



SISTERS
OF THE PRESENTATION
of the Blessed Virgin Mary



Stand Together
and spend yourselves for the poor

JUSTICE UPDATE – MARCH 2007

TRAFFICKING OF GIRLS

“Trafficking in persons’ shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation or the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.” (Article 3, UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime)

Saman was born in rural Iran where half the population lives below the poverty line. She lives amidst no music and no social activity in her country. She is the eldest of two siblings. Her parents work on the small acreage but this year their crop was destroyed. This leaves the family with little to eat and they are very poor. At twelve, Saman is involved in housework. While visiting her father, a kind man in the area promises a well-paying job for Saman to work as a housemaid in a nearby city. Her ignorant dad agrees and her parents are assured that she will be sending back money once she is working. Saman is thrilled that she will be able to help her family and know that they will have food with her help. When she reaches the city, she is taken to a big mansion but the job is not what she expected. Instead of being paid for her work, she is treated as a slave and confined to the mansion. Fortunately, Saman is rescued and returned to her family after about a year.

CONNECTIONS

Affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care, and economic opportunity. (Earth Charter, #11)

We strengthen our Justice Network to work for structural change especially in issues related to: women and children, Indigenous peoples, ...and human rights. (Portion of IPA directions for mission)

REFLECTION

The United Nations estimates about two million girls (ages 5-15) are initiated into the commercial sex industry each year. Sexual exploitation occurs not only in the sex industry but also in families and local villages. An example of this is forced marriages due to settling of conflicts, debt payment, falsified marriages, or parents unknowingly thinking that the girl will be given employment and be a source of income for the family. Childhood exploitation often leads young girls into the commercial sex industry if they don't begin there. This process points to one of the connections between sexual exploitation of girls and the abuse and disempowerment of women.

How do we stop this violence to girls? What are potential solutions? Among the solutions are public education describing the risks of trafficking, advocating for legislation, training programs for governments to hold traffickers accountable, enabling women toward financial independence, engaging men and boys in respecting and upholding the rights of girls and women, and implementation of protective conventions from the United Nations.

ACTIONS

1. H. Res. 121 expresses the sense of the House of Representatives that the Government of Japan should formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for its Imperial Armed Force's coercion of young women into sexual slavery, known to the world as 'comfort women', during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II. Urge your Representative to co-sponsor and/or support this bill.

2. From Jubilee Debt Campaign in UK: Donegal International sued Zambia, one of the poorest countries in the world, for millions of dollars - but in an important legal ruling, got less than it asked for and had its witnesses described by the judge as "dishonest". Donegal bought this debt cheaply when Zambia was already eligible for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries scheme. It is now seeking to extract money from a country that is internationally recognized as needing debt cancellation. Take action at <http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk/?lid=2893>

3. Senators McCain and Kennedy are seeking to introduce comprehensive legislation on immigration that is significantly different than last year. The bill, in outline format, includes a process whereby those currently here illegally could obtain permanent status, an increase in the number of guest workers, better border security and aggressive enforcement of laws against hiring illegal individuals and a stringent deportation process. Unclear details include which undocumented workers would be eligible for temporary legal status and which could apply for permanent legal status and potentially US citizenship, and what penalty would exist for illegal immigrants before granting them legal status as a debt to society for breaking US immigration laws. Urge your legislators to support reforms in the US legal immigration system that are comprehensive and lack punitive behaviors.

We want to urge legislators to pass comprehensive legislation this year.