In the workshop we had in San José, Costa Rica from 6 to 11 April 2014, we were able to observe the different activities that are being undertaken in the region against human trafficking in persons:

a) Prevention and shelter to victims of human trafficking.

b) Good Shepherd partners establishing networks (RAMA in Central America, KAWSAY and UN GRITO POR LA VIDA (A CRY FOR LIFE) in South America), all linked to the TALITHA KUM network that is born of the International Union of General Superiors (UISG).

c) Sisters with extensive experience of work on the human trafficking issues. They are our experts in the region.

Thanks to the assistance of the Mission Development Office (MDO) in Rome and in Bolivia; the Good Shepherd International Justice Peace Office (GSIJPO) and the contribution of the sisters in the region of Our Lady of Charity and Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd - linked to this issue, we managed to consolidate a working Plan for 2015-2019 period.

We are satisfied of the results of the workshop, and our hearts were inflamed with the zeal of St. John Eudes and Sainte Mary Euphrasia, inspired by Jesus the Good Shepherd and Mary Mother of Mercy. May they continue to bless us and grant us wisdom to be assertive in the implementation of the plan.

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Levantate Mujer (Women Stand Up) Foundation is running the project "Women Promoting the Exercise of Their Rights as Citizens and the Communication Rights" which is funded by Mensen Met een Missie and it is present in four cities: Santa Cruz, Sucre, El Alto, and Oruro.

This project seeks to empower women, particularly those who have been victims of violence, so that through training and participation in information sessions, they will know their rights established by Bolivian law and therefore be recognized as subjects with rights, so that they can exercise them effectively. Also, they encourage them to be protagonists of change regarding their own realities, and to engage in participation and decision-making with authorities and other actors.

Therefore, activities are envisaged which will prepare women to develop leadership, through access primarily to the media - radio and television, so that they can exercise their right to communication through the use of these means. Hopefully, this will be a benchmark for other women coming to them with their own life experience and their own language. With all this, the women will expose their demands to the media, which has often functioned as protagonists in violation of the rights of women. In addition, the authorities and decision makers will also be targeted, encouraging them to improve and generate policies favorable to women.
Vulnerability of people living in poverty and facing natural disasters

By Marta Iris López C– GS NGO Regional Designate in America Latina and the Caribbean

On April 10 a strong earthquake of 6.7 and a second one of 5.6 resulted in two dead, dozens injured and thousands of victims, plus damage to at least 2,403 houses in Managua, Mateare, León (Nagarote and La Paz Centro) in Nicaragua.

Thanks to the containers of food received from Canada through Canadian Food for Children, to benefit people living in poverty, our sisters of the Good Shepherd in Nicaragua, were able to bring food to hostels in Nagarote and La Paz Centro.

However, these disasters also reveal the vulnerability and inequality of many people. The Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction of the United Nations (UN/ISDR) reflected that: "the vulnerability to disasters is a condition produced by human actions. Vulnerability indicates the degree in which a society is exposed or protected from the impact of natural hazards. This depends on the state of human settlements and their infrastructure, the way in which the public administration and policies handle risk management, and the level of information and education available to a society about the risks and how to address them."

According to Jorge López Arévalo (2013): "while Governments are not responsible for incorrectly named disasters, it should be responsible for the prevention of its effects and the minimization of risks.

Yes, the misfortunes affect unequally, and hit the poorest for being the most vulnerable. Reconstruction also is different, because the poorest places have, generally incompetent and corrupt Governments and these make disaster a way of enriching themselves."

http://www.paho.org/mdgpost2015/?page_id=236&lang=es

In the Rio + 20 Conference, one of the objectives of sustainable development proposed for the Post-2015 Agenda has been "Conflict and Fragility". It proposes that "disasters can create or exacerbate the dispute, by creating or deepening inequality in access to resources. So it is necessary to consider the impact of disasters in the process of Post-2015 development targets. And have you heard about SDGs-Sustainable Development Goals? Has your country public safety programs to mitigate the impact to natural disasters? Who would be the most vulnerable people, in a natural disaster?"
“Bolivia Viva” with our brave entrepreneur women
By Mariana de Jesus Torrejón and Wara Cardozo Sayarí Warmi Oruro. Regional Levántate Mujer (Women Stand Up) Foundation

In the city of Oruro, from 10 to 14 March, we had the privilege to host 17 women artisans who came from Santa Cruz, Sucre, El Alto, and Oruro regional to participate in the workshop of high design of products. This workshop was led by two Colombian experts whose experience is a fabulous journey, and they believe in responsible and conscious consumption and trade fair. Marcella Echavarria and Clara Saldarriaga come from the world of design, to rescue indigenous techniques, to enhance the creativity in each country. We work with them in a collection of products that they called "Bolivia Viva". The skies of our country were the inspiration to create the color palette; the sunrises and sunsets inspired us to use a range of lilac, orange with blue and brown accents. The shapes of our mountains, people and their clothing, as well as their rituals were source of inspiration and creation. It was a week of hard challenges -our artisans had to display initiative in creating products, each of them in her area of specialization, with products that have not been produced and were completely new.

What do you think happened? They produced more than 50 products including bracelets, earrings, bags, backpacks, scarves, multi-purpose, cushions, and other products that were characterized by a great aesthetic and are functional with the sure leadership of the trainers. But this does not end here; we had the privilege of the presence of Katherine Leonetti Marketing Manager, representative of HandCrafting Justice, to verify the capabilities of our artisans and select, in this way, 32 products with high potential for export to the United States while including the possibility of working also with the local market.

We want to thank Jesus the Good Shepherd for the great opportunity to reach these women. We lived a rapprochement and fraternity that was based on solidarity, spirituality and mission.- These three pillars contribute to the fulfillment of our objective, which is to enhance the integral development of women and their families with protection, care, preventive actions, awareness, and generation of financial resources and entrepreneurship, so that the women can take control of their lives without violence, without discrimination and with economic autonomy.

Reporting on Human Rights - UPR (Universal Periodic Review)
By Marta Iris Lopez C – GS NGO Regional Designate in America Latina and the Caribbean

Sr. Francisca Torres, Provincial Leader and Sr. Marina Ureña, JP Contact of the Province of Central America, accepted the commitment to write a report on human rights as a result of the JP Contacts training workshop in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Quito, Ecuador in 2012. They requested the JP Office for accompaniment, and we collaborated on a work plan, to carry out the outline for the development of human rights (Universal Periodic Review - UPR) report. Sr. Janeth Rodríguez was the link for the report of Nicaragua and Sister Maria Marina Ureña was the link for the report of Costa Rica.

Process for a draft of the report: first, we took time to understand, clarify doubts and concerns; we read information (Constitution of the country, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the former recommendations UPR-2010); then, we encouraged participation by collecting contributions from sisters, partners in the mission and beneficiaries of the mission; searching for information in the media and other institutions. Once prepared, we sent the draft of the report to Sister Hedwig and Margaret in the Human Rights Office of the Good Shepherd in Geneva, so that they could continue the process.

In our experience we learned:

*It is important to choose two or three problems that people are facing, in relation to women and children in the Good Shepherd Mission, those which are most significant, and most importantly, to provide recommendations regarding these problems.

*Study the problem in a comprehensive way, in order to be specific when explaining the situation.

We are deeply grateful to Sister Hedwig and Margaret for their support in this process, their recommendations and the work they do in the office to continue to report to the Council of Human Rights of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Costa Rica was examined on May 5 and Nicaragua on May 7, and it has been of great satisfaction to see that the contributions were taken into account in the summary prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which is the synthesis of all the contributions of NGO’s and Human Rights Institutes in the reviewed country.
Marabut Western Samar (April 7-9, 2014). The team who had an immersion in barangay Malobago last February 2014 went back to the place for a follow-up mission without the three original team members. It was only Sr. Nenet Daño who went with Mrs. Nelie Juan partner in mission.

On Monday April 7, Sr. Nenet and Ate Nelie together with Barangay captain Rodrigo Tiwaken gathered the people of Barangay Malobago. The short meeting was attended by 88 villagers (20 men and 68 women). The purpose of that gathering was to conduct an updating regarding their current situation.

Sr. Nenet asked the people if the requested help during the February immersion was still the same. The people responded in chorus: “There is no longer need of fishing boats as they already received forty five (45) fishing boats from the Camillians”. During the short meeting the people said they really wanted the 300 meter fishing nets given by the Camillians, to be extended to 1000 meters. After a thorough discussion on how to distribute the 700 meter nets given by the RGS, the people agreed that the 700 meters fish nets will be distributed to those 20 fishermen whose boats are already operational.

The following day Tuesday April 8 - Sr. Nenet and Ate Nelie went together with kagawad Odelon to Tacloban and bought fishing nets complete with accessories. They were able to bring the nylons and floats “pataw”. The 14,000 fishing nets and 350 kilos of lead sinker will be delivered after Easter.

On the third day Wednesday April 9 - the twenty (20) recipients of the seven hundred (700) meters fishing nets were gathered again. Before distributing the fishing accessories, Sr. Nenet together with Khler BEC coordinator of the parish taught the fishermen about Bible sharing and Bible reflection. The short Bible workshop was well received by the fishermen. Their enthusiasm was evident as they expressed that they wanted to learn more about the Bible. There was a joyful atmosphere during the distribution. After distributing the nets, the newly organized women’s group of Malobago informed Sr. Nenet that they wanted St. Mary Euphrasia’s name be added to the name of their newly organized group. The complete name is SAMAHAN NG MGA KABABAIHAN NI STA. MARIA EUPHRASIA NG MALOBAKO, SKSMEM as the acronym (WOMEN’S GROUP OF ST MARY EUPHRASIA IN MALOBAKO).

The bank houses that Sr. Nenet visited turned out to be without water and electricity. The houses were very hot and not really strong, if another typhoon will visit again the area. According to the survivors they were threatened by the Department of Social Welfare and Development, “if they will not stay at the bank houses they will not be able to receive the promised relocation houses”. Many of them were forced to live there in order to receive the promised houses, but a lot of fisher folks were also forced to sign the waver, as a sign that they had given up their rights to be relocated, as they preferred to stay in their ruined houses.

Despite the hardships people in Malobago believe in God and encountered miracles during the typhoon. Countless miracles happened when the typhoon came, but the biggest miracle that Barangay Malobago is really praying for, is the conversion of hearts of all government officials involved in rehabilitation, that they will really use the money for the betterment of survivors and that justice will be rendered by really using the money intended for the recovery of typhoon survivors. See full articles and pictures here: RGS and partners in mission visiting Malobago

Etnico: Ate Nelie and Sr. Nenet made visits to some houses. Five months after Yolanda, the houses of the survivors remain the same. Malobago continue to suffer because the government is not serious in helping them. They vowed to recover by themselves with the help of different NGOs especially from religious organizations. They were whipped by super typhoon Yolanda and continue being whipped by the lack of help from the government, despite the billions of dollars donated by the international communities.

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RGS and partners in mission visiting Malobago
Levantate Mujer Foundation "EPUA KUNATAI" sponsored by MENSEN MET EEN MISSIE, is implementing the project: "Contributing to the change in violent behavior and the construction of public policies in the municipality of Santa Rosa, at Rincón de Palometas, Loma Alta, Asubi and Colorado communities".

On Tuesday, May 20, 2014 at 10:00 a.m., in the municipality of Santa Rosa, at Rincón de Palometas Community at the Sub – Mayor Office, women from Loma Alta, Asubi, El Colorado, Los Andes, attended the Municipal Summit; women and men hosted the event.

At the Summit we had the support of the Ombudsman of Santa Rosa, where we reviewed the Integral Law to guarantee a life free from violence for women - Law No. 348. There was a discussion between the panelists and attendees about the way of denunciation, types of violence, and creation of Integral Legal Services (SLIM).

Then five work tables were formed with the following themes: trafficking in persons, violence, human rights and gender equality - discrimination, where each group had a facilitator's guide work, carrying out an analysis of the thematic concepts, causes and effects. A representative from each group gave a brief explanation of the work of the other attendees of the Summit.

Finally, we submitted conclusions of the Summit, in which the women and men proposeded to work as follows: workshops of enterprises for adult women and youth (Cotillion, cutting and dressmaking, etc), socialization of the Law No. 348 in all communities, work tables with adolescents and youth, and self-esteem workshops for women. At the end of the meeting, lunch was shared among all attendees.

With these actions adopted by Epua Kuñatai, we hope to achieve that rural women become aware of their rights and of the law that protects them from any situation of violence. Thus, we contribute to prevention of violence.

The strength of the charism of the Good Shepherd is in the reality that sisters face in their daily actions. The involvement on the ground gives a new life to our mission in the 21st century.

Sr. Hanan Youssef has been working for a few years in a very poor neighborhood in the Beirut suburb. Given her involvement in working with refugees from several countries, she was approached by some NGO's to reflect both action among the poor and the inter-religious relation, Christian-Muslim.

The Church in Need (NGO which has the mission of supporting Christians persecuted around the world) came several times to visit our health center where 100 people come per day, mostly women and children of all nationalities and religions. Syrian refugees are the most important part of this work, because of the large number that Lebanon has welcomed.

This NGO organized an International Congress on religious freedom in the month of May in Malta, and they invited Christians from several countries in the Middle East and Africa to bear witness to their actions to the poor and their commitment to interreligious dialogue. Sr. Hanan (Good Shepherd) gave her testimony concerning the commitment of the Lebanon/Syria province with Syrians and Iraqi refugees - all religions combined.

Our world is thirsty for peace and security and it needs witnesses who live their faith without any distinction or discrimination.

May the Good Shepherd guide us to be witnesses to our brothers and sisters suffering injustices.
An Unforgettable, Invaluable Experience by Sister Mary Juliana Suzanne DEVOY, Macao-China

It all began with a few words in an email from Sr. Hedwig “or if Juliana will come to Geneva and lobby herself. . .” My first reaction to those words was that it was quite unthinkable for me to drop everything and go to Geneva to lobby for a just domestic violence law for Macau. Crazy! But a few hours later I was in the chapel and the words of Hedwig came back and I began to think, “Why not? Maybe it’s not such a crazy idea. I’ve worked so hard for more than 3 years on this issue. If there’s anything else I can do that might make a difference why not give it a try!”

The background to this is that I sent an email to Winifred asking about making an NGO submission to the CESCR (Committee on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights) Winifred referred me to Hedwig and I learned that the Statement that our Macau Anti-Domestic Violence Coalition had sent in to the Committee was surely too late to be considered. I learned that we should have had it in a month and a half before the beginning of the session. This is the reporting year for China which always includes under its umbrella Hong Kong and Macau. Our concern was with Article #10 of the Convention and the question posed to the Macau government: “What have you done to criminalize domestic violence and make it a separate law . . .?” The government’s response was an evasive answer focusing on all they are doing and will do to strengthen protection for victims. It is very clear that our government has no intention of criminalizing domestic violence. In response to CEDAW they did an initial draft in 2011 making it a “public crime” (Macau legal language) but in 2012 they did a complete U turn in the name of “family harmony” and left the status quo in place meaning that the victim must be the one to initiate legal proceedings.

I’d like to thank my provincial who could hardly have understood the importance and urgency of the matter, but who gave her OK for me to go. It was April 25th when I got the email from Hedwig and I would have to be in Geneva on May 5th to read my Oral Statement if Hedwig could manage to get me a slot of time in the one opportunity which was the morning session for NGOs.

Everything was in a hurry – writing the statement, booking a ticket, consulting with the Coalition members for authorization to represent them. But I’m so glad I went and so grateful to Hedwig for her mentorship. It was a great experience and a whole education on something of which I was totally ignorant. I had been told that my oral statement could only be 3 minutes. The first time I read it to Hedwig she clocked me and told me it was 8 minutes! I cut out some and tried again. This time she told me it was 5 minutes. Once again I had to delete some of my cherished explanations. A third time and she said it was 4 minutes. Three minutes means 3 minutes! I protested, “How can I cut out more and still say something?” But I obeyed and discovered that it is possible in 3 minutes to make a point. Afterwards I was very grateful to Hedwig for this lesson. There were 25 speakers in the NGO session and I was the last. The session was already 2.5 hours. The following day I was able to have a few words with the Portuguese member of the Committee who perfectly understood the issue and promised to bring it up in the meeting with the government delegation.

Hedwig explained many things about the working of the UN Body in Geneva and managed to get an entry badge for me to attend several other sessions where I could witness the workings of committees of different conventions and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), the role of the NGOs and the interaction between committee members and government delegations. I attended one session on Lithuania at the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), a UPR session on Equatorial Guinea and a session on the Committee on Torture (CAT) where the Holy See (Vatican) was the one responding because of sexual child abuse now being listed as torture.

One thing that struck me during this brief exposure was how seriously these matters of international conventions are taken by all – the governments, the committee members, and the NGOs who go to much trouble and expense to present issues not acknowledged or brought up by governments.

I greatly appreciate our sisters, Hedwig and Winifred who carry out this special mission on our behalf and would wish that all Good Shepherd Sisters would have an opportunity for an exposure experience. Finally I want to share two “spiritual experiences” of mine during my time in Geneva. The first was in the church where we attended Mass. It is a basilica dedicated to Our Lady with a very long history. As soon as you enter this Church you can “feel” the prayer. It is so tangibly a “house of God”. The second experience was at a restaurant where we went for lunch after a long walk around a lake. Near the end of our meal the owner of the restaurant came out to ask about how he could find in Geneva the movement he had joined in Italy because he wanted to continue to have a deep relationship with Jesus. How beautiful!

Did my intervention make any difference? I think it did. The Committee report will only come out later but a summary of the minutes stated that the bill of the government is not appropriate because it does not make domestic violence a “social” i.e., “public” crime but only a mini-crime. The government was also asked to pay more attention to the human rights of the victims and not just the perpetrators.

See also this video in the following link: http://portugues.tdm.com.mo/evideo.php?vid=7176

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What was important in Geneva at the UN since the last ETW?

By Hedwig JÖHL GS NGO Representative in Geneva

That was the question in looking back what could interest GS people around the world. There were two events, the Human Rights Council (HRC) and the Social Forum.

Human rights Council (HRC) March 3rd–28th 2014: The Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon came to Geneva at the first day and addressed the HRC – for the last time in presence of High Commissioner for Human Rights (HCHR) Navy Pillay, because her mandate finishes.

During the session the HRC adopted many texts (in numbers not less than 42), about situation in Syria, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea), Mali, South Sudan, Palestine...There was a Panel on the right to privacy in the digital age. For next year persons with disabilities will be on the agenda. The HRC President Baudelaire Ndong Ella condemned reprisals against Human rights defenders. NGOs brought this issue many times to his attention over the last years. Rosa Kornfeld-Matte (Chile) was appointed Independent Expert (IE) on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons.

And this brings me to the issue at the Social Forum on aging persons –April 1st to 3rd, in Geneva, the theme addressed was: “The Rights of Older Persons”. We heard about Human rights of Older Persons, Challenges, Opportunities, Gaps and Promises. Looking at the reality of older persons, there is ill-treatment, no respect of privacy, no choice of food, older persons are isolated, do not have a pension, suffer physical abuse, economic discrimination, sexual abuse, do not have protection. There are stereotypes, older persons are neglect, and they should be free from torture. Older persons have a right to work (and at work), to housing, income and social security, adequate health care, long term care.

We need instruments, monitoring mechanisms at UN level. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Treaty Bodies has a Role to play to strengthening Human Rights for older persons, in Geneva and New York. No one should be left behind. The Civil Society will be extremely helpful. The HRC President said: we need an analysis on discrimination on the base of age.

Mr. Craig from the OHCHR said: We should see aging not as a disaster but as an achievement, and respond to the challenge. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is translated in 360 languages, is full of wisdom, but not a word of older persons, and he added: “We look forward to a Convention on that issue of older persons”. Ms. Leyla Alynak from United Nations Population fund said: Two third live in developing countries. We miss the issue in the Post-2015 agenda. Aging is not about the future but the present. Here you have a link to main documents, most in the 6 UN languages for those who like to know more about: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Poverty/SForum/Pages/SForum2014.aspx

Visit the regularly updated Good Shepherd JP website for news, events, JP training resources, and so on. Go to: http://www.buonpastoreint.org/jp-en

Editor’s Note:

“We commit ourselves to work zealously with women and children, especially those who are trafficked, forced to migrate or oppressed by abject poverty”

Yolanda Sanchez: yolasanco@gmail.com

Original in English:

Translated into Spanish by Victor Carrasco and Yolanda S.

Translated into French by: Yolanda Sanchez and Sr. Marie Helene Halligon (France)

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

Thank you