

Shalom/UN-NGO Newsletter

Volume 11, Issue 4

December 2010

Solidarity and Human Rights: A Call for an Attitude of Ongoing Learning and Transformation by S. Marinez Capra (SP)



From personal experience and ministering as an SSND, I strongly believe transformative education is the key to learning how to be in “solidarity with” and to respect human rights wherever we are, in whatever we do. In our growing we have experienced how to become persons of solidarity, humanized through overcoming sufferings and struggling for a life of dignity for ourselves and others.

The processes of humanization and transformation are understood as continuous learning. It is learning to know from life experiences, learning to make things better, learning to live together, and learning to make choices for which life comes first, that transforms us into persons of solidarity and impels us to act to change the world.

By grounding our living and our actions in an attitude of ongoing learning and searching for ways to make life better for all, solidarity and human rights become a way of life for us in mission. In prayer I ask the living God, that:

Before the right to life, give us wisdom to defend and protect life.

Before the right to shelter, strengthen us to struggle for housing and care for our common house, the planet.

Before the right to be unique, give us the sensitivity and openness to welcome diversity.

Before the right to freedom, give us autonomy and responsibility.

Before the right to enjoy the goods of Earth, give us a heart that shares and cares for creation.

Before the right to security, give us peace.

Before the right to education, give us courage and creativity to offer transformative education for all.

Before the right to equality, give us grace to hold all in common.

Before the right to enjoy the benefits of human rights, give us a heart to act out of a spirit of solidarity.

Five Years to Go! by S. Eileen Reilly, Director of SSND UN-NGO Office

A new sense of urgency was felt by the leaders of the nations of the world as they came together at the United Nations Headquarters in New York for the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Summit in September.

Ten years ago, when world leaders agreed on eight MDGs, they allotted fifteen years to achieve these goals. Now, with only five years left, an evaluation of progress toward these goals led to an acknowledgement that one of the biggest obstacles is what has been labeled “intersecting inequalities.”

For example, although nations might point to an impressive growth in the rate of school enrollment overall, an analysis of the statistics can reveal that girls, who live in rural areas, and whose parents depend on them for financial assistance, actually have a decreased rate of school enrollment.

The MDG Summit served as a reminder that national statistics are not enough. They need to be broken down by gender, area, wealth, etc. UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, has launched a campaign called, *Five Years for Children*. Their goal is to see that the MDGs are achieved with equity. More information is available at the [UNICEF](#) website.

SSNDs in Kenya Give Vulnerable Children a Chance by S. Mary B. Odundo (AF)

The option for the needy is a priority, and like Mother Theresa, we use our meager resources so that others can simply live. Of particular concern are vulnerable children—those who experience or are prone to a threat of any kind within their environment. In Kenya, School Sisters of Notre Dame are instrumental in giving children a second chance for life.

The Kisumu Formation Community made it possible for a mother living with HIV/AIDS to start a small business of selling second-hand clothing which initially came from SSND communities. The profit made it possible for the woman to provide food options for her child, and as a result a child has been able to remain free of the HIV virus. Presently the community is considering how to assist another child from a nearby school where one sister serves. This child is in need of long term medical treatment.



Tens of thousands of children are orphaned or particularly vulnerable because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in regions of Kenya. School Sisters work with the local Christian communities in Nyalieng'a to identify orphans and other vulnerable children, who are often heads of households. Through Notre Dame Children Outreach the sisters carry out in-depth assessments and collaborate with others to respond to a variety of needs: food, education, medical assistance, guidance and counseling, and opportunities to improve agriculture. The desire is that more children will have a chance to live a full and healthy life.

The spirit of Blessed Theresa and the *Shalom* commitment to promote life, human dignity, and solidarity inspire us and stir into a flame the fire that brings new life for the most vulnerable in our society.

Praying, Celebrating, Living Peace by S. Roxanne Schares, International *Shalom* Coordinator

Several *Shalom* Contacts reported how the UN International Day of Peace September 21 was commemorated in their part of the world. In each place were heard commitments and actions for peace and non-violence and prayer for God's gift of peace to the world.

In Sierra Leone, West Africa the *Shalom* Club members of Lokomasama Secondary School led the morning school assembly in song and prayer. The Christian and Muslim students together prayed for 21 places in the world most troubled and lacking peace. At the end of the day, club members gathered in a classroom to pray the rosary for peace and conclude with the Muslim prayer for peace—salaam.

In Kenya, the *Shalom* Club at St. Francis Secondary School, Kiptere marked the day by being in solidarity with a marginalized group in the country. Through presentations to further understanding and change attitudes, commitments were made to reach out to others with love and peace. The Nyalieng'a and Nyabururu SSND communities commemorated the day by planting trees as a sign of new life of peace.

In Kenya, East Africa the members of the postulant community in Kisumu focused their entire day on peace. In the evening, everyone gathered at the peace pole to reflect and share on what it will take to weave peace. In procession they went to the chapel where one of the postulants gave a reflection on peace in the world. The other postulants held candles facing different directions as they prayed for our sisters in ministry throughout the world.



In Wilton, Connecticut more than 50 School Sisters, Wilton residents and staff members at the Belden Hill Road campus gathered together around a Peace Pole to pray for peace. During the ceremony, 14 staff members prayed the words “May Peace Prevail on Earth” in their native languages, and buttons with those words were given out to everyone at the ceremony.

At the Academy of the Holy Angels in Demarest, New Jersey, the school community began their day by gathering in the auditorium to pray for peace and to rededicate their Peace Pole. During lunch everyone was invited to the Peace Pole to sign the peace pledge—to do all they can to keep peace in their hearts and share the spirit of peace in their homes and community. Teachers incorporated meditation exercises and the theme of peace into their lessons.

The Global Justice and Peace Commission at Notre Dame Elm Grove, Wisconsin sponsored the SSND Public Prayer for Peace. Hundreds of people, ages ten to ninety, gathered for a common prayer for peace. Sisters and staff, students from nearby schools, and others from the neighborhood shared peace reflections, readings, and creative movement.

In Slovenia, sisters in most of communities prayed with the September International Solidarity Reflection on peace and spoke about this theme in their community gatherings. The teachers celebrated the day in religion classes through prayer and workshops, inviting students to commit to do something for peace. Several SSND communities made a commitment to participate in the campaign “101 Days of Prayer for Peace in Sudan”.

STAND UP!

At over 2,038 events in seventy-four countries around the world, thousands of people participated in “Stand Up: End Poverty Now” actions September 17-19, 2010.

In New York City, S. Mary Lynch (AM) was one of several participants of the ONE Campaign against Global Poverty who was shown as an audience member on the Today television show. Sisters Roxanne Schares, Ann Scholz, and Eileen Reilly took a break from their planning meeting to join the Stand Up event in Lincoln Center.

On Friday, September 17 The school community at the Academy of the Holy Angels in Demarest, New Jersey “Stood Up, Took Action and Made Noise” in solidarity with the School Sisters of Notre Dame and millions of people around the world to show support for the fight against poverty and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals

(MDGs). Cheerleaders and Just Angels Club representatives led a recommitment to the Millennium Development Goals. All were then invited to sign a petition to President Obama, asking him to fulfill the U.S. commitment to meeting these goals through his support of the Global Fund.

Please let us know if you participated in a Stand Up event in your area; write to ssndunngo@gmail.com.

Announcements

101 Days of Prayer for a Peaceful Referendum in Sudan campaign invites the international community to join in solidarity with the people of Sudan at this important time in their history. The referendum vote for unity or cessation in Southern Sudan will be a new moment in the history of Sudan. The vote will take place on January 9, 2011.



Solidarity with Southern Sudan in collaboration with Catholic Relief Services, the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference, and Catholic Aid for Overseas Development initiated the 101 days of prayer and peace building activities from the UN International Day of Peace September 21, 2010 to the World Day of Peace January 1, 2011.

The peace prayer, a booklet of prayers and reflections, and other materials are available on the Solidarity with Southern Sudan website: www.solidarityssudan.org.

Speak Up: Stop Discrimination is the theme for Human Rights Day, December 10. This day can be an occasion for all of us to recall the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), and the promises it contains. December 10 information is available on www.gerhardinger.org.

It Is Not Too Late to register to attend one of the UN Commission meetings in 2011. The Commission on Social Development in February will consider the theme of "Poverty Eradication". The Commission on the Status of Women at the end of February will deal with educating women for science and technology and eliminating violence against girls. See www.gerhardinger.org for information about these and other commissions.