas, which are particularly disadvantaged by lack of infrastructure and cultural conditions. In advance and during this Commission there were training events that helped me a lot. I was able to learn more about the structure of the UN and about the possibilities for influencing as NGOs. We were present at all levels of the Commission: Sr. Winifred followed closely the text of the draft document, she spoke on several side events, and there was a side event with the Holy See, in which a survivor of human trafficking spoke about her experience. She has had the opportunity of reintegration at the Good Shepherd Service in the Philippines. Today she is a social worker. This side event was very well attended; the big hall was almost fully occupied half an hour before the start. It particularly showed me how important the grassroots work we are doing is because ultimately the efforts at the UN try to improve the situation of the local people. We also made a written statement on the woman’s situation and I was working on a draft oral statement. These verbal statements may only last for up to 3 minutes and must provide facts as well as recommendations for solving the situation described. Here, for the first time, I was able to work with our Justice and Peace Contacts all over the world, and received information and suggestions, which I then incorporated into the 3-minute statement. We needed other organizations to sign the statement, and so finally I got the mandate to speak for 26 organizations when we were invited to deliver this statement. Of course that was a special moment, when you are called by your name and organization to speak. Before that, I practiced reading the English text quickly and comprehensibly, which was not easy for me as a non-native speaker.
There were several sessions at the UN in the following months, of which the Financing for Development Forum exited me the most. It is about how development can be financed, and above all, the benefits of financing in the long term. Particularly interesting were anti-corruption side events and a draft treaty discussed at the UN. This international treaty deals with transnational companies responsible for fracking or mineral loss or damage for people, and it tries as well to ensure a fair tax payment. The proposals made in this draft contract are very interesting and the discussions and side events gave me more insight about these mechanisms. This draft treaty is due to go to the fourth hearing in Geneva this autumn and I hope to be able to attend.

In May, the National Advocacy Office of the Good Shepherd Sisters organized a conference against human trafficking in Washington DC. There were experts and survivors of human trafficking speaking. For me, the second part of the conference was particularly interesting, where we could go to various US senators for advocacy, to bring forward our concerns and bring in our expertise on the subject. This advocacy in small groups has helped me a lot to learn how to prepare, and also that politicians are well interested in good information and even ask for information. It shows me the importance of the work of NGOs and civil society.

I learned that many ideas are never enforceable, that in the ongoing negotiations often only tiny compromises can be found, and the energy and time, you put in the work is often like the fight of Don Quixote against windmills. I learned how complex international cooperation is. Often it is very difficult to achieve the desired goals.

At the end of July, I will leave New York for an internship with a human rights lawyer in Geneva, continuing my education and training to be a main representative. I am very grateful for this time, the many experiences and help I have received here, especially for the friendly reception by the sisters here in New York and also in Washington. I will always keep this time in good memory.

**Hope Amid Crisis in Venezuela – Sr. Adriana Angarita and Carmen Hernandez**

“**Carmen Hernandez, one of our Mission Partners in Venezuela, who is living through the crisis, poor among the impoverished, confident in the fidelity of Jesus the Good Shepherd, continues the pastoral ministry of catechesis in her local church. With few resources and without internet access, she has made this small effort to write the following text and send the photos below.**” - Adriana Angarita, JP Contact, Province of Colombia, Venezuela and Cuba.

Good day dear sisters! I send you warm greetings from Venezuela.

We are privileged to be witnesses of the wonders of God our Shepherd in our small communities of Colina Feliz and Zumba. One of his great gifts is the transformation of our children upon receiving the sacraments, especially Holy Communion. In the midst of so much uncertainty and precariousness, this time dedicated both to the children and to their parents makes our vocation as Good Shepherd Mission Partners stronger and better every day, especially when we see these results in the beautiful hearts of people because of God’s love for society.

We are happy to be called every day by our Shepherd to live and share God’s love and mercy with others!! Warm greetings from Venezuela, with hope in God!!
Preparing for HLPF 2018 – Regional Representatives attend Meetings in Geneva, Santiago, Beirut, Dakar

This spring Good Shepherd around the world has been participating in UN regional meetings in preparation for the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) which will take place in New York, July 9-18, 2018. The High Level Political Forum meets annually to evaluate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. This year’s theme is "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies," and the set of goals to be reviewed in depth will be SDGs 6 (Water & Sanitation), 7 (Energy), 11 (Cities), 12 (Consumption & Production), 15 (Terrestrial Ecosystems), and 17 (Partnership). In addition to the review of specific SDGs, 47 countries will be conducting voluntary national reviews to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned related to the entire sustainable development agenda.

The first of these regional preparatory meetings was the meeting for the Economic Commission for Europe, held from 1-2 March in Geneva, Switzerland. Hedwig Johl attended this meeting, along with a civil society pre-meeting on February 28th, which provided information on important terminology and acronyms, and emphasized a human rights approach to the goals under review. Both the pre-meeting and the official meeting at the UN highlighted the interconnectedness of the goals, and shared good practices and challenges from many European countries. The meeting also featured an interesting special event – a fashion show. Hedwig reflects that the fashion show “made us think how fashion is linked to SDGs, (health, child forced labor, chemical working condition, pesticide mortality, security, waste of water, minimum wage, working hours, 80% women with 40% of men’s salary). How do we promote and raise awareness for sustainable fashion?”

The next meeting took place from 24-26 April in Beirut, Lebanon for the Middle East and North Africa region. Georgette Tannoury attended this meeting, and mentioned that while ministers, deputies and the Director General all participated enthusiastically and genuinely, it is true that speeches can be something and reality something else. For instance, almost all of them spoke about gender equality (support women to take their place in every field, change laws in their favor, involve them in decision making, etc…), but the reality from the field, including terrible honor crimes, leads one to wonder if people’s mentalities are truly prepared or ready to live this change. Similarly, all mentioned the importance of collaboration between the public and private sector, political parties and civil society, when in everyday life, religious fanaticism is in full swing. Georgette also worries about the future of youth in societies where there are high levels of corruption and marginalization is clearly visible. She recognizes that almost all these countries face major challenges to sustainable development related to war and conflict, corruption, brain drain, injustice and negligence that leads to marginalization. Georgette reflects, “For me, an update of institutions and laws is important. Believe in the right of people, especially the most vulnerable. It is essential to have a common vision between those countries in order to work on sustainable development. Our participation to such conferences is essential in order to join up efforts for the importance of partnership (sharing between different people, communicate about the ongoing mission of the Congregation and know what is going on elsewhere: this pushes one forward). The zeal of our founders is not limited to one country or one region”

Marta Iris Lopez and Erica Sanchez attended the next meeting, which took place in Santiago, Chile from 18-20 April for the Latin America and the Caribbean region. Both attended a civil society pre-meeting and various side events on gender equality, participation and protection of human rights defenders, environmental justice, and a briefing on the Global Compact on Migration process. This was also an opportunity for Erica to meet delegates and UN staff from ECLAC. Erica reflected that it is important for more people to participate in these meetings, because without the participation of more sisters and mission partners, the realities and good practices they experience cannot be adequately communicated at the UN. “We miss out on the opportunity to make known the realities of the places where the Congregation is working… Those of us who participate can only talk about the reality we know from the countries where we are living and working, but we don’t know about the other places where we have never gone, and where no one informs us. The big challenge that I see is that it is necessary that we all try to take concrete actions in our places of work, taking advantage of the networks that we have been able to build... We need to be aware of the role that all of us have to the mission to Justice and Peace that we have taken on since 1973, as well as what we need to make it more effective from our Congregational commitment, and not only from those in the Justice Peace offices and others.”

Donatus Lili and Sisters Brigette and Jeanne from Senegal attended this meeting and various side events, linking up with other civil society organizations through the African NGO Major Group and the African Women’s Major Group to collaborate on statements on the SDGs. Donatus contributed to the papers on SDG 6 and SDG 11, advocating against the commodification and privatization of water so that all can have equitable access to water, and advocating for clean fuel and the empowerment of all communities through access to information about the SDGs and their rights. Donatus reflects,
Preparing for HLPF 2018 (continued)

“Unless I team up and follow Major Group events, the ministries of our Congregation in African regions will remain unheard since these are groups that network and present issues to respective governments and ECA. This is a way of advocating to persons in vulnerable conditions whom we serve in our ministries in collaboration with these groups.” She plans to continue working with these networks to plan side events and statements for the HLPF in New York in July.

Now that the regional meetings are over, preparations for the HLPF will continue in New York, where position papers have been drafted and events are being planned. Good Shepherd in New York will follow the negotiations of the HLPF Ministerial Declaration and participate with the NGO Major Group and Women’s Major Group throughout this process.

Good Shepherd Advocates for Human Rights & Dignity during Global Compact for Migration Negotiations

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM) represents a unique opportunity for the global community to create common approaches toward the treatment of migrants worldwide. Since February, the Member States of the United Nations — with the noted absence of the United States — have been negotiating an international agreement containing 23 objectives that would establish a multilateral framework for migration governance. The objectives laid out in the draft Global Compact follow the general path of migration, from root causes to return, and are progressive and based on human rights principles, but based upon the negotiations to date, it is clear that they go too far for some governments which have called for an explicit mention of the non-legally binding nature of the document, and offered amendments to the text to reaffirm their sovereignty and lessen their obligations. With five rounds of negotiations completed and only one round to go, there are still worries for many civil society advocates and migrant communities that all of this effort will produce a document which does little, if anything, to impact the status quo.

Since the Global Compact is “for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration,” it is important that this document should encourage the implementation of policies that would increase legal pathways for migration, including regularization programs for people in an irregular or undocumented status. Regularization would reduce vulnerabilities and allow people to come out of the shadows, helping to ensure their wellbeing by giving them open access to social services, decent work, and allow them to fully integrate into societies. It is vital that the Global Compact articulate that irregular migrants should be ensured basic services and access to justice regardless of their migratory status, and that they should be able to access these services without fear of being reported to immigration authorities.

One of the most important aspects of the Global Compact is that it addresses migrants in vulnerable situations who do not qualify as refugees under the definition set in 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees. While every person has the right to live with safety and dignity in one’s country of origin, sometimes people leave their countries out of desperation, due to violence, extreme poverty, natural disasters and environmental degradation, among many other drivers. To ensure that people are able to migrate in safety and dignity, governments should allow and expand visas that can be used to protect migrants in vulnerable situations, including humanitarian visas and visas tailored toward specific vulnerable populations, such as victims of human trafficking and domestic violence, unaccompanied children, people with disabilities, and those in need of protection due to climate displacement.

Beyond expanding legal channels for migrants in vulnerable situations, the Global Compact must ensure that all migrants can exercise their human rights in their countries of destination, regardless of their migratory status or their skill level. Global trade unions and other civil society organizations have advocated strongly for inclusion of the decent work agenda into the Global Compact, to ensure that all migrant workers, especially women migrant workers, low-skilled workers, domestic workers and others in the informal economy (particularly undocumented workers) are able to enjoy their full labor rights, including full and productive employment based on their skills, can be reunited with their family members, are free from exploitation, are able to access justice.

The Global Compact should not promote deterrence and enforcement tactics as a means of reducing irregular migration, as these tactics are certainly not “safe” for the migrant. Deterrence policies such as closed borders, pushbacks, family separation and immigration detention can place migrants in danger by removing due process. Return and reintegration policies should voluntary and sustainable, and should not return migrants to an environment where they would be at risk of violence, torture and death. Reintegration programs should be tailored to the needs of returned migrants and include job training and placement, physical and social protection, and basic needs support.

Even if all of this is achieved in the commitments of the Global Compact on Migration, this is only the beginning. How will the GCM be implemented? How will States be held accountable? To make a real difference in the lives of migrants and their communities, these key questions still remain. In the end, the Global Compact for Migration will be successful if it creates a new approach to governing global migration that emphasizes human rights and dignity for all people, and if governments demonstrate the political will to follow through with their obligations, cooperate with each other and with civil society, and show solidarity with those who are made vulnerable.
Sisters in Myanmar help IDPs seeking safety from prolonged conflict - Sr. Lucy Aung

Myanmar is made up of eight major ethnic tribes and each ethnic land has their own State. Since independence from British rule, Myanmar’s ethnic peoples have asked for autonomy to rule their own ethnic State. Myanmar has experienced the tragedy of armed conflicts and civil wars for over seven decades, which is recorded as one of the longest civil wars in the world. The civil war in Northern Myanmar, Kachin and Northern Shan states has been going on since 2011. Kachin Independent Army (K.I.A) and Myanmar government troops are fighting for autonomy over Kachin land after 17 years of a ceasefire agreement. Because of the intense armed conflicts in the region, there are over 120,000 people displaced from their villages and places of origin (Internally Displaced Persons - IDPs). United Nations agencies and Church social organizations have been providing humanitarian assistance to IDPs for almost seven years.

Catholic bishops of Northern Myanmar dioceses where conflicts are ongoing speak out and release statements every year to end the civil war and call for peace and justice. Catholic social entities of Myanmar have delivered humanitarian assistance to vulnerable IDPs. Assistance such as food, shelter, WASH facilities, protection, non-food items, sanitary items for women, health and education are provided for IDPs in Kachin and Northern Shan states. Yet year after year, humanitarian assistance for IDPs in Northern Myanmar is dwindling although armed conflicts have not ended. No peaceful solution has been reached between the two opposition armed groups. Since April 2018, the fighting between both parties has massively increased. Due to recent conflict there are new displaced people arrived in IDP camps from villages for their own safety. Nowadays international communities also focus on issues in Kachin as government troops’ systematic persecution on the Kachin people has increased.

Amidst such intense conflicts, we, RGS in Myanmar, together with priests and religious leaders, are extending our helping hands to ease their pain and suffering. We accompany them in their struggles for safety and survival by our regular visit to the camps and caring for their urgent needs. Whenever we visit them, we carry for them food, medicines and other necessary material they need. In recent months, RGS has reached out to 3984 IDPs. Besides, RGS will welcome 40 school girls who are internally displaced people at our residential center in Hopin and Mohnyin Communities to support their education. 

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 June 2018.