Audrey’s story of transformation and growth is remarkable and one of many stories of the women at Good Shepherd Gracenter. The Mission of Good Shepherd Gracenter, a licensed recovery residence in San Francisco, CA, USA, is to help women without resources break free from drug and alcohol addiction and choose a lifestyle of health, wellness, recovery and independence. Audrey has a special connection to the Good Shepherd because she grew up in Angers, France, the city where St. Mary Euphrasia Pelletier founded the Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, who serve women, girls and families around the world in over 73 countries.

The lowest time of my life arrived at the end of 2014. I had just ended a two-year relationship with a man in my life that was extremely unhealthy and abusive. My co-dependency issues had become so extreme that I was doing anything and everything for him, including using hard drugs and giving up all my money. By mid-December 2014, I was completely broken down and isolating. Depression had taken its toll on me. I spent several months so depressed that I was unable to take care of myself. A few days at a time I would lay in bed, sleeping or crying, unable to take a shower or even eat anything substantial, barely drinking water. I was praying to God to let me go. I wanted to die.

Then came recovery. To make a long story short, I started living a clean and sober life. I was soon met with the opportunity to enter Good Shepherd Gracenter in San Francisco. Then my life really started to change. It has been my home for the past ten months, and the support I am getting from everyone (all the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Sister Marguerite in particular, all the staff, Sandra in particular, and all the women) has helped me transform. I am slowly but surely becoming a beautiful butterfly. Life has become more of a fun adventure. My eyes now see small miracles unfolding on a daily basis. I feel happy, much more healthy (emotionally and mentally), and more at peace with myself.

I am so grateful and feel so blessed to be living at Good Shepherd Gracenter. And, with the help of God, and my new connection with my higher power, I have found the strength to change and grow. This second chance at life, would most likely not have happened for me without the stability that Good Shepherd Gracenter has offered me.

Audrey’s story of transformation and growth is remarkable and one of many stories of the women at Good Shepherd Gracenter. The Mission of Good Shepherd Gracenter, a licensed recovery residence in San Francisco, CA, USA, is to help women without resources break free from drug and alcohol addiction and choose a lifestyle of health, wellness, recovery and independence. Audrey has a special connection to the Good Shepherd because she grew up in Angers, France, the city where St. Mary Euphrasia Pelletier founded the Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, who serve women, girls and families around the world in over 73 countries.
A drought ravaging agriculture across the region is forcing South Africa to look at importing staples such as maize. This drought had killed more than 1300 cattle. Meanwhile, the South African yellow maize price raised to a record on concern that growing areas will not be enough to prevent drought damage caused by the El Nino weather pattern. Across the country we experience very hot weather.

In this context, we serve in a poor rural area, which is in both Gauteng and North West Province. The convent is situated in Hebron.

Health care: Our clinics are situated in Madidi and Mmakaunyane. There is a total of about 5 staff at each clinic, which includes both qualified nurses and care workers, or home based workers. The function of the nurses at the clinic is to assess patients, dress wounds and dispense medicines. About 100 patients are assisted each week. Care workers are supervised by the qualified nurses; they visit the homes of the patients, report back on the immediate need of the bedridden and disabled and assist with any problems that they might meet. We struggle to find retired qualified nurses, and have just heard of the resignation of the nurse at Madidi.

Due to the forced closure of the functioning of the clinic at Mmakaunyane in July 2015 by the Department of Health, as they said our clinic was too close to the state clinic, we can no longer get medication subsidy for the clinic. This has also affected the clinic at Madidi.

A great sign of hope has come from the Japanese Embassy. They have donated a fully equipped mobile clinic. This enables Sr. Anne and the care workers to visit the further areas, one of which is at Swart Dam and the swamp, where they have seen cow carcasses and dead birds lying around. At present these areas are experiencing severe drought and temperatures of over 40°C. The mobile clinic which started to operate in October and November has a side shade area, a table and chairs for assessing patients. This is such a great boon as these rural people cannot travel to any clinic that is nearby. With this generous gift, we are now able to reach more poor and old people who are not able to come to our clinic. The mobile clinic is equipped with a generator, fridge and all the necessary medical equipment.

Workshop Training: Four workshops have been offered to about 150–200 young adults. This a great help to the rural people, as unemployment figures are about 40% at Mmakaunyane, which lies in the Winterveld a deserted and dry area.

These workshops have been offered in our area, through the funding of the Catholic Healthcare Association of South Africa. We have provided the transport to and from our venue, meals and refreshments. We are happy to have empowered so many young people to gain an extra certificate to assist them to find employment.

Education: Congratulations to our kids! 110 young kids from Good Shepherd day care graduated to grade R and 67 kids from Mosisa Yo O Molemo day care Hebron graduated to grade 1. Also pictured: Sports Day and the Annual Trip to the Zoo.
In accordance with our province Chapter Directive Article No: 7 “the renewal of the ministries of Child Care, Rehabilitation, Crisis Intervention and Single Mothers, by letting go of methods that are irrelevant for today, and take bold steps”, we the sisters involved in the above Ministries participated in a Workshop and Research Program for two weeks. The program was designed and conducted by Ms. Manuela Collette, the consultant of Good Shepherd Mission Development Office of Rome. It was a learning experience for all of us which helped us to think - why we do, what we do.

During the first two days of the program, 29 of us including one lay mission partner together with our resource person Ms. Manuela had general discussion/orientation. The discussion was based on why changes are necessary on what we are doing at present, what is the real problem, root causes and the effects of the problem etc. At the end of two days journey through log frame analysis process for child protection and the stakeholder analysis the group was able to identify the problem and the people who contribute to the problem and find ways to resolve the problem. The group was convinced that the Good Shepherd Sisters of Sri Lanka/Pakistan Province should contribute to the reduction of violence, abuse, neglect and abandonment of children in Sri Lanka. Thus we agreed to take this as our project goal.

Then a small group - the research team, consisting of eight members began a two weeks program. The team began the research tasks by interviewing stakeholders at national level. The team also met with Ms. Caroline Bakker, Chief Child Protection of UNICEF Sri Lanka, and an officer of the Bureau for the prevention of abuse of women and children and a probation officer.

Then the team travelled to the Northern part of the country to work in the two sites- Ganeshapuram and Mankulam which were selected as sites to be included in the pilot project. The work of Ganashpuram and Mankulam consisted of:

- Interviewing stakeholders at regional level
- Consultation with individual girls- It was a one to one interview session to get information on why and how long they have been in institutional care and their family background etc.
- Consultation with girls’ groups, which included problem and solution analysis, to ascertain hopes for the future and aspirations in terms of education and employment.
- Consultation with parents of the children
- Consultation with business owners for market analysis,
- Discussion with school boys
- Case files assessment

Using the above mentioned techniques the group was able to test the hypothesis, relating it to the root causes of the problem of child abuse and its effects towards the victims and to the whole society. Most of the assumptions made by the larger group during the first two days of the workshop proved true.

After 6 full days of research work in the Northern part of the country the group moved to Nayakakanda St. Euphrasia’s Home, the 3rd site of the project which located in the Western province of the country. The work at this site too comprised of the same procedures used at the other 2 sites of North.

While working in Ganeshpuram, Mankulam and St. Euphrasia’s Home Nayakakanda, the group started converting the problem tree (root causes) into objective tree and selected a program strategy. Based on the findings, the pilot project was designed. The group strongly felt that the time is now for Good Shepherd of Sri Lanka/Pakistan Province to reinforce effective child protection system in Sri Lanka.

Moving from the work we used to and stepping into the unknown is not an easy task. As our Saintly Mother Foundress says, it requires courage to go forward to the unknown. “Experience is not what happened to the person, it is what the person does with what happened to her/him”. We have just started. We have a long way to go in making our country a better place for our children by empowering our children, families and society.
Going beyond the Summit on Climate Change: A look into the future...

By Sr. Yolanda Sanchez, GSJPO Geneva

Yolanda Sanchez attended the COP21 Conference in Paris in December. This is an excerpt from her reflections.

The COP 21 (the 21st International Conference on Climate Change or the 21st Conference of the Parties) has come to an end on last Saturday 11 December. This was an historic moment as the 195 countries represented at this Conference reached an agreement to carry out joint actions on mitigation and adaptation to climate change affecting our planet. Many people were behind this great achievement. We have the action of those working through different movements, groups, NGOs, sectors of civil society and the different religious confessions, politicians, scientists and educators. But most especially behind this we have the populations living in extreme poverty and who are the most vulnerable to climate change. Some points to highlight, among others, in the agreement: the intention of reducing to zero emissions of gases into effect greenhouse gases by the middle of this century; change the energy production systems; maintain the increase in global temperature to 2 degrees Celsius although 1.5 degrees was proposed, the will to grant a budget to help developing countries to create new energy systems. The agreement is yet to be further developed and requires the political will of States, especially the rich countries, in order that the agreement becomes reality. We cannot wait and delay our action. We have to think and act fast enough because thousands of millions of people are at risk due to climate change. The soil is affected, strong droughts or flooding become more prevalent, sea levels rise and all this causes the many disasters we have seen affecting our planet in recent years due to climate change. These disastrous effects have increased because the lack of agreement at the previous summits.

Pope Francis in the Encyclical Laudato Si (52, 53) reminds us: “The foreign debt of poor countries has become a way of controlling them, yet this is not the case where ecological debt is concerned. In different ways, developing countries, where the most important reserves of the biosphere are found, continue to fuel the development of richer countries at the cost of their own present and future. The land of the southern poor is rich and mostly unpolluted, yet access to ownership of goods and resources for meeting vital needs is inhibited by a system of commercial relations and ownership which is structurally perverse. The developed countries ought to help pay this debt by significantly limiting their consumption of non-renewable energy and by assisting poorer countries to support policies and programs of sustainable development. The poorest areas and countries are less capable of adopting new models for reducing environmental impact because they lack the wherewithal to develop the necessary processes and to cover their costs. We must continue to be aware that, regarding climate change, there are differentiated responsibilities. As the United States bishops have said, greater attention must be given to “the needs of the poor, the weak and the vulnerable, in a debate often dominated by more powerful interests”. We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family.

There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalization of indifference. These situations have caused sister earth, along with all the abandoned of our world, to cry out, pleading that we take another course. Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two hundred years. Yet we are called to be instruments of God our Father, so that our planet might be what he desired when he created it and correspond with his plan for peace, beauty and fullness. The problem is that we still lack the culture needed to confront this crisis. We lack leadership capable of striking out on new paths and meeting the needs of the present with concern for all and without prejudice towards coming generations. The establishment of a legal framework which can set clear boundaries and ensure the protection of ecosystems has become indispensable; otherwise, the new power structures based on the techno-economic paradigm may overwhelm not only our politics but also freedom and justice.”

Implementing these agreements (COP 21) will depend not only on Governments but also on the common effort of each inhabitant of the planet, all committed and involved to mitigate the devastating current effects of climate change and thinking of future generations. We need a change of systems, structures, and devastating practices for the planet. We need advocacy work and pressure on Governments at the national and international levels to achieve the creation of policies on climate justice and human rights for all. We need to support initiatives in global networking, etc. Ways are many and varied. What is important is that everyone finds a place and each one bring their action to the fore: Then we can go forward to make a pathway which takes care of and protects our “common house” and the whole of creation (Laudato Si).

To read Yolanda’s full reflections, you can find them here (Part 1 & Part 2). Read the COP21 Outcome Document, the Paris Agreement.
Chiapas is one of the states with the highest number of Indigenous in the country, a place rich in natural resources and with a poor population. Its borders to the north and south are officially and clandestinely open for the passage of migrants, Mexicans, Central Americans. The reality of life is shame for a humanity that claims to be civilized.

The corruption and immigration screening leave hundreds and thousands of undocumented people unprotected every year. The state is origin, transit and destination for migrants. On the border, in towns like Benemérito de las Américas, Frontera Corozal and Tenosique, it is not uncommon to see young Central American women in bars and brothels, clandestine places, destinations where many young women leave behind their American Dream among men, drugs and alcohol.

Many young women leave Chiapas as a place of origin, going to big cities and nearby towns in search of a job that will give them better living conditions. Many of them, after failing to find better options on their first day of searching, end up in cantinas and bars, in clandestine prostitution networks, abused and raped by employers and people who promise them help. There are those who by circumstances end up in prostitution thereby breaking an ancient lineage of cultural values and morals. Many of them will never return home, others are left pregnant and in need of looking into clandestine adoption in their babies. There are networks that capture the sexual acts in a hidden way to sell cheap pornographic videos.

The large number of military quarters that are in different parts of the state paradoxically makes social and family connections vulnerable. It is not unknown that they require women to provide sexual services. Often these quarters are close to towns, and there are women who have been forced to provide services temporarily in military quarters and then when they become pregnant they are discarded. Children without fathers are not uncommon in indigenous communities.

The breakdown the social fabric of indigenous communities is increasing, and excessive permits for the sale of alcohol provided by corrupt officials threaten the life, dignity and peace of many indigenous households. Ocósingo and jungle communities, Frontera Corozal, Benemérito de las Américas, Nueva Palestina to name a few, have spaces dedicated to the sale of alcohol with female entertainment. Presumably there are no health measures for young people, threatening their health and their lives.

Indigenous peoples are an excluded population, and honest measures for justice that put special interest in the life, welfare and progress of this population should be made more visible. Allowing prostitution as an economic alternative for indigenous women is humiliating. Underground centers for young women to enter into this situation is corrupt and unjust and that this indigenous population can enter into the situation of prostitution threatens cultural values that can enlighten a humanity that walks in darkness.

The world officially commenced implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on 1 January 2016, with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) succeeding the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which expired on 31 December 2015. On the occasion, the UN highlighted the importance of partnerships and international solidarity in implementing the 2030 Agenda, and called for sharing experiences and tracking progress. Learn more about all 17 SDGs here.
On October 9th, the Working Group on Girls presented the 3rd Annual Girls Speak Out at the United Nations. The event brought over 650 girls together and was made possible by the tremendous support from the missions of Canada, Peru and Turkey and in collaboration with UN Women, and UNICEF. You can watch the entire event here: [2015 Girls Speak Out](#).

In Mysore, India, a prayer service was conducted by all schools in the campus praying for girls all over the world especially those who do not enjoy their rights as girls and are ill-treated and even killed for various reasons. The children also enacted a skit depicting child marriage and child labour. This skit brought home the message that as children they should enjoy their childhood as well as be educated to be useful persons in society. In Moodbidri, there was a prayer service conducted by the children with the theme of bringing home a greater awareness about the girl’s position in society, a better life in society; it also stressed the necessity to remove the different social stigmas and discrimination that girls generally face in their life. Essay-writing and speech competitions were held to emphasize the importance of girl child.

In Kenya, on 11th October, 2015, 300 beneficiaries of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd converged at Kanyueri High School in Embu County to celebrate the Day of the Girl Child. The event was marked by a procession from the school to the nearby shopping centre creating awareness on specific issues affecting the girl child in Embu. During the procession there were ten stations each station was represented by a particular issues and participants posed for prayer and explanation on that particular issue. The issues were Female Genital Mutilation, Abortion, Poverty, Sexual Abuse of children, Gender Inequality, Drug and Substance Abuse, Child Labour, Early Marriages, Teenage Pregnancies and Alcohol among others. From the ten issues they voted for FGM, Abortion, Poverty, Sexual abuse of children and Drug abuse as the priority to be addressed. One of the girls presented a very beautiful and touching poem on challenges facing the girl child. [Watch the video here.](#)

**Coming Soon: 60th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

The sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women will take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 14 to 24 March 2016. The Priority Theme this year is “Women’s empowerment and its link to sustainable development” and the Review Theme is “The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.” Read our statement to CSW60 [here](#).

We are sponsoring three parallel events during this year’s Commission on the Status of Women:  
March 17: No Random Act: Human Trafficking and the Interplay between Systemic Oppression and the Individual Life Course  
March 21: Storytelling and Conversation Circles: Transformation and Engagement in Human Rights Work  

Learn more at the [UN Women website](#), and follow our activities on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

The event featured a screening of the new documentary film Maisha: A New Life Outside the Mines, which shows the dangerous artisanal mines around Kolwezi, in the South of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and grim stories of abuse, exploitation, violence, poverty, disease and death. In the midst of this poverty, the story of a successful development project has emerged, where women and children have broken the cycle of abuse, violence and poverty and built a vibrant new life. The informal school program, training center for young girls and cooperative farm in Kolwezi are evidence of the new life in the community, and illustrate a promising alternative development model that if replicated and expanded could help other communities at the bottom rung of the global supply chain to build a sustainable future. The film highlighted the successes of inclusive and participatory decision-making modes of engagement that uphold human rights and gender equality, provide new and diversified economic opportunities, put former girl and boy miners in classrooms, and provide food security for local communities.

Filmmaker Bernhard Warner presented the film and Clare Nolan from the GSIJP in New York moderated the panel. Charlotte Malegna Omoy from the Mission of the DRC to the UN provided context of the situation in her country. Bhumi Muchhala from the Third World Network critically assessed the extractive development model and how it contributes to inequality and human rights violations. H.E. Ambassador David Donoghue from the Mission of Ireland to the UN and Co-facilitator of the Post-2015 Intergovernmental Negotiations discussed the project as a best practice for the implementation of Agenda 2030. A lively and participatory discussion followed.

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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 worldwide 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. I take the opportunity to say thanks to all who were helping with translations and proof reading and especially to those who sent articles for this edition of February 2016.

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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Thank you