

Shalom-UN/NGO Newsletter

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Educating Women Helps Heal Many Wounds by S. Genevieve Cassani (SL)



As a School Sister of Notre Dame, when I read the editorial “A grim portrait” (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Dec. 15), I was reminded of our commitment to the United Nations and the Millennium Development Goals. In 1833 a brave woman in Germany realized that women had to be educated to strengthen the family. Her vision is still being carried forward by the School Sisters of Notre Dame and their colleagues throughout the world.

Today education is at the heart of eliminating gender bias and discrimination. We try to accomplish this in a variety of formal and non-formal educational programs in 32 countries, transforming the world through education. Our mission is to ensure that all people enjoy the right to develop their full potential and use their gifts for the common good.

We have assembled a group of teachers and students from many cultures who will meet with other young women for ten days at the United Nations in February for the UN Commission on the Status of Women. For that meeting UNICEF and the Working Group on Girls is seeking recommendations from young people about how to prevent discrimination and violence against girls. The forum “Stop violence and discrimination against girls” will be open until January 15. Details are available on UNICEF’S [Voices of Youth](#) Web page .

We believe that our ministry of education for justice is the way to empower women and ensure the health and well-being of children. It is how we fight disease and abuse and heal the wounds of Earth. Education that promotes justice will create a future filled with hope for all people, easing the grimness bit by bit.

This commentary originally appeared in the December 23, 2006 issue of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, <http://www.stltoday.com/>.

Bavarian Province Integrates Earth Charter into Educational Institutions

by S. M. SalomeStrasser, Provincial Leader (BY)



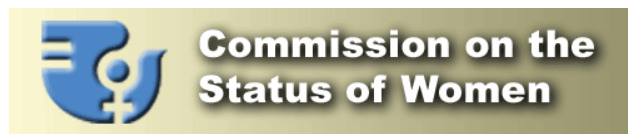
During the past year, the provincial council of the [Bavarian Province](#) worked with the directors of our province-owned educational institutions on a common model for our educational ministry, which responds to the challenges of today’s world in the spirit of Mother Theresa. In our discussions, the following priorities crystallized: (1) *responsibly caring for creation*, (2) *education that does justice to the differing needs of girls and boys*, (3) *dialogue between religions and cultures*, and (4) *concern for disadvantaged persons*. The parallelism with a number of points from the [Earth Charter](#) is clearly recognizable.

An information weekend was held in October 2006 for all the sisters who minister in schools or in our province-owned centers for the care of children. Dr. Peter Beer, a professor who accompanies the process, is the director of the Catholic Office in Bavaria and acts as the liaison for issues relating to church and politics. Dr. Beer combined extensive information with personal discussion, which motivated the participants to become more sensitive to current, urgent issues. The Shalom Day held in November 2006, with Sister Cathy Arata as speaker on “The Cries of Earth and its People—Challenges for us School Sisters,” deepened and broadened the topic in a way that was very helpful to us.

In the meantime, the model was designed. Dr. Beer will present this model to the religious and lay teaching personnel of our province-owned educational institutions during the All Province Day that

will take place in the Munich Motherhouse on May 5, 2007. Then it will be everyone's responsibility to make the document alive and to apply it in practical terms in the local situation. With renewed motivation, religious and laypersons involved in education will work as promulgators, convinced "that the world can be changed through the transformation of persons." (See *You Are Sent*, C 22 and 24, and the *Call to Transformation*.)

CSW Up-Date by S. Ann Scholz, SSND UN-NGO Director



School Sisters of Notre Dame, together with their colleagues, students, and friends, are hard at work preparing for the February 26 to March 9, 2007 meeting of the United Nations

[Commission on the Status of Women \(CSW\)](#). This year the Commission will focus on policies and programs that can help to eliminate discrimination and violence against the girl child.

Plans call for involving as many SSNDs and young women as possible in preparations leading up to the CSW. Materials that have been distributed to SSND schools, SHALOM Clubs, and SHALOM Contacts can be used in a variety of settings to teach about girls' rights and to prepare young people to participate in the on-line forum "*Stop Violence and Discrimination against Girls*," hosted by [UNICEF's Voices of Youth \(VOY\)](#). The information and recommendations gathered during the forum will be used to compile an *Official Youth Report* to be presented by a young woman at the CSW meeting.

The SSND delegation to this year's Commission meeting will include women and girls from several countries where SSNDs serve. The following secondary schools are each sending a team of one teacher and one student:

- Theresia-Gerhardinger Gymnasium, Munich, Germany
- The Brede School, Brakel, Germany
- Notre Dame Senior Secondary School, Sunyani, Ghana
- Mother Theresa Technical Secondary School, Tambogrande, Peru
- Notre Dame Preparatory School, Baltimore USA
- St. Saviour High School, Brooklyn, USA
- Academy of the Holy Angles, Demarest, USA
- Notre Dame High School, St. Louis, USA

All this is the result of the efforts of the planning committee that will also serve as staff for the week that participants are in New York. S. Ethel Howley is serving as chair, and Sisters Eileen Reilly and Carolyn Jost are planning the program. Beth Huggins, a student at Mt. Mary College, will serve as our youth leader. S. Cathy Arata, who will not be a delegate to the CSW, is helping to coordinate communications with the SHALOM Network.

Information about the *Voices of Youth* forum on ending discrimination and violence against girls is available at http://www.unicef.org/voy/takeaction/takeaction_3295.html. The documents are available in all of the official UN languages (including English, Russian, and Spanish) and in Swahili.

Salvadoran Enterprises for Women (SEW) by S. Anne Marie Gardiner (AM)



Women in El Salvador, like women everywhere, seek a life with dignity and hope for themselves and their families. Employment is the key to obtaining the resources basic to life—shelter, food, water, health care, and education.

Meaningful employment and empowerment of women in El Salvador is the mission of [Salvadoran Enterprises for Women \(SEW\)](#). Salvadoran women want to work and have many creative ideas for effective businesses, businesses which are near their homes and serve local and regional needs. *Salvadoran Enterprises for Women* provides funds for job training, start-up costs for supplies and equipment, and ongoing support for small businesses for women in El Salvador.

SEW has funded women's groups to start a bakery, sewing businesses, candy and jelly production, natural medicine groups, candle-making, and chicken and egg production.

For *Salvadoran Enterprises for Women* businesses, employment and empowerment are interdependent. Trainings provide the technical skills for specific work and teach the group how to run a meeting, do accounting, and seek appropriate markets for their goods.

Equally important are the concurrent trainings in self-esteem, gender equality, human rights, and assertiveness training. In a country where men make most of the decisions and do most of the talking at home and during community meetings, encouragement and opportunity to find one's voice and speak one's truth does not come easily. As women develop their business, they talk about their common interests, challenges, and dreams. With companionship and training, they learn how to be advocates for themselves, to negotiate prices for their products, and to pursue the political and social common good.

Anne Marie Gardiner (AM) began SEW seeing that jobs with dignity were the only means of sustained development. Initially funded by the School Sisters of Notre Dame of the former Baltimore Province, USA, *Salvadoran Enterprises for Women* is now a nonprofit organization. Please visit their web site www.sewinc.org and see how poverty, malnutrition, and hopelessness are yielding to a hopeful future.

International Women's Day—March 8 by S. Ann Scholz, SSND UN-NGO Director



What will you do to celebrate [International Women's Day](#) this year? Invite women to join you for prayer and tea? Host a discussion for young women about what it means to be a woman of faith in the 21st Century? Teach about women's rights and the needs of women worldwide?

The theme for International Women's Day 2007 is "Ending impunity for violence against women." In recent decades, much progress has been made. On a worldwide level, women's access to education and proper health care has increased, their participation in the paid labor force has grown, and legislation that promises equal opportunities for women and respect for their human rights has been adopted in many countries. The world now has an ever-increasing number of women participating in society as policymakers.

However, nowhere in the world can women claim to have all the same rights and opportunities as men. The majority of the world's 1.3 billion absolute poor are women. On average, women receive between 30 and 40 percent less pay than men earn for the same work. And everywhere, women and girls continue to be victims of violence.

For the women of the world, the March 8 is an occasion to review progress in the struggle for equality, peace, and development and an opportunity to unite to move the human rights agenda forward and to ensure that all people have the opportunity to develop their potential.

Resources are available at:

SSND International, www.gerhardinger.org
<http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/womenday/>
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/iwd/>
<http://www.un.org/events/women/iwd/>
<http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/womensday/index.asp>

St. Joan of Arc SHALOM Club by S. Mary Helen Stokes (SL)



"Caring for creation can be done in a variety of ways. Let's look at what one St. Louis school accomplished." So begins the lesson for 7th grade students using the Harcourt Religion Book series [Discover Catholic Social Teaching](#). The SHALOM Club of [St. Joan of Arc School](#) in St. Louis, Missouri provides the example for the lesson on "Care for God's Creation" in the Harcourt Religious Book Series.

The goal of the school's Shalom Club is to "develop a worldwide look at important peace and justice issues affecting the lives of children and creation in order to take action to make a difference. Since the 2004-2005 school year, the members of the SHALOM Club have been involved in raising

consciousness about poverty and its effects on children. They use games, posters, and other creative methods to help the student body become more aware of the global and local reality of poverty.

SHALOM Club activities also include the study of the [Earth Charter](#) as well as the [Rights of the Child](#). Recycling has been introduced at the school through the SHALOM Club.

After the Tsunami tragedy in 2004, the Student Council supported the Shalom Club's goal by facilitating creative fundraising activities throughout the school to raise \$2,500, which was contributed to the Tsunami victims.

Seventh and eighth grade students have been trained in nonviolent ways to resolve conflict.

The St. Joan of Arc School SHALOM Club began in 2004 under the guidance of S. Ann Coleman, S. Mary Helen Stokes, and three lay teachers. Congratulations to St. Joan of Arc SHALOM Club for having been chosen as a model program for "Care for God's Creation."

World Day of Peace 2007 by S. Ann Schoch (MK)

Established by Paul VI with the intent that each New Year begin in the light of Christ, the great peacemaker of humanity, World Day of Peace is an annual celebration in Rome. School Sisters of Notre Dame living at the Generalate joined Christians and believers of all faiths for the 2007 Peace March organized by the Community of [Sant'Egidio](#) in Rome. Winding their way from Chiesa Nuova toward Piazza San Pietro, marchers with colorful banners bearing the names of war-torn and poverty-stricken countries demonstrated that peace is possible. The group arrived at the Vatican in time to hear Benedict XVI stress the theme of this year's [Peace Message](#) "the human person, the heart of peace."

This year marks the 40th anniversary of [Populorum Progressio](#). In this year of the 22nd General Chapter, consider re-reading Pope Paul VI's *On the Development of People*. As we address the Cries of Earth and its People his encyclical offers us inspiration and motivation to continue our efforts to transform the world.

"Such aid alone will never be enough, nor will investments or gifts, or loans. It is not enough to conquer hunger or put an end to poverty. Our goal must be to build a world—a world developed to the full, so much so that all men and women, no matter their race or creed, can live a truly human life." #47

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via della Stazione Aurelia 95
00165 Roma, Italia
tel: +39.06.6652.01 fax: +39.06.6652.0234