

***“ UNITED IN A BRIGHT FUTURE: The Experience of the Good Shepherd
Asia-Pacific Justice and Peace Network at the Asia-Pacific NGO Forum
on Beijing + 15”***

October 21 – 25, 2009

Manila, Philippines

“United in a Bright Future” is the title of a Mandala made by a young woman survivor of human trafficking for sexual exploitation in Cebu City. It symbolized the synergy and challenge experienced by the GS APJP Network in its participation – for the first time at the AP NGO Forum on Beijing+ 15 held in Manila, Philippines.



It is one among many “mandalas” created by women and girls victimized through prostitution which was included in the Research study by Sr. Angela Reed, RSM – supported by GS Social Justice Office in Melbourne, Australia and presented by GS APJP Network as one of the Parallel Sessions at the NGO Forum .

“United in a Bright Future” are voices of women seeking a bright future, where they can flourish as human beings and be free from slavery. It symbolized a deep desire and human longing to being ONE and being HOPE in a broken and fragmented world.

The 3 day Forum was an experience of blessings of the “*diversity of cultures*” and the “*resiliency*” of multi-generational women (with some men) journeying and struggling together to realize their liberation from centuries of patriarchal oppression and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women.

“Weaving wisdom, Confronting crises, Forging the future” as its theme, the NGO forum attended by 640 delegates from the Asia-Pacific region has become a “*sacred space*” where we listened and shared our stories of struggles and triumphs for the past 15 years since the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) was launched at the Beijing Conference of Women in September 1995.



The GS APJP Network has the biggest number of delegation with 37 delegates representing one organization with 23 GS Sisters, 1 RSM Sister and 13 GS Lay mission partners coming from 11 countries in the Asia-Pacific region (India, Sri

Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Japan , Taiwan, Thailand, Myanmar, Macau and Australia.)



The GS APJP network organized a Pre-Forum and Post-Forum meetings apart from the 3-day NGO forum. At the Pre-Forum meeting on October 21, 2009, three objectives were set by the Network in its participation to the NGO Forum which were adequately achieved as stated in the following:

1. To strengthen the networking of GS APJP in its responses to the four priority issues (*migration, anti-trafficking, economic justice & care for the Earth*) of Asia-Pacific region and to establish networking with other NGOs.
2. To maximize participation of the GS APJP Network by sharing experiences and learning from other participants of the AP NGO Forum
3. To identify and address the gaps (“*missing links*”) and to forge the challenges for the GS APJP Network in its responses to the four priority issues affecting women and children in the Asia-Pacific Region (in general) and in each particular country.

The APJP Network’s substantive participation in the NGO Forum were done on 3 levels:

1. Presented a Parallel Session on October 23, 2009 entitled : “***United in a Bright Future – Giving Voice to Trafficked Women***”. It highlighted the Research done by Sr. Angela Reed, RSM with women from GS Welcome House and GS Recovery Centre “to gain insights into human trafficking for sexual exploitation as perceived by young women in Cebu, the second largest city in the Philippines”. It acknowledged that women who have been trafficked are the experts in knowing and understanding their own stories.
2. Formulated a GS APJP Statement on anti-Human Trafficking which was read at the end of the Parallel Session and distributed the GS Booklet entitled “ The cries of women” and Brochures/flyers to the delegates in the Forum.
3. Set up the GS APJP Economic Justice Projects Booth at the Women’s Bazaar



The Post-Forum meeting on October 25, 2009 (on a Sunday!) was a very significant meeting as all participants from our GS network “broke bread” and shared their life-giving experiences of the 3 day NGO Forum.



A reflection, documentation and sharing of 3 significant experiences by each delegate were done in small groups. They were encouraged to share how their experiences at the NGO Forum would link with their GS programs back home and the GS Mission in general.



The more challenging part of the day was to share in plenary session the perceived challenges for GS APJP Network and concrete actions to be done based on the gaps or missing links which they gathered from their experiences during the 3 days of the NGO Forum .



Some significant challenges to note are:

1. More comprehensive plan of action for Asia-Pacific on the 4 priority areas on Migration and Trafficking, Care for the Earth and Economic Justice
2. Maximize our GS NGO Status in the UN by fostering a culture of networking and lobbying on the 4 priority issues
3. Resource mobilization for APJP Programs/projects through collaboration with the Mission Development Office (MDO)
4. Levelling-off on the understanding and analysis of the 4 priority issues
5. Research and Documentation of the GS programs addressing Migration, Trafficking, Economic justice and integrity of creation through videos, short films, books, pamphlets et al.
6. To have a GS APJP Resource Center and maximize our *experts* in the GS Network --- and many more.

The meeting was capped by a prayer/reflection/video on the recent calamities that hit the Philippines and a “*ritual of movement*” through a dance of pilgrims journeying side by side each other and forging the challenges of the future!





In the afternoon, some selected delegates went on a brief exposure at *Bagong Silangan in Quezon City* – an urban poor community severely affected by the string of calamities and flashfloods brought by dams and continuous rains from typhoon “ONDOY”. It was a concrete way of linking the issues of Women and the Environment.

As we headed home and bade our goodbyes, the words of St. Mary Euphrasia sent ripples of vibrations to all : “ *Rouse yourselves my dear daughters! Courage, go forward!*”