
Call to Solidarity: SSND's Commitment to Education by S. Judith Kamada (NP)

“Education” is big business in Japan. Parents want quality education for their children so they can climb the social ladder to acquire power and prestige. Parents want to train their children from the time they are babies to be admitted to the best kindergarten, the best elementary school, the best high school, and to the best university so that they can attain that goal. There are even special after-school “cram schools” on all levels to support their efforts. Parents sacrifice everything to send their children to cram schools even if it costs a great deal.



Most elementary school students over 4th grade go to cram schools after school and come home very late at night. Many parents come to pick them up at school and bring them to cram school providing them a “box supper”. Children don’t have time to play with their friends or sit at the dinner table with their families. As a result, they acquire knowledge and skills to pass the tests but they do not learn how to relate. Cases of children and even parents with emotional challenges are growing. Our sisters serving in Nepal see the same thing among the parents who want their children to be “educated”. It seems that this idea to see education as the tool to be powerful is spreading globally.

Our SSND commitment to education is to enable persons to reach the fullness of their potential as created in God’s image, not to become powerful. God’s image is the Trinitarian communion, of a mutual relationship of love and respect. God has been inviting all of us and all of creation to join the Trinitarian communion. This is why we put our priority on the powerless and are attentive to listen to the cries of all creation. Mutuality and community are essential means to attain our goal of education. Because our goal and the means of education are so counter-cultural to today’s world, we articulate the sense of urgency and renewed determination to carry out our mission in our *Call to Solidarity*: “We are convinced anew that education is our response to the cries of Creation, the concrete expression of our solidarity with all.”

Commemorating Human Rights Day by S. Roxanne Schares, *Shalom* Coordinator



Human Rights Day 2009, *Embrace Diversity; End Discrimination*, was commemorated on December 10 in various ways by School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND).

Sisters in the Gambia prayed with the monthly Solidarity Reflection and animated school and parish groups.

Students in Bwiam learned about human and children’s rights and looked at how these are being respected locally. The SSND community in Soma took the parish Missionary Childhood group on an excursion to learn about slave trade in their country. They visited the museum at Albreda, St. James Island where those captured were kept until shipped, and the Kinteh family compound, believed to be the ancestral home of Alex Hailey, author of *Roots*. The experience had a deep impact on the children and led to discussions about the importance of human rights for all.

The school community of [Theresia-Gerhardinger-Gymnasium am Anger](#) in Munich, Germany gathered for an introduction to human rights. During the day students continued their study of some important rights on display throughout the school building, and one teacher prepared a quiz for student to test their knowledge.

[Sisters of the Polish Province](#) marked the occasion in several ways. During communal prayer, sisters remembered with gratitude all those who work for justice and protection of human rights and asked for blessing on those who suffer from violations of their rights. The *Shalom* Club in Warsaw, with support of the principal and teachers, organized a four-day program of workshops for all students on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. On December 8, the SSND and the Diocese of Gliwice marked the opening of the “Window of Life” project undertaken by SSND to provide protection and support the development of children. In Wołkowysk, Belarus sisters and students visited the children’s home as an expression of solidarity with those who have experienced injustice in their own families.



In Slovenia, [School Sisters of Notre Dame](#) included the intention in their common prayer and discussed actions they would take to promote human rights. The monthly Solidarity Reflection was used with resident college students in Ljubljana. Some sisters wrote letters to government leaders calling for respect of children’s rights and of the value of the family. At Ilirska Bistrica retreat center and new kindergarten, conscious decisions were made to give just salaries to employees and to ensure the safety and rights of the children.

In the United States, [Sisters at the St. Louis](#) provincial house participated in a Human Rights Day Write-a-Thon. Letters concerning the safety of a woman rights activist in Nepal were written to a government official or directly to the woman, expressing support and encouragement.

The Global Justice and Peace Commission of the [SSND Milwaukee Province](#) also sponsored a Write-a-Thon. Throughout the day, sisters, associates, employees, and the public stopped in the Notre Dame Elm Grove All Purpose Room to enjoy Fair Trade Coffee and cookies and to take action. Over 550 letters were written in support of individuals faced with human rights violations and 250 postcards signed in support of debt relief and comprehensive immigration reform. More than 100 people signed a letter congratulating President Obama on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize and urging him to live up to it. A similar number signed a petition urging the President to help establish a Global Education Fund. The day concluded with a program of prayer, songs, and S. Lillia Langreck’s reflection: “What Pro-Life Means to Me”.

What Really Happened in Copenhagen by S. Ann Scholz, Director UN/NGO



After years of hard work and months of anticipation, the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change’s](#) (UNFCCC) 15th Conference of Parties ([COP15](#)) failed to deliver the much hoped for agreement. The December 7-18, 2009 negotiations which included representatives of 190 countries and attracted many heads of state produced few concrete steps toward a real solution to the global climate crisis.

In the end, the United States, China, India, Brazil, and South Africa headed a list of 28 key countries that adopted the [Copenhagen Accord](#), a new framework for addressing global warming that at least keeps the process going toward climate talks scheduled for December 2010 in Mexico City.

Many have labelled the conference a failure and no one could claim victory for the planet. However, there are some that point to the conference’s accomplishments. U.N. climate chief Yvo de Boer told reporters, “It’s an impressive accord. But it’s not an accord that is legally binding, not an accord that pins down industrialized countries to targets.”

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and other world leaders have been more generous in their assessments. “This breakthrough lays the foundation for international action in the years to come,” Chancellor Merkel told the German newspaper *Bild am Sonntag*.

So exactly what happened at Copenhagen?

- All countries agreed that climate change is a global threat and that international cooperation is urgently required to help those countries most at risk.
- All but five countries “took note” of the final climate proposal and pledged to register by the end of January 2010 their plans to reduce emissions and combat climate change impacts already occurring.
- The United States, China, and India all pledged to cut their carbon output by 2020.
- The accord promised \$100 billion a year by 2020 to address developing countries’ climate change needs.

Chancellor Merkel summed up the thoughts of many, “Copenhagen is a first step toward a new world climate order, nothing more but also nothing less. Those who are only putting Copenhagen down are helping those who want to blockade rather than move forward.”

Peace Prayer Opens Jubilee Year by S. Roxanne Schares, *Shalom* Coordinator

An interreligious peace prayer service opened the 150th Jubilee Year of the [School Sisters of Notre Dame](#) in Vienna, Austria. On January 20, 2010 the sisters and the school community [Schulzentrum Friesgasse](#) welcomed leaders of Vienna’s Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, Coptic, Orthodox, and Christian Evangelical communities and 150 invited guests to pray and “open the door” for peace.



Instrumental music provided by teachers and students created a prayerful setting. S. Karin Kuttner, Provincial Leader and School Superintendent, welcomed everyone and began the service with lighting a peace lamp from Israel. S. Roxanne Schares, International *Shalom* Coordinator, invited for the occasion, reflected on the *Shalom* commitment of School Sisters of Notre Dame throughout the world. As part of the reflection, she presented a gift, symbolic of the occasion: of prayer for peace, of jubilee, and of solidarity.

Religious leaders, teachers, and students offered prayer, readings from sacred texts, songs, and petitions for peace. Central to marking the Jubilee Year is the commitment of the school community to a social project to raise funds for educational assistance to 15 Christian and Muslim Palestinian families of the West Bank. The prayer service concluded with the guests gathering in the school courtyard and releasing 150 blue balloons with messages of peace into the air.



Hafa Adai from Guam! by Connie Guerrero, *Shalom* Contact for Guam

Shalom to all! This Pacific Island of 156,000 people continues to be formed and reshaped by the vitality of dedicated teachers and young people Kindergarten through Grade 12 in three schools under the [School Sisters of Notre Dame](#). Their commitment is for peace and to begin with oneself.

The *Shalom* Club of [St Francis School](#) in Yona organizes peace-related activities in school. In November 2009, the club sponsored an in-school dance for its 301 students. To enter, students had to ‘pay’ with a homemade Thanksgiving card, later to be given to the elderly in the community. With excitement and joy, students came to the dance and shared their

artwork; later came the grace-filled experience of delivering cards to the senior citizens center down the street.

Seniors at [Notre Dame High School](#) decided to give a different twist to their annual retreat day. In the morning, they gave service at the two elementary schools administered by the School Sisters of Notre Dame and at St. Dominic Senior Center, a nursing home for the



elderly. In the schools they assisted in the classrooms and wherever needed, and at the nursing home they helped feed residents and visited and entertained them. After the period of service, the students gathered together, reflected, and shared on the experience of giving themselves in service to others. The 93 seniors found the experience to be “super”, and many felt a deep sense of peace. They discovered for themselves the deep and lasting joy that comes from giving oneself to others.

In the last two years, the people of Guam have been intent on preparing and responding to the impending military buildup in 2011. The honor students in the U.S. Government class at Notre Dame High School were challenged to educate themselves and become involved in public forums about the military buildup and whether it is good for Guam. By February 17, 2010, the public is to submit their concerns for the Draft Environmental Impact Statements.

UNESCO Publishes 2010 Education for All Report



The [2010 Education for All Global Monitoring Report](#), *Reaching the Marginalized*, argues that the global financial crisis is threatening education systems in the world's poorest countries. The results could create a lost generation of children whose life chances will have been irreparably damaged by a failure to protect their right to education. The report examines why some children are being left behind and looks at concrete solutions for making sure that no child is excluded from schooling.

Coming Events: The [54th Session of Commission on the Status of Women](#) (March 1-12, 2010) will review progress and continuing challenges on the occasion of the 15th Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women. The SSND delegation will include seven SSNDs and young women from Mt. Mary College in Milwaukee.



[Education for All Global Action Week 2010](#) will take place April 19-25. The focus of the 2010 campaign will be financing for education and April 20th has been chosen for the day of global action. This year EFA Week will be a precursor to the larger [1 Goal: Education for All Campaign](#) which will draw on the energy generated in the run up to the 2010 football World Cup to be held in South Africa. Since its inception, Global Action Week has been growing exponentially from 2 million people participating in 2003, to close to 14 million in 2009.



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