

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
New life...
Promise of fruits to come...



**"You did not choose me but I chose you,
And I appointed you to go and bear fruit,
fruit that will last."**



TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN AND CHILDREN

UNANIMA International has undertaken an 'Anti-Demand' Campaign to address the demand for trafficking of women and Children for sexual exploitation. According to this organization, "Human trafficking for sexual exploitation is the greatest illicit global slavery of today caused by the growing demand for victims of commercial sex. The link between **trafficking for sexual exploitation** and **prostitution** is irrefutable. Both realities are rooted in poverty and the structural inequalities between men and women. *UNANIMA International* advocates uprooting the demand for trafficked women and children for sexual exploitation as a significant step to eliminating the crime of human trafficking.



On September 20, 2006, the U.N. Human Rights Council heard a presentation by **Ms. Sigma Huda**, Special Reporter on the human rights aspects of the victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children. Her report, covering the period January-December 2005, was divided into three sections. While section one outlines the Reporter's activities during the reporting period, sections two and three are devoted to a thematic study on the relationship between trafficking and the demand for commercial sexual exploitation, followed by conclusions and recommendations. Among the recommendations are information, education and advocacy campaigns.

Here are concrete facts, which clearly indicate the relevancy of this recommendation, and the importance of assuring information that is accurate and adapted to the targeted clientele. A sister of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, Sr. Marie Patricia Plumb, from Academy of Holy Names, Tampa, Florida, writes : "A seventh grade class helped to discover a case of human trafficking in its own parish community because

the students had the information explained to them in their language, at their level of understanding. In fact, it is of prime importance that the language be adapted to those we wish to sensitize. This was once again confirmed in a testimony given by a High School student. He admits : "I never understood what they were talking about until I heard the speaker explain it all in personal terms (someone from the US Foreign Service with actual experience in the field)." ¹

The two main causes, poverty and gender inequality, are what nourishes the demand according to *UNANIMA International* according to the Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. This report is now in second reading before the Canadian Senate. ²

Prayer intentions and actions to take to overcome this scourge...

¹ Inter mission Nov.-Dec. 2006 , Vol. 19 no 4

² *Turning outrage into action to address trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Canada*, Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, p. 9 and 11



WATER

According to most of the traditional visions of the world, water is part of the common good. Sharing water generously has been recognized as an established custom, even in regions where it is scarce. As we know, not all countries have an abundance of water like in most regions of North America. But danger is looming: can we imagine that one day, we too could be among those who have less?...

It is true that pressures continue to increase so that water will be considered as a "common good" that can be privatized and commercialized advantageously. In 1990, fifty one million people were receiving their domestic water from private companies. In 2003, this number rose to more than three hundred million. The tendency towards the privatization of water is growing based on a wide range of accords, commercial policies and investments. When the takeover of public services such as the distribution of water is taken by private interests services, the poor and vulnerable people risk losing access to the water they need.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank are not innocent in this movement: they encourage it by loan conditions that they grant and the type of projects they support. Furthermore, actual international commercial accords, negotiated by the World Business Organization (OMC), promote the privatization of water supply systems.

This reminds us that the "neo-liberal" economic ideology, which promotes free markets constraints, minimal rules for companies and limited government involvement in the economy, is supported by policies largely determined by rich industrial nations.

March 22

Water World Day...

*How I appreciate you,
my sister, Water !*

Water is also threatened by climatic changes, pollution and exploitation. We do not have great means to remedy these situations. However, small simple actions can contribute to the conservation of water: for example, not letting the tap run needlessly, using a shower rather than a bath, filling the washing machine with a good load of clothes, etc. If you know of other means... why not share them with us?

Inspired by "Water:Life before Profit. Report from Justice, Globalization and Ecumenical Relations to the 39th General Council." August 2006, and retaken in Aujourd'hui Credo -November 2006, p. 4 and ss.)

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The Social Justice Committee of the Esther Blondin Province (Quebec) invited the sisters and the SSA associates to celebrate water on the "22" of each month.

A sister in the infirmary was wondering what means would help her to praise God and to celebrate the gift of

water

She decided to post beautiful scenes of water in her room to thank God for this very precious gift and to pray that all the people on earth will have the water they need to live.

Former Haitian Child Slave at UN
Feb. 22 - March 10, 2007
From Marie Zarowny, SSA

According to UNICEF there are currently over 300,000 child slaves (restaveks) in Haiti. These children are usually given at a very young age (7 years old) to a family in the city with the hope that in exchange for some help in the home they will be able to go to school and have enough to eat. The reality is very different: most rise very early in the morning; walk great distances to fetch water which they carry on their heads and are beaten if any spills; spend the day going to the market, cleaning, preparing food; and finally drop off to sleep after the others have gone to bed. They don't go to school, are fed only scraps, if that; often have no place to sleep except beside the door with the dog; have only rags to wear; and are abused physically, emotionally and often sexually. Their birth parents often live in rural areas and it is extreme poverty that drives them to send their children away. Living at such a distance they usually have no idea of the conditions in which their children are living.

The theme of the UN's 51st Commission on the Status of Women (Feb. 26 - March 09, 2007) was discrimination and violence against the girl-child and money was available to bring girls under the age of 18, who had experienced violence, to this session of the UN. While in Haiti in the fall, I explored the possibility of identifying a restavek or former restavek child who would go to the UN and speak of her experience. Thanks to the collaboration of our Sisters of St Ann in Haiti as well as the movement called MVM, which works for the integral liberation of 1078 restaveks, we did it! Roodnir Joseph, 15, who had been a restavek for 5 years and who now lives with her birth family, goes to school, and works with MVM to help liberate other restaveks, was chosen. Renise Alce, General Administrator of MVM who has worked with restavek children for 22 years, came as her adult companion. Renise speaks French and Creole and understands some English; Roodnir speaks only Creole and understands some French. Sister Therese Proulx, SSA, who had served 10 years in Haiti, joined us for the full 17 days to help them feel somewhat at home and to provide very necessary translation. Therese also brought an assortment of warm clothing for them to don as soon as they arrived at the airport, which in itself was a truly thrilling moment!



(From left to right : Renise Alce and Roodnir Joseph)



They came early to participate in various orientation meetings. We started the day after their arrival, with a meeting at the UNANIMA office, going to the UN to get our passes and speaking to a group from Franciscans International. On Day 2, Roodnir and Renise went to an all day meeting with the other participants who were under the age of 18. On Day 3, Roodnir was part of the welcome at a consultation with other NGO delegates who had come from every continent. On Day 6, Roodnir participated on a panel, attended by over 100 people, on Sexual Exploitation. On Day 7, Renise and Roodnir were part of a panel on Violence, again attended by about 100 people.

From left to right : Roodnir, Sr. Marie Zarowny, Sr. Thérèse Proulx and Renise



The days were packed with new experiences and learnings. Both Roodnir and Renise learned first-hand how the UN works and how NGO's can influence the outcome of proceedings. They also learned about conditions in other parts of the world and what is being done by various organizations to improve the lives of women and girls. Most days,

Roodnir met with the other young people to provide input from their perspective into the discussions that were taking place.



(From left to right: Sr. Thérèse Proulx, Renise Alce, The Haitian Minister for the Status of Women, Roodnir Joseph and Sr. Marie Zarowny)

Additional meetings were scheduled with the Haitian Ambassador to the UN, the Haitian Minister for the Status of Women and the Regional Representative of UNICEF for Latin America and the Caribbean. Each provided opportunities for further networking and follow-up meetings with MVM back in Haiti.

We did manage to have some fun, especially on the weekend, when we joined a New York family for an ice-skating expedition.

None of this would have happened if we were not part of the UNANIMA International coalition. UI also brought 4 other people to this session, a 14-year old from Togo with her chaperone and two women from Peru. Those from Togo also spoke French so we did a bit more with them but all of us met together several times.

This project was one of my last activities as SSA representative on the Unanima International Board. I truly felt it was a "congregational" project, with the direct personal involvement of our Sisters in Haiti, St. Marie's Province, St. Joseph Province and, of course, the General Administration and Congregational Social Justice Team. I want to give special thanks to Sister Renette Damas, who "shepherded" Renise and Roodnir through their visa appointment, bought their plane tickets and took them to the airport; Sister Michelle Joseph, who helped with the communications, especially once I returned to Canada; and Sister Bernadette Goda, who helped me sort out what was needed for the visa appointment. We couldn't have managed in NYC without Therese Proulx's assistance in so many ways. "Mesi anpil" to all! I also want to acknowledge Sister Marthe and the other team members at MVM who did so much to help prepare Roodnir and Renise for this experience and who then had to do without them during their time in NYC. I pray that in some way the experience will be fruitful for their continuing ministry with restavek children.

Did you know that ?...

- The Canadian Government is also moving. In December 2006, a report of the sub-committee, examining laws regarding soliciting, was tabled and this could lead to a law on the legalization of prostitution... In February 2007, the permanent committee for the status of women deposited a report entitled: "From indignation to action to counter the trafficking of women for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Canada." However, pay close attention: these two reports do not present prostitution in the same way... Therefore, to be continued, especially if federal elections are announced in the near future.
- Consolata Missionary Sister Eugenia Bonetti, received the award "Woman of Courage" for her efforts to combat human trafficking. The award is signed by the U.S. ambassador to the Holy See, Francis Rooney. A letter from Paula Dobransky, U.S. undersecretary for democracy and global affairs, says : "We honor you for your exceptional courage and leadership. Your achievements have helped to create transformative change within your country and have set a positive example for emerging women leaders worldwide."
- The Sisters of Saint Anne (St. Marie Province) have endorsed the upcoming *Interfaith Summit for Immigrant Justice*, to be held April 12, 2007, at the State House. The purpose of this summit is to expand understanding, support and advocacy for immigrant members of congregations and communities. This event is important to support, as it has the potential to benefit the lives of thousands of individuals, families, colleagues and communities across the Commonwealth.
(Friday Afternoon, St Marie Province, March 9, 2007, # 5)

Happy Easter Season!

May the Joy of Christ

nourish your commitment!

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