



## Welcome

Ten years have passed since the NGO Office opened its doors in New York in September 2003. Much has happened during these year, especially in the area of communications about global justice issues through our website. Now it is time to put those sisters who have helped from behind the scenes into the limelight. Without their indispensable assistance our mission at the UN would surely not have grown. Happy reading and happy birthday to all who are part of our mission at the UN.



*Pictures of RSCJ who have helped out in 2012*

## Hidden Sisters *by Cecile Meijer, rscj*

More than ever ours are times of instant communications. Whether we share information or maintain relationships through ordinary phone or skype, by email, facebook, twitter or texting, or simply by reading a website on the internet, language is the cornerstone on which much of our communications is built. But what do we do if there is no common language?

The United Nations has chosen six official languages in which to com-

municate: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. Many meetings I attend in New York are provided with simultaneous translation, while documents and reports are often made available in the six official languages too.

Multilingualism has also prompted the Society of the Sacred Heart to choose three so-called "Society languages," three languages in which we communicate with one another: English, French, and Span-

ish. Letters and official documents coming from Rome, General Chapters or other international meetings are usually made available in these three languages.

From its beginning in 2003, the NGO Office has made sure that all of its communications, including its website, were accessible in the three Society languages. This deliberate choice has had huge implications, however, both as to 'how' and 'what' to communicate. Editorial assistants were

*Hidden Sisters, from page 1*

needed as well as translators, many of them, because as an NGO that is associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI), the NGO Office has much to communicate.

It is now ten years since the Society of the Sacred Heart began its mission at the UN – this anniversary also marks ten years of hard work by our translators making communications available to everyone in “our” three languages. Sisters like Maryvonne Duclaux have collaborated with the NGO Office from the very first minute and are still doing so; others have walked with us for part of the journey or have helped out in times of crisis. No matter how long it has been, without these outstanding editors and translators and their unfailing service sharing their gifts of tongues, you would not be able to read this newsletter in any language other than English. Heartfelt THANKS to all RSCJ and their sustained generosity of time and talent as editorial assistants and translators for the NGO Office during the past ten years.

## Women’s Day in Torpa

by Daphne Sequeira, rscj

The theme for *International Women’s Day 2013* in Torpa (India) was *Trafficking of Women*. Around 2,000 women from around Torpa and Rania participated in this event. Two hundred women from very interior villages came to our Center for Women Development (CWD) the previous evening and stayed overnight. Others arrived at around 9am at the place where our rally would begin, about two kilometers away from the CWD. During the rally we shouted slogans and sang awareness songs. The police was very cooperative. The main road was blocked for more than half an hour, stopping all traffic on both sides. When the rally reached the main gate of CWD, the women of Konkya village welcomed the rally with a traditional dance.



Photo by RSCJ India

The program, which began at 11am, was inaugurated by the District Collector who, along with other dignitaries, lighted the inaugural lamp. Ms Jyostna, an activist and main resource person, led a very interactive discussion on the roots and the effects of trafficking, the impact trafficking has on the girls, and the chain of agents who are involved in trafficking. She also spoke about the provisions made for women in laws and the facilities to live a dignified life made available for women by the government. She also gave very alarming data about the local situation of trafficking. All dignitaries, too, emphasized women’s potential and women’s very important contribution to society. In between the speeches our women sang awareness songs, danced and enacted street plays.

The program ended at 1:30pm with a meal for all. Even after the program was over, many women danced to their heart’s content and one could see “a free woman” on every woman’s face.

## Return to Congo *by Cecile Meijer, rscj*

Last year I traveled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where I had been previously in 1996. Around 50 RSCJ live and work in and around the capital Kinshasa. During my stay I was able to visit almost all of our communities and projects. Our Congolese sisters, most of them under 50 years of age, are as valiant and committed as I have ever seen any. Running schools against odds such as the daily struggle to have sufficient food and water on the table for the students, the lack of supplies and contemporary teaching material, and appallingly poor teacher's pay, require a special vocation to spread God's love through deep, Gospel-rooted, dedication and hope. The Congolese RSCJ have it all and share it generously.

Reflecting on my return to Congo, I am still struck by the mixture of hope and challenge I found. Yes, excellent new roads have been built which can be used both by foreign investors and by the local population, but how many of Kinshasa's eight million poor inhabitants are able

to benefit from them? Most of the adventurous entrepreneurs I saw were young women and men, eager to carve out a life with more dignity for themselves and their families, but how many young people have that entrepreneurial gift? Yes, there are some real supermarkets and even a few restaurants in Kinshasa today, but how many of the city's extremely poor can afford their outrageous prices?

On March 21, 2013, the UN celebrated for the first time the *International Day of Forests and the Tree*. Reading the Secretary-General's message for that day I was reminded of the many barren hills which, in my recollection, had been covered with trees and brush only 16 years ago. The figures, numbers and information the Secretary-General cites are for me no mere statistics but have human faces attached to them. When will we finally wake up to the hard reality that eradicating poverty in countries like the DRC is the right thing to do for the survival of both the local population and planet Earth?

## Website

Have you looked at our website lately? We have posted the following articles since January 2013:

- Newsletter Issue 6
- Diary from Indonesia Weeks 1-6
- World Interfaith Harmony Week 2013
- Educating for Universal Human Rights
- STOP violence against women
- One Woman
- Prayer for Romero Day
- United for a culture of peace
- MDG Momentum
- Wanting to make a difference
- A focus on empowerment
- Civil Society Declaration 2013

### Society of the Sacred Heart at the UN

406 East 80th Street  
New York, NY 10075

Phone (212) 737-7231

Fax (212) 737 7235

Cecile Meijer, rscj  
cmeijer@rscj.org

*Layout & Design:*  
CEDC.org

© Society of the Sacred Heart

