

# Asia Pacific Justice Peace Network

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd



## *Our Heartfelt Congratulations to our New Leaders!*



**Sr. Mary Francine Muthugala**

*Province Leader of  
Sri Lanka / Pakistan*



**Sr. Bridget Paily**

*Province Leader of  
South West India*



**Sr. Sabina Pathrose**

*Province Leader of  
Central East India / Nepal*

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Dear Mission Partners,

We take this opportunity to congratulate our new leaders in the region. Reports on the '16 days' campaign in the various locations follow. Sr. Lakana writes on 'A dream comes true' and Sr. Angeline on an exposure program for volunteers to Pehon, Myanmar. Thanks Arthur for the fresh look to the newsletter.

Enjoy reading!

*Gloria – Coordinator of APJP Network*

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# 16 days of activism to end violence against women and girls

## In Sri Lanka / Pakistan Province

### “Winning Back The Night”

\_\_\_\_\_ To commemorate International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on 25 November 2013, the Good Shepherd Sisters, Sri Lanka / Pakistan Province, together with other women groups joined in the “Winning Back The Night” walk. The event was aimed at increasing women’s freedom of mobility by recognizing their right to be in public places devoid of sexual harassment. This event was held in Colombo 08, Borella. The posters were composed by the participants. The night was lighted with candles, light buckets, and fire “pandams”. A single bangle never jingles, so we walked together in order to raise a strong voice against violence against women and girls.



### Girls employed at factories in the free trade zone

\_\_\_\_\_ Good Shepherd Service Centre provides residence to girls who come from the rural areas of Sri Lanka seeking employment at the factories in the FTZ. A programme was conducted to energize and empower these girls towards ending violence against women.



### **“Orange Their World” by girls from St. Euphrasia’s home for rehabilitation**

\_\_\_\_\_Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread violations of human rights. How can we prevent and stop it? The workshop for the girls was focused on their rights as human beings, and how as women we should stand to gain our own rights. This workshop was an eye-opener for them. It was conducted by Srs. Niluka, Shamindan and Surani.



### **The Contemplative Sisters conducted a prayer service for their weekly prayer partners to raise awareness and plead before our Shepherd God to end violence against women and girls.**



### **The Sisters of Nayakakanda community in solidarity with women and girls whose rights have been violated.**



### **The Sisters at Nisaladiya Sevana, Negombo conducted an awareness programme for the girls**

\_\_\_\_\_The Sisters at Nisaladiya Sevana, Negombo, organized an awareness program on violence against women and children on the 06th December 2013. Mr. Manoj Samarasekara the Colombo OIC for the Unit of women and children was the resource person. He shared how the women and children are ill treated by their family and the society. He also spoke about the dignity and value of women and children and how they need to become more responsible citizens with an awareness of their worth and dignity. He guided the participants to face life and develop positive self esteem. Twenty five participants attended the programme. †



# 16 days of activism to end violence against women and girls

## In Macau

### Public screening to raise awareness of sex trafficking

The Good Shepherd Centre, Macau marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women with the public screening of a gripping and eye-opening documentary, "Nefarious: Merchant of Souls". It was to raise an awareness about one of the worst forms of violence against women – sex trafficking. Two other screenings were shown on December 1st and 10 which marks International Human Rights Day. The documentary reveals the shocking physical and psychological degradation that millions of women all over the world are subjected to due to the demands of the greed-driven sex industry.

Human trafficking has risen to be the second largest source of income for international organised crime, along with drug trade, surpassed only by trafficking in weapons. Sexual exploitation of women and children ranks numerically as the highest form of human trafficking.

Sr. Juliana Devoy, Director of the Centre said, "This universal problem also exists in Macau. Women are mainly sold to Macau for prostitution. They are forced or cheated to come here, with the hopes of finding a job." She believes that everyone

can "do something" about human trafficking. "By showing our concerns about human trafficking, we have different roles to play and in different ways. If everybody is concerned, something will have to change." †



# 16 days of activism to end violence against women and girls

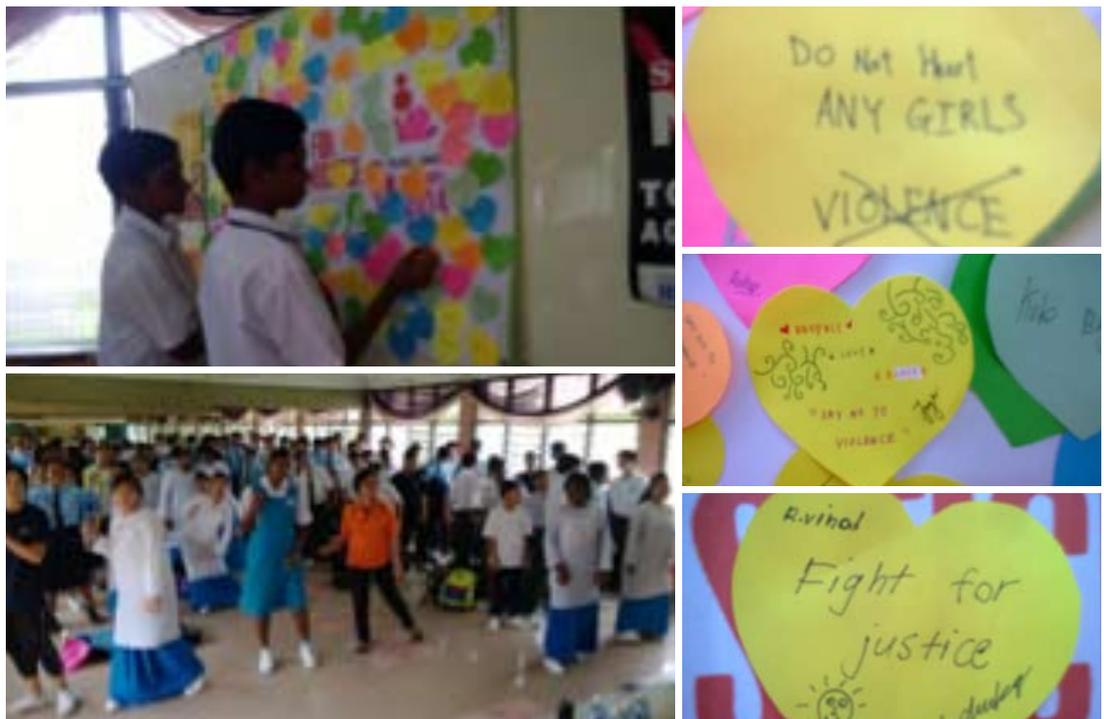
## In Malaysia

### Kuala Lumpur

\_\_\_\_\_ Rising For Justice! One Billion Rising is a global campaign to end violence against women and to promote gender equality. There are 7 billion people on the planet. Half are women. One third of them are raped or beaten. It is a call for one billion women and men around the world to join together to dance in a show of collective strength. This year the campaign took place on 14 February.

The staff and volunteers at the Teenage Centre organized a session for 200 secondary students, boys and girls, in SMK, Hulu Kelang. They were informed of the campaign and were given a piece of coloured paper on which they expressed their personal pledge to stop violence against women and girls. These pledges were pasted on a huge banner. They then learnt the "One Billion Rising" dance.

Before they departed for home, white ribbons were pinned on to their uniforms. These were made by the residents of the Centre. Wearing a white ribbon symbolizes a personal pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls. Some of the students took extra white ribbons for their family and friends. Leaflets containing information about the campaign and Good Shepherd help lines were made available to them.



## Ipoh

The children at the Rose Virginie Good Shepherd Centre were given examples of violent behaviors to help them to understand the term 'violence'. These examples also helped to trigger the children's memories. They shared their experiences of violence either within themselves or their families. They also shared stories where they recalled seeing violent behaviors of others that left them fearful. These issues were further reflected on during the individual counseling sessions.

Following this they put their handprints on a mahjong paper and they wrote on a piece of paper one thing they would do to break this cycle of violence. All the children promised to stop one of their violent behaviors such as throwing things, shouting, beating, and scolding. The mahjong paper was then hung in a prominent place to remind all of them of their promises to break the cycle of violence.

Special stickers were pasted on the sandwich boxes which were sold at Unisem, Carsem and Heart Gift shops. White ribbons and flyers were distributed to customers who patronised the shops.



### Kota Kinabalu, Sabah

\_\_\_\_\_The highlight of the launch was when each participant was asked to pick a balloon and inflate it. They were then asked to write one word to describe one of the many forms of violence suffered by women and children.

The balloons were then tied together on a string and the male participants were invited to break the balloons to symbolize their strong opposition to these violations that are committed every day. The campaign was thus officially launched.



About 150 women, men, and children came forward to support the white ribbon and signature campaign to end violence against women and children.

### Tulid, Sabah

\_\_\_\_\_The campaign started with an introduction to “The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence.” This was followed by sharing from each participant on their understanding of violence in relation to their own experiences in the family and community, and how they could be a support for each other.

A talk on Human Trafficking was conducted on the next day. Besides an understanding of the topic, it also included the preventive measures that the villagers can take to prevent their community from falling victims to traffickers. A prayer session for all women and children who have experienced violence was arranged. There was also a group discussion on “16 things they can do to stop violence against women and children” and how they could implement these steps in their community.

The participants were enlightened on how women can protect themselves in the event of domestic violence and how the community can offer support to stop violence against women and children.

There were about 150 participants comprising of women, men and children who came forward to support the signature campaign to end violence against women and children. †



## *A dream comes true!*

*In Thailand  
by Sr.Lakana Sukhsuchit, rgs*

\_\_\_\_\_What a wonderful day the 6th December 2013 was for the Good Shepherd Sisters, staff, volunteers and especially the children with the opening of our new school.

Bishop Pratan officially opened and blessed the school. This was followed by Mass. The school was alive with the colour and perfume from the many beautiful flower arrangements. Our friends worked so hard on them.

Lunch was an adventure for the taste buds with such a variety of food to choose from. The children had a fun filled afternoon with an endless supply of candy floss and ice cream. They enjoyed playing on the giant trampoline, donated by our "Grumpy Old Men's Society" along with other sports equipment. The children now have a grassy area to run around in and to enjoy.

The school has an enrolment of about 120 children now. Their ages range from 3 -13 years. They learn 3 languages: Thai, Burmese and English, along with other subjects.

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The Good Shepherd Centre has been handed back to the pregnant women who live there while awaiting the birth of their babies, and such beautiful babies too! The Centre is also used by Burmese people who have health problems, some of them quite serious, who come to receive medication, support and understanding on a monthly basis. We also do community visits 3 times weekly. We monitor their health, check their blood pressure, give medication, advice and help pregnant women with vitamins and other medications.

Of course, there are always children with some problem or another. We monitor the children monthly: weight, height and general well being in our nutrition scheme. It is such a pleasure to see them blooming and in good health; we feel that this is a very important part of our role.

When the need arises we make hospital visits to see consultants. Financial help is always needed for people with various health problems so we attend to them to fully understand their needs. Sometimes it is confusing for them due to the lack of understanding the Thai language or the diagnosis.

We have regular volunteers who come from Denmark. There are generally 4 of them who give their time helping to teach English and helping with community visits. This year we welcome for the first time 3 volunteers from Ireland.

We appreciate the support of our friends and benefactors without which we could never have achieved our dream of a new school. With this the children will have a brighter future. May you and all your family continue to enjoy good health and have a very happy Christmas. We thank you from the very bottom of our hearts. †



## Reaching out beyond boundaries

### Volunteers from the Malacca-Johor Diocesan Migrant Ministry visit Myanmar ( 3 – 11 December 2013 )

*by Sr Angeline Lau, rgs*

\_\_\_\_\_An exposure program was organised for the volunteers who work closely with the migrants in the Diocese of Malacca-Johor (MJD) Malaysia. Many of the migrants whom they work with are from Pekhon which is in the Southern Shan State of Myanmar. The objective of the program is to enable the volunteers to have a deeper understanding of the context of the people they serve.



*From left - 4 Pekhon migrant returnees from Johor, Sr Angeline rgs,, Fr Augustine, volunteers from MJD and Fr. Felice ( extreme right ) Fr Augustine and Fr Felice were in MJD to serve the Myanmar community for Easter and Christmas for the past 2 years*

#### The spirit connects.....

##### What did I see in Pekhon?

- Mountainous and rough plains and villages with very poor infrastructure
- Land aplenty with tired looking farmers toiling their land with the assistance of cattle
- Bullock carts, ponies and motorcycles as means of transportation. Many travel by foot
- Sights of aimless youths hoping to be employed.
- Scores of school going children in slippers and incomplete school uniform. Very few schools.
- No hotels/guest houses in sight

##### What did I hear when in Pekhon?

- Pekhon was a black listed area but opened to foreign visitors recently
- Villagers have to travel six hours to gain access to the nearest hospital where supply of medicine is limited. Cost of medicines borne by the patients. High fatality rate of women and children due to malaria, typhoid, influenza, tuberculosis or malnutrition
- Many school dropouts due to financial position
- All parishes to provide boarding hostels for orphans and very poor children so as to enable them to access elementary/high school. Funds needed to maintain the boarding hostels and existing wooden chapels.

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### Some observations...

- The commitment and zeal of priests attending to the faithful in the outskirts. Priests have to travel long distances to carry out their pastoral duties.
- The simple lifestyle of the priests who are mission focused, faith-filled and have greatly trusted God's providence in all things.
- The thoughtfulness of the village folks who provide little huts with containers of water for passersby to rest and drink while on a long journey by foot.
- The people find enduring hope and solace through their faith in God and Mother Mary

Through my encounter with the people at Pekhon, the Spirit beckons me to reach out...in love and compassion beyond the boundaries of the Malacca-Johor Diocese, to give hope and make the Christmas message, "God With Us" tangible in the lives of the poor in Pekhon.

### Sharings from volunteers

#### MY EXPERIENCE - CPChan

On arrival at the rocky hill site, Ave Maria, Pekhon, the statue of Mother Mary stood tall and graceful, overlooking the shores of Inle Lake and flanked by the surrounding hill villages. The 7 meter high icon of Mother Mary is the largest I have ever seen.

Joining the multitudes of pilgrims in attendance on the Feast of Immaculate Conception, I felt that we were just one big family, gathered by Mother Mary. Never have I been carried away by this awesome atmosphere to honour Mother Mary with great devotion and intensity.



*Aporkone - Our Lady of Fatima Chapel*



*Similao - Infant Jesus Chapel*

We visited a few poor parishes and parish run boarding hostels for children. They are all in need of funds to improve the living conditions of the children. At Aporkone and Similao villages, the age old wooden chapels are in very poor condition. The villagers hope that they can replace these with concrete chapels. I am blessed and grateful to be included in this invaluable and enriching exposure.

### Sharings from volunteers

#### SEEN, SHARED and ACTED - Joseph

I saw the helpless poor and frail under-nourished children in the villages living together in joy, sorrow, in harmony and as a community. I have never seen people living in such poverty. I was moved with compassion at their plight and gave a small contribution towards the orphanage and boarding hostels which I am aware is far from sufficient. More help is required for their basic needs. At the same time, I saw the richness of their faith and spirituality. I was touched by their enthusiastic participation and reverence during the Eucharistic celebration.

#### ALLOW ME TO BE THEIR VOICE - Margaret

When I looked around I could sense a lost and neglected world in my midst, our brothers and sisters suffering in silence, living in poverty and oppression which they have endured all these years. There is little opportunity for them under such suppressed environment and all that sustains them is hope.



*Kuntha boarders under Fr Timothy*



*Receiving Christmas goodies before leaving for school*



*Sacred Heart boarders and orphans under Fr Augustine Ko. A Christmas party was organised for them.*

The church in the Diocese of Pekhon has taken the responsibility of running boarding hostels and orphanages for children of all ages who are orphaned, needing care and who are in situations of abject poverty. I saw joy and innocent smiles on their faces when little gifts were distributed to them during our Christmas party. They were so grateful for the little that they received. It is a constant struggle for the parish priest to find the financial resources to sustain this service.

I believe that our kindness in contributing towards the up keep of the boarding hostels will go a long way in making a positive difference in the life of these children. The best blessings that we can ask for ourselves is helping others especially the less fortunate. †