



....the cries of women....

Book 1



Compiled by
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Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
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The picture on the front cover was taken at the doorstep of a Good Shepherd shelter. It depicts the emptiness in the hearts of the women who had experienced painful struggles in their lives.

*“Our commitment to reconciliation
demands that we promote
justice and peace ...”*

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....exploited, sexually assaulted, stranded....

Fourteen ladies in their mid twenties arrived in Malaysia from Myanmar in 2 groups. The first group of 8 arrived on 29 September 2008 and the second on 13 January 2009. They were employed in a garment factory where they worked from 8.30am till 12am with an hour's break in between for lunch. Overtime pay was refused and huge sums of money were deducted from their usual pay, for example, RM500 for four months for their working permits and other levies. They received less than RM200 on some occasions and they did not receive any pay slips. Their passports and other documents were held by their employer. They were trafficked in labour!

Complaints from the ladies fell on deaf ears. Instead, the employer, his wife and five men, one of whom impersonated as a police constable arrived at their workplace one morning. The constable instructed a body search. All the ladies were sexually assaulted and they were warned that if they made any further complaints about anything they would lose their jobs. The ladies were terrified! That evening the men followed them back to their hostel. They did not turn up for work the next day.

On the following day, the employer took the 14 ladies in a van and left them stranded along the highway. They were told to fend for themselves and in the event that they were caught by the police they were not to contact him. Luckily one of them was able to contact a friend who came to their aid. They were rescued and referred to the Good Shepherd Sisters for shelter. Although the Sisters do not have an existing shelter in Kuala Lumpur they agreed to take them in. An ad hoc one was set up and a committee to oversee to their needs was formed.

Day by day the ladies grew in confidence under the care of the Good Shepherd Sisters and their volunteers. During their stay of 6 months they were given counselling, spiritual guidance and language lessons. Recreational activities were also organised. From the micro enterprise projects which were arranged for them they were able to earn some money to send home to their families who had borrowed huge sums of money for them to travel to Malaysia.

The fourteen waited in vain for the return of their passports so that they could start life again as documented persons. Referring parties assigned to retrieve the passports had their limitations when faced with an unsupportive bureaucratic system coupled with time constraints arising from the many other cases they were handling. After 6 months of futile waiting and with mounting debts back home in Myanmar, the ladies made the brave decision to strike out on their own without their passports. Their only defence at this

moment are police reports on their experiences at the hands of their unscrupulous employers.

At the farewell lunch, Sr. Susan Chia, Province Leader of Singapore - Malaysia said to them, "When the Good Shepherd Sisters were asked to shelter you, we were afraid as we had no experience but we said that we must try. Together with some volunteers we made this place your home.

Now you have a Good Shepherd Mission and that is to go out there and help those who are lost and need help. God gave you a second chance and you must do the same for others.

Sometimes when I have difficulties I remember you as yours are ten thousand times more difficult than mine. In the last 6 months you encouraged me greatly and gave me hope. The Good Shepherd Sisters and I will work harder and do more for others like you.

Go forth; be a light to love and when you continue to love, God will take care of you. Always pray to God and to St Mary Euphrasia."

Each of the ladies expressed their heartfelt gratitude and thanks to all who have helped them. Tears of sadness were evident on each of their faces as they bid farewell to all who have given them much love and attention. As Florida of Tenaganita, an NGO which worked on the case put it, "The smiles and glow on the faces of the 14 ladies show that they have been well taken care of in the shelter. Well done!"

....duped by own brother....

A social worker knows no time ... she must be ready and willing at any time to sacrifice many things to respond to a soul that is crying out for help and protection.

Mina, 26, a high school graduate from Sumba in Indonesia was a good, beautiful, diligent and intelligent woman with healthy relationships. Her future looked promising as she had a good job, good lifestyle and was working in Jakarta for some years. Mina was sociable and was active in church activities. She often helped her friends in trouble and she once helped a friend who was pregnant outside of marriage.

Mina faced a big problem she never dreamt about. It happened when PT. SEKAR SETIA, the agent for migrant workers asked her and some her friends to go to Singapore. They were first brought to Batam. The agent had promised that they would be sent to Singapore to work as domestic workers. They were trained to do household work as they await their turn to be sent to Singapore. When nothing happened after 2 months Mina tried to buy a ticket to go back to Jakarta but was caught by the agent.

She was disappointed and angry and with prolonged stress wanted to run away but could no longer do so as she became sick and was losing consciousness. She began experiencing hallucinations and a loss of memory.

Sadly it was her own brother who made promises that she would have a brighter future if she had worked in another country. He made the arrangements for her.

The person in charge of the shelter where she was, was confused and did not know what to do with the sick Mina while her boss was in Singapore. She asked the Priest of the nearby Parish to pray for Mina who looked empty and kept silent. By this time she would not talk, eat, or shower. The Parish Priest invited the Good Shepherd Sisters to visit Mina.

When the Sister visited Mina at the shelter she caught the necklace of the Sister and spoke suddenly, 'Yes ... where Sister hood? ...' She began to speak, then remembering only her own name. She showed her rosary and they prayed together and this brought a smile back to her face.

Her friends wondered about the sudden changes. When the Sister and her companions said goodbye to her she wanted to go along with them. All who were there promised to visit again the next day. The next morning the Sister visited Mina again, this time wore a veil. Mina seemed happy to see her and

asked to take a bath. After that they went to the grotto of Mary in Bengkong Lubuk Baja with some concerned people, friends and the doctor to pray.

Mina received help from different doctors, a psychologist, a priest and some volunteers for four months from March to June 2008 before regaining her mental and physical health. She finally decided to return to her village in Samba. While she was recovering in the shelter, Mina was able to help in mentoring other victims of abuse who were in the shelter of Good Shepherd Sisters. Mina is now a survivor who helps other people in difficulties. She is currently studying in a University in Sumba.

....the girls from Atambua, Indonesia....

These 3 girls, Marinee 22 years old, Meryana 23 and Jhoanita 17 are from Belu Regency, Central Malacca district, the Village Kamanasa, NTT, Indonesia. Having very good intentions to help their families, they tried to get a job outside of the country as they were unable to find any in their village. One day the uncle of Jhoanita offered them a good job in Malaysia. With the help of a Migrant Workers agent, these 3 girls were sent to Jakarta with 6 other girls from Belu, Atambua, NTT on 23 June 2009.

Whilst in Jakarta they were placed in the shelter of the agent with other girls from the same region. At that time there were 29 girls, all from Atambua, NTT. They were there for more than a month. At the shelter the girls experienced verbal abuse, sexual harassment and were humiliated as "black" girls from NTT.

As these 3 girls were unable to bear the humiliation and sexual harassment, they decided to run away from the shelter. They were helped by a journalist who sent them to an NGO called "Peduli Buruh Migrant". The NGO in turn sought our help to return the girls to Atambua, NTT. The agent looked for them at the NGO and threatened it. They wanted the girls to be returned to them.

We, the Good Shepherd Sisters worked together with The Commission of Anti-Woman Trafficking. On 31 August 2009, the girls were evacuated to Bojonegara where they stayed for a month. They were given some skills training before returning to their village of origin.

....South American women trafficked into South Korea....

Good Shepherd Sister, Virginia Kim described the situation of a group of young women from South America who had been trafficked into South Korea. They were recruited in South America by an agent during a fashion parade in their country. This agent also has an agent in South Korea working for him. The women were promised a lot of money to work as fashion models in South Korea. The first two women arrived and were put up in a posh hotel. They had internet access and told their friends back home that they were treated well and were enjoying a good life in South Korea. Subsequently, two more women took the job offer and came over.

But when these two women arrived in South Korea, they found themselves in a very different situation. They were forced into prostitution! One of the women, Maria also discovered that she was pregnant. The traffickers insisted that Maria have an abortion or pay them a compensation of US\$4,000, a common choice faced by trafficked women in South Korea. She phoned her boyfriend in her home country and he encouraged her to return home, promising that he would marry her and help care for their baby. The other three women advised Maria not to abort the baby but to return home. While the other three women were taken away to work, Maria was left alone in the flat. She found a way to escape and managed to find her way to a police station.

The police asked the Good Shepherd Sisters to provide Maria with accommodation and support. Maria was welcomed into the Good Shepherd shelter. Many trafficked women whose dreams of making a fortune by working overseas have been shattered by unscrupulous trafficking syndicates. The Good Shepherd shelter has become home to women from many countries – not only from Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam, but also from Russia, China, Mongolia, and Nepal.

Maria was concerned for her other three friends who had been trafficked with her. She helped the police find her friends and their traffickers. The traffickers had driven the three women around South Korea in a van forcing them to have sex with between 5 and 10 men each night. When the police caught up with the traffickers, the four women gave detailed statements about the crimes committed against them but they decided not to stay in South Korea for the trial. They also refused to be interviewed by the media. The traffickers were convicted in a South Korean court.

....I felt like a withered leaf which I never ever can explain....

I am Linda from Mindanao. I am twenty-two years old, and am the 8th child among ten siblings, eight brothers and a sister. I am a high school graduate. My friend and I met Tony who came from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, while we were performing in a Live Band. Tony informed us of a job offer in Malaysia as a waitress with a salary of ten to fifteen thousand pesos a month, and that everything would be free. We would just repay the agent when we have the money. I was overjoyed that at last, I would be able to fulfill my promise to my mother to help her financially. After having waited for a week, I was shocked to know that our tickets were for Zamboanga, and not to Malaysia.

In Zamboanga we met Chris, who brought us to stay at a hotel where we were confined to the room while waiting for our passports to be processed. One evening, a man came to escort us to the boat at the pier, and a security guard of the boat gave us our passports shortly after the boat had left the shore. We were shocked - the passports had our pictures but we had different names! It was too late to do anything for we were already in the middle of the sea!

I was afraid and gave up all hope, for in my hands was surely a fake passport. At the Immigration Office in Sandakan, I was questioned, and was told that I could enter that time but would have to present my genuine passport for the next time. After which, at Joy's house, we were cordially greeted by her who called us "my friends." Then, she informed us that the place of our destination was changed to Kota Kinabalu instead of Kuala Lumpur.

After a few days, an old Chinese man and a young Chinese boy came to take our pictures. The following day, a Chinese tomboy who introduced herself as Nick, our guide came and together with Joy, they took us to a Hot Spa in Kota Kinabalu. At that moment, I felt anxious, apprehensive and suspicious – why did Joy not come along?

That very night, we started to work. Within the next twenty-four hours, the number of men who had sexual intercourse with me was eleven men in all! My body was aching all over, my body was destroyed! I felt like a withered leaf which I never ever can explain! Why and how in this world did I end up in this kind of work? At that moment what entered my mind was that there must be no God and God had abandoned me!

After our day's work at 2:00, we were sent back to the apartment by the driver, who locked us in and left. We waited till around 4:00 when we

executed our escape through an unlocked Fire Exit. Then, one of my companions contacted a friend who is a staff member in the Philippine Embassy for help. I experienced extreme tiredness and perspired a lot during that long journey, and also was afraid for I did not have my passport. Fate destined us to encounter the Police Patrol and God inspired one of the policemen to show us the way to the bus station where that friend would meet us. We arrived at the destination and I was delighted to meet her. Then, she took us to the office and we met Sir Finardo Cabilao, the Social Attaché of the Philippine Embassy. He promptly helped us to process our necessary documents, and also arranged to send us to a shelter run by the Good Shepherd Sisters while waiting for the court hearings.

At the shelter, I was able to “rest” after going through a painful, harrowing experience. After a month, I discovered that I was 4-months pregnant by my boyfriend in the Philippines. I was full of fear during the following months because I was continually bleeding and I did not know what would happen to me. I finally delivered my baby and upon check-up, the baby was found to have meningitis. Thanks be to God, my baby is well now because of the care that was given to her. Moreover, I have learned how to reflect on my life, how to begin life anew, especially now that I have a baby. I hope that Jesus will continue to enlighten me and give me the necessary strength to face life again.

However, I still wonder at what has happened to my life. Why is my baby sharing my painful and ugly experience? I ask myself many questions. Is this some kind of punishment from God? What wrong have I done? Is this a trial God sent me and would I be able to bear it – with all the hardships I experienced in Malaysia, the hardest and ugliest of all work that I know? It would have been better if I had died or that I was never born. Was I born in this life for this kind of experience? Am I meant for suffering?

My greatest fear is to know that I have contracted sexually transmitted infection (STI), and hope that what has happened to me will not happen to my child too. It’s my worst nightmare! I know I can forget the past, start anew, and move on in life. My only desire in life is the well-being of my family, and to be able to help them improve their life from the hardships they now endure. My prayer now is that when I go back to the Philippines, I will have a happy family life for the sake of my baby.

I was happy but also afraid when I learned that I had to testify in court. What gave me strength was my prayer to God to help me give clear answers when I was questioned. However, I was able to tell the truth in court without fear. To all those who have helped me I want to thank them and may they continue to give this important service to victims of trafficking.

....I was asked to have sex and made to work without food....

I am Belle, twenty-five years old and I come from Bulacan, Luzon. At the age of fifteen I conceived a child and eventually I entered into marriage without much thought. Ever since I have encountered endless battering from my husband who is habitually jobless and a drunkard. I was really tired of the family situation and had dreams of working abroad as a way to get out of my difficulties.

Last June, Gerlie my neighbor visited me with her friend, Marilyn whose sister is Mae, wife of a Chinese boss in Malaysia. Marilyn told me that I could work as a sales promoter at a mall in Malaysia and earn a big salary of twenty thousand pesos monthly excluding tips and allowances. I agreed to the job offer right away even though I was afraid for I had heard that Malaysia is a dangerous place to be in. I met Jhoey, a cousin of Marilyn who recruited me and two others.

I stayed in the captain's room throughout the boat journey to Sandakan, Sabah, East Malaysia. Upon arrival I was taken immediately to Kota Kinabalu in a van. The boss, Mae and Lolo were already waiting for me at the meeting place. I was happy that I had arrived safely in Malaysia except that the particular place where I was, looked comparatively quiet. I became nervous!

After dinner, we were brought to our boss's apartment. We were asked to surrender our passports so that he could see to the extension of our stay when needed. That very night, he and Lolo instructed the three of us to remove all our clothes. They examined each of our naked bodies thoroughly. I felt violated and dehumanized! I was terribly angry deep inside! We also had to stay in the same room as Lolo.

The next morning, each of us was allocated an advance budget of RM200 to buy sexy clothes. I thought that I would be working in a pub but I was shocked when I was taken to the Massage and Reflexology Center. I was brought into a room where a customer was already waiting inside. It was indeed painful for me because I had not expected to be in this kind of work. I was treated as a commodity and had to do what the customer wanted just because he was paying for it! However I was afraid that I would be killed if I did not follow the instructions. I did not receive any of the service commissions as I had to repay the expenses incurred in bringing me to Malaysia. Day after day I had to succumb to this very humiliating work. Food was not provided. I have goiter and I felt like dying when I had to work on an empty stomach. It was a nightmare for me! I was trafficked! I hated all those who were exploiting me especially my employer. I had thoughts of killing him and I thought of running away. There were eight of us in all and we found

our exploitative situation intolerable. One of them begged for help from a customer who reported our situation to the police.

One morning the police came to the apartment where we were staying. I was overjoyed. All of us were set free from the clutches of the exploitative syndicate. Statements from each of us were recorded by the police. Mr. Finardo Cabilao from the Philippine Embassy took over the case and arranged to send us to a shelter managed by the Good Shepherd Sisters.

I was happy staying there as the staff and residents made me feel secure and at home. The Sisters understood my painful experiences and they tried their best to provide me with opportunities to be happy. There were counseling, debriefing and self-awareness sessions. I stayed there for ten days after which I was transferred to another shelter while waiting for the court hearings. I was always afraid and nervous whenever I had to appear in court but the director of the shelter was always there to support me. Ultimately I was furious and disappointed with the outcome of the case. The boss and his traffickers were not convicted! It was so unfair!

As I was leaving Malaysia, I felt like a bird been released from a cage. This experience has taught me not to make hasty decisions and to be more careful when accepting any employment especially when it is in another country. I am now happily reunited with my family and will never leave them again.

....the Penan girls wait for justice!....

The Justice Peace Solidarity In Mission Office and Pusat Kebajikan Good Shepherd (Good Shepherd Welfare Services) Malaysia were among the 36 organizations which endorsed the statement highlighting not only the plight of the Penan girls and women whose rights have been violated but also the overall state of affairs of the Orang Asal: the Orang Asli of Peninsular Malaysia and the indigenous peoples of Sabah and Sarawak (East Malaysia).

The Penan schoolgirls depend on timber vehicles to transport them to and from school. Logging tracks are often the only means of access to the villages and schools and clinics are 4-6 hours away. The Penans have little access to registration, healthcare and education due to poverty and the remoteness of their settlements. They do not have personal documents while their children have a high drop-out rate at school. They also feel neglected because of negative perceptions and prejudices against them.

The horror the Penan girls and women went through...



- A girl, 12, was raped by a stranger outside her hostel and by a timber worker when she took a lift in a timber company's vehicle from her village in Long Kawi to her school in Long Lama. She got pregnant, quit school and married a Penan man.
- A woman from Long Item was raped by a timber worker in 2005 and 2007 and gave birth to a baby girl, now two years old.
- One was raped by an Iban timber worker when she was kidnapped at the age of 13, while visiting her relatives in Miri.

- One was almost raped when she took a lift with her father from a timber company to apply for an identity card.
- In Long Muboi, a student said her 14-year-old friend was molested by a truck driver who gave her a lift to school.
- A 17-year-old girl gave birth to a child and her neighbours claimed that she had sexual relations with the timber workers.
- Schoolgirls were often molested by lorry drivers while travelling to school in timber company vehicles.
- A group of women said they believed that sex exploitation exists among the Penan women and girls but they were too ashamed to tell their stories.

Justice must see the light of day!

WHO ARE THE PENANS?



1. The Penan are aboriginal people from Sarawak.
2. There are currently about 10,000 Penan people, with over 400 of them leading nomadic lifestyles. However, most of them were nomadic until the 1950s.
3. Penan people mainly live in the Ulu Baram district, but also reside in Limbang, Miri, Tutoh and Belaga.
4. The Penan people cultivate rice and garden vegetables. Their diet mainly consists of sago, jungle fruits and wild animals such as wild boars, deers and snakes.
5. Hunters in the tribe catch the animals using "lepud" or a blowpipe.
6. The Penan people are known to be highly tolerant and generous.
7. They also practise "molong", which means never taking more than what is needed.



Star GRAPHICS © 2009

...fire from the ashes....

Mangalika was born to a poor family in Monaragala, Sri Lanka. She was twelve when her mother abandoned the family. Mangalika assumed a mother's role to her younger sister who was then 2 years old. Their father and sickly grandmother looked after them. One day while her father was away, she brought her sick grandmother to the hospital. As her grandmother was hospitalized she left the hospital on her own. Missing the 1.00 pm bus, she had to wait for the next which was scheduled for 3.00 pm. While standing at shop nearby, a man came in a white van and kidnapped her. She was taken to a lonely place where a group of boys raped her. She shouted and forced them to take her home but was instead taken to a house and kept there that night and was raped again by two men, of whom one was handicapped. At about 3.00 am she was taken by another group of young men and abused by them. The exhausted girl, filled with fear, anxiety, and depression could not struggle to free herself. When dawn broke the men took her by a 3 wheeler vehicle saying that they would take her home. Mangalika couldn't believe them and jumped out of the moving vehicle. She ran to the closest boutique and with the help of a man went to the police station to report the whole incident. Action was taken and she was able to identify only three of her abusers who were taken into police custody. Mangalika was 14 when she was brought to St. Euphrasia's Home in Nayakakanda on the 05th October 2002 through the SEDEC. She was counselled to help her overcome trauma and fear and to rebuild her self esteem. She was given the opportunity to an education where she showed much interest and did well in her exams. With the emotional, mental and spiritual support she received from the sisters, she managed to do well and went on to high school at the Good Shepherd Convent in Nayakakanda where she continued to succeed.

Mangalika is now 21 and her case is still ongoing. As the Sisters were unable to send her on to higher studies, she took the initiative to help the girls in the institute and began teaching in the home in Nayakananda. She taught Home Science and the many who sat for the exams got through with flying colors. This gave Mangalika a great joy. She felt very proud of herself and is very grateful for the opportunities that she received. She has a very positive outlook. Despite the bitter experiences of the past, she considers herself blessed with opportunities for her growth. While in the home she showed herself to be a very loving and generous person while developing trust and self confidence. When the other girls call her "Miss Mangalika" she feels a great sense of pride and dignity. She is very joyful at being able to give to the institute what she had received from the same place. With all the experiences, she has become a mature woman and is able to confidently give "life education" to the children of the home. She is now a staff with a salary at the centre. She would continue to stay at the institute until her legal case is closed. Her desire is to be a good teacher to brighten the lives of the little children.

...getting into her shoes....

Unless a woman feels that one is not only concerned with the baby but is also sincerely committed to understanding her situation, she will go ahead with an abortion.

"Thanks Sister, for being there when I needed you most," expressed Lilia as she packed her things to return to her condominium in Makati. Lilia was raped at 29 by a 36 year old married man who was a business client. On hindsight, she thinks she must have been drugged. Eager to make a business deal, she never suspected his intentions. When she experienced dizziness, she asked him to take her home but he brought her to a hotel room instead. She was too weak to protest when he forced himself on her. He threatened that she would lose her business if she told anyone what had happened while he could easily tell others that she was a willing partner.

A month after the incident, I received a phone call from Lilia saying that a priest had referred her to me. She had gone to the nearest Church to seek help soon after the incident. The priest there advised her to go to an NGO offering services to women in crisis. The staff there listened to her, offered her a female lawyer, and asked her to make a police report at Camp Crame. There they took down her story and did a pregnancy test that proved positive. She called up the NGO again and they said they would schedule an abortion for her, adding that under the circumstances, it was the best thing for her and that she had the right to do so; and since her menstruation was only a couple of weeks delayed, there was not yet a baby.

Lilia was a daily Mass-goer and she again approached the priest and expressed her dilemma and was referred to Pro-life services and Sr. Pilar.

I invited Lilia to stay in the guest room of the convent for a few days so we could plan what was best for her at the time. I knew it was important for her to get away from the condominium where she was living by herself as the man could get back at her if a subpoena from the police was to be issued to him.

Lilia was at first filled with guilt and thought that it was her fault that she got raped. She could not get herself to tell her parents or siblings as she thought they would not understand, and in fact blame her for deciding to live by herself in Manila. I encouraged her to tell her family, and though they were shocked, they were very supportive of her move to file a case against the married man involved. Her brother, who works in Manila immediately offered to stay with her and accompany her wherever she went. Her sister, in the province, promised that she would relate it gently to their ageing and ailing

parents and asked her not to worry about sending financial help for a while. A phone call to the boss of the rapist brought a sense of justice to Lilia, as he expressed how angry he was at what his employee had done and would take legal measures against him immediately.

There was yet another problem - what should Lilia do with her pregnancy. I referred her to the pregnancy services of Pro-life groups. But somehow, my intuition prompted me to give her another pregnancy test. This one proved negative. We embraced each other in relief. Although deep inside, I fumed at the thought that the NGO she first went to wanted her to go for an abortion.

More and more people are thinking that it is about time abortion be legalized so that women could have the right to choose. Those who call themselves 'feminists' dare not question the "absolute right of women to make their own decisions regarding their own bodies". Yet there are members of this generation who see their friends and sisters suffer the trauma of an abortion and have decided that 'enough is enough.'

Leading feminists, too, are beginning to realize that abortion is not the solution for women who get pregnant. They now recognize that many women in vulnerable positions are simply offered no other choice other than to abort their pregnancies.

A week after Lilia returned to her condominium, she called to say that she had her menstruation that morning. She added, "Sister, if it was positive test again, I would have gone on with the pregnancy, knowing that you would be there with me all the way. I would have had to make a lot of adjustments, but I know that the baby would have been a blessing and not a curse. You have made me stronger in my belief that God is a God of justice. I still cry a lot and I can hardly wait for the man to be put in jail. But He is also a God of love and that is what I would have given my baby."

In our Pro-life mission, can we be courageously pro-woman, promoting a choice that is truly in favor of women? Thousands of disturbed pregnant girls and women are waiting for our answer.

...the two young women....

Harshani, a 15 year old girl, came to St. Euphrasia's rehabilitation centre, Nayakakanada 4 years ago. She was born in Kandana and lived in Ja-ela. She came from a poor family and yet was able to go to school until grade nine. She has a younger sister who was 13 years old. Her mother was a mentally ill patient. The only income generating source for the family was the father's salary. He was working in a garment factory in Katunayaka. When the father retired, the living conditions became a great threat for the family. This father was an alcoholic who continually harassed his sick wife and two daughters. Under such circumstances, the children had to discontinue schooling.

One day the father took Harshani to an unknown house where she was told that she could continue her studies. Since Harshani was keen to continue school, she thought that it was an opportunity to continue her studies. As such, she willingly went with the father but later realized that her father had sold her to the owner of a brothel. Her father had trafficked her. Her misery started from that day onwards. The 15 year-old was forced not only to have sex with men who came to the place, but she was taken to the other hotels in Colombo as well. She tried all possible ways to escape but due to the high security of the house, she could not free herself from that miserable situation. Therefore she was forced to continue in that situation for 11 months. During that time, she was not given any money as her monthly salary was handed over to her father. Sadly, her father in the meantime also sold her 13 year-old sister to another brothel. She broke down when she related this story. She was able to escape one day when all the others in the house were sleeping. She ran to the Seeduwa police station and related her story. She was given protection until the case was over. The father was eventually caught for trafficking two of his daughters. She found her sister too and both of them were sent to St. Euphrasia's Home at Nayakakanda.

Harshani was happy at the institution and said that it was the first time in her life where she has come to understand the meaning of love, kindness and security. Through counselling and spiritual guidance, she was able to look at her life in a positive manner and look to the future with confidence. It was a great joy for her that, while she was in the institution, she resumed studying from grade 9. She did her 'O' Levels Examination in 2008. During her time in the institution, she excelled in dancing, singing and handiwork. The effort she put into the training was seen by the results of her performance and creativity. At present, she is following a vocational training course on dressmaking, cookery, computer, beauty culture and agriculture with great enthusiasm. With the help of the Good Shepherd Sisters and counsellors she is able to leave the bitter past behind and look to the future with hope. Now she is 19 years old and awaiting to find a job once she is released from her case. She is very grateful to every one who has helped her to restore her life in spite of all her traumatic experiences.

....it all began when I was beaten by my father....

When I was sixteen years old, I was admitted to Good Shepherd Centre and lived there for more than a year. I had an older sister and a younger brother. Sadly our mother abandoned us when my little brother was just a month old. My elder sister was 3 years old then and I was a year and a half. In order to help my father look after us, he hired Ah May who eventually became my second mother. After that, there was a third mother and then a fourth. From all these mothers came a number of little brothers. Our family had grown to be a big family and I now have five little brothers.

Since I was the second eldest, I was responsible for looking after my brothers. Every morning, I had to burn incense at the shrines of more than a dozen household gods, wake my brothers up, give them their breakfast and take them to school. I had to fetch them after school and then help them with their homework. I had to wash their clothes and cook the meals as well.

I never thought to compare myself with my elder sister until one day when she got 100% on her dictation and my father rewarded her. However when I got a report card with all my subjects in the 90's, he did not even take any notice of it. My father would scold me for the slightest mistake and punish me. He made me pull my ears continuously or kneel for hours. He often beat me too. When he was drunk, his beatings were more violent.

There was once when my father beat me up most violently. It happened that some neighbours gossiped to my father that they had seen me with the boy next door. Without asking for any explanation, he took a stick and started to hit me. He said I was too young to talk to boys and to have a boyfriend. He kept raining blows down on me until my arms and legs were bruised and swollen. There were 9 family members in our home at that time but not one person came to rescue me. I was extremely disturbed and went to the bedroom and got a razor intending to cut myself. Knowing my intention, my second mother called my father. He then came into the room, pulled out a desk drawer and threw it at me. I got up immediately and ran out of the house and hid behind a staircase in a nearby flat. At that time I was sore all over and bleeding. I was so mixed up and confused. Was I really so bad? In the middle of the night, I went to the home of my class teacher and asked for help. She and her husband were so distressed to see the condition I was in and discussed whether or not they should report to the police. I stayed in their home that night and the next day, they took me to Good Shepherd Centre.

I still remember my first day when I met Sister D and the social worker in the parlor. It was a feeling of being in a safe place. During the first week,

Sister accompanied me to see the doctor every day. She wouldn't let me go out alone because she was worried about my safety. During that period of time, I mostly rested in bed and slowly got acquainted with my new 'family'. The Sisters and the social worker were so friendly and kind.

During my initial days in the Centre, I was very emotional and gave vent to all my negative feelings. Sister D was so patient and would encourage me to share my thoughts and feelings. She would listen to me and help me to understand things through our discussions, not like my teachers who would just lecture me. With Sister, I felt respected and valued. I remember very well some words she often repeated: "It's not the end of the world. There are many people worse off than you. So don't get discouraged and give up! For every problem, there's a solution." This made a deep impression on me. With Sister's influence, I started to believe in God and go to church and join in some of the activities. I made a lot of new friends. I met my first boyfriend. When I told Sister D, she did not object to it. She just encouraged me to widen my circle of friends and I felt that I had found a mother in Sister D.

When I graduated from High School and got a job in a lawyer's office, I moved out from the Centre. I learned to be independent, to work hard and begin a new life.

After my father died, my three mothers took off with whatever of value there was in our house leaving my five brothers to fend for themselves. So once again, I took up the responsibility of looking after them. My family responsibilities did not lessen my decision to continue with my studies. Four years later, I went back to school and earned my first degree in Commerce and Business. During this time, my brothers grew up and I thank God that they have all turned out well. They respect me and are grateful for all I have done for them. I continued to strive for the goals I have set for myself. I completed my second degree in law and am doing my practicum.

I hope that anyone who reads my story will understand that they should not use corporal punishment in bringing up their children. They should communicate with them and show that they care for them. This is the only way to a happy family.

The author is now a very lovely professional woman who holds management level positions in several companies. She is fluent in four languages and has been instrumental in helping many charities.

....give this family some hope....

The phone rang "we are bringing a woman and her three children to you". Within half an hour, a police woman brought Tracy and her three children for asylum. Tracy trembling with fear was obviously traumatized and devastated. This is a common sight to the staff of a shelter for battered wives and their children. This shelter is the first state-owned in Taiwan and run by the Good Shepherd Sisters.

Between sips of hot coffee, Tracy related her story. Her husband had fled from Taiwan and had a debt of US\$242,424. While abroad, he phoned her to run away immediately. The creditors had intended to sell Tracy and their three children separately into prostitution and forced labor to repay the debt. The boy was 6 and the two girls, three and half and two years old. Tracy was desperate as she did not know anyone who could help her out of that situation. She did not want to be a prostitute nor did she want to be separated from her children. At the same time, she did not want the future of her children to be ruined. In desperation, she told the landlady her situation. Having heard her, the landlady being fearful of any consequence if involved, told Tracy to pack up and took her and the three children to the police station.

Tracy was a Filipina who came to Taiwan at the age of 17 with a tourist visa. The "middle man" deceived her by saying that she could be employed leading her to stay on to work illegally as a caregiver. She had to work 7 days a week, 12-13 hours a day and was tired out. Despite the long working hours, she stayed on and kept the job as she had no means of funding her return air ticket. Besides, her family needed the money back in the Philippines. She also took another part-time laundry job to provide for her invalid grandmother.

More than a year later, an agency introduced her to her husband-to-be. Although he promised to be good to her, he gambled away all her earnings as a factory worker.

Life was hard as she had to look after her children as well as working in the factory. On top of that, she was left again with no money.

It was after his disappearance that she discovered that she was not legally married and she did not have a marriage certificate or any legal document. Nonetheless, the birth certificates of her two daughters had her as their mother and she had photos taken in the Buddhist temple to prove that she was married.

With these documents and photos, we sought help from the best lawyers to rectify her residential status. As she was not able to produce her marriage certificate which the law required, she was considered an illegal resident. Accordingly she had to leave Taiwan. However time passed and she stayed there from months to years.

Meanwhile, we managed to get her children to kindergarten and later on into primary school. The children were very clearly Taiwan citizens but there was trouble whenever we had to produce the certificates or explain the identity of the mother. There was no trace of the father. When challenged by the law, we handed back the responsibility to the police who referred her to the shelter by telling them, "It was you, the police who sent her to us, if you want to send her out of the country, we will bring the children to your house and your wife can look after them. They are Taiwan citizens." So the police kept a blind eye and Tracy was able to earn a living by working as a part-time cleaner for different families and was able to provide sufficiently for herself and her children.

One day she came to us in tears saying that while cleaning the ceiling of the kitchen she fell off the ladder and hurt herself. Although she had lived in Taiwan for about 20 years, she was still an illegal immigrant. As such she did not qualify for national medical insurance and she did not have the money to pay for her medical expenses. We realized that she cannot stay on illegally in Taiwan. We then asked the help of a legislator who was able to get her permanent stay.

To-day her children are grown ups and two of them are working. They live happily as a family. We are presently assisting her with a Taiwanese citizenship.

....breakthroughs for us three!....

Sheila together with Kayleen and Fanny invited Sister Fidelma and I for lunch as we had not met for quite some time. We met at a simple restaurant and had a really delightful time together. More than twenty years ago, the three of them found shelter in our halfway home and today a strong bond of friendship has flourished among us.

All three of them experienced an extremely painful and traumatic childhood...

Sheila is the daughter of a handicapped unmarried mother. She does not know who her father is and her maternal grandmother told her that girls were useless and each time she saw Sheila she would give her a slap. Her mother was not able to protect her. At the age of eleven she was sold into prostitution.

Fanny also had an extremely traumatic childhood. She had never seen her mother. Her father was irresponsible and was a drunkard. At the age of 13 she had to look for a job as she was hungry. She was introduced to prostitution. Consequently she was caught by the police and sent to a detention center. She was delighted when the Juvenile judge helped her to look for her mother. However her birth mother who lived in a temple confined her within the walls of the temple, shaved her head and told her to be a Buddhist nun. According to her mother, to be a Buddhist nun was better than to be in prostitution. Weeks later, she got hold of a pin and pricked her fingers to use the blood to write to the Juvenile judge for help. A worker in the temple helped her post the letter. She was rescued and was admitted to our halfway home.

Kayleen was 15 years old when she was admitted to our home where she was employed. Every night she would call her 3 younger half brothers. They have the same mother but each from a different father. It was one of these 'fathers' who sold Kayleen into prostitution, took the money and disappeared. She would send every cent of what she earned at the shelter to the Social Welfare Department which will in turn ensure that the 3 younger brothers had food to eat. She was afraid that her mother would neglect these young children. Seeing her concern for her family, the court and the Social Welfare Department decided to allow her to go home. However a very strict warning was given to her mother that should Kayleen be ill-treated she would be imprisoned for another 5 full years. She would be pardoned of her impending 5 years prison sentence if Kayleen was not sold again. This young innocent girl with the experience of being sold had to face many challenges. Her first task was to ensure that her mother would not live with another man. She managed to persuade her mother to work with her in a petrol

pump station. They both worked outdoors in the heat of summer and the cold of winter. She could have got a better job had she been on her own but to keep her illiterate mother working, she had to work side by side with her. After work her mother would be busy cooking for the family while she attended night school until she successfully graduated. By that time, her mother was more stable. All the money they earned was used for the family. The shack they lived in became a home, clean, and equipped with the basic facilities.

Today after her very painful experiences she is happily married with two children who are doing well both at home and in school. Her three half brothers are married and working. Her mother is living with the family of one of her brothers. Helping Kayleen has led us to help 4 families, her own and the families of her three brothers. We find it fulfilling to help child victims.

Though the 3 of them now live in different counties they are in close contact with each other. All three expressed their heartfelt thanks for the care they received in our halfway home. They insisted on paying for the meal as a sign of their gratitude and friendship.

....never give up hope....

Anna's husband left her to work in Malaysia for some years. He neither sends news or money to the family in Indonesia. His wife had to take care of their 4 children in Village, in Ruteng, Flores, Indonesia. According to the culture in Flores, a woman has no rights to the family property. Her younger brother drove Anna and her four children out of their house.

The mother and four children came with nothing to the Sisters to seek help. It was fortunate that the Sisters still had one available room for women in difficult situations. So Anna and her children stayed on in the shelter for some years and she earned a living by making traditional food.

When her husband returned from Malaysia he came with so many debts. While in Malaysia he was jailed for 6 months and according to him was tortured in jail until he sustained some broken bones. His return to his family made the situation worse as he could no longer work. The burden of Anna's family has instead increased. Anna still works with our Sisters in Flores making traditional cakes.

....about child trafficking....

Tricked, coerced, threatened and sold! Each day, children all over the world find themselves victims of trafficking. Child trafficking is one of the gravest forms of child abuse in the world today. It is a multi-billion dollar industry that involves an estimated 1.2 million children every year. These children end up trapped in the worst form of child labour like slavery or sexual exploitation.

The underlying cause of trafficking of children is poverty. They are often trafficked because they or their families desperately need money. Poverty makes them vulnerable. Factors like war, natural disasters, family dislocation, domestic violence and an absence of trafficking penalties place children more at risk of trafficking. It is a tragic situation and it is growing. But there are ways we can help to stop this trading of innocent children.

About Good Shepherd

Good Shepherd Sisters and their lay partners come from a long tradition harking back to the initiatives of Mary Euphrasia Pelletier, their founder who lived in France in the early 19th century. Today the Good Shepherd Congregation is present in more than 70 countries around the world. Our mission is to work with women and children on the margins of society.

About the shelter in Andra Pradesh, India.

Good Shepherd Sister Aruna George expressed her frustration at the lack of funding for the shelter, Karunalayam in Andra Pradesh, India. There are 75 young girls who had been living on the streets in and around the city of Vijayawada. The shelter provides a haven for many who had fled from trafficked situations or from abusive work environments. One young girl who was sold into domestic service found herself the subject of sexual abuse when she reached her teens. She fled from the home where she lived and worked and found safe harbour at Karunalayam.

Sr Aruna, besides having to take care of the girls, she also has the task of looking for funding. She explains that her commitment is to the girls during their teenage years. She cannot return them to the streets but to feed, clothe, educate and care for her 75 young charges for a year, she needs 9 lakhs. If we find the trafficking of children so abhorrent, we need to find a way to support this Good Shepherd initiative. Sr Aruna says, "We have big hearts but empty pockets". Can we help to fill the pockets with money to support trafficked and vulnerable girls?

Good Shepherd Asia Pacific Justice Peace Network

<http://apjpnetwork.wordpress.com>

Our priorities

Trafficking - Migration - Economic Justice - Prostitution - Girl Child - Ecology

Our network

Cambodia - Thailand - Myanmar - Vietnam - Korea - Macau - Hong Kong
Taiwan - India - Nepal - Sri Lanka - Pakistan - Indonesia - Japan - Philippines
Australia - New Zealand - Singapore - Malaysia

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*'One person is of more value
than a whole world'*



Saint Mary Euphrasia Pelletier
Foundress of the Good Shepherd Sisters
(1796 - 1868)