



The Vincentian
Partnership for
Social Justice

Working for social
and economic
change tackling
poverty and
exclusion

Members:

The Society of
Saint Vincent de
Paul,

The Vincentian
Congregation,
The Daughters of
Charity
and

The Sisters of the
Holy Faith

The Vincentian
Partnership for Social
Justice
Ozanam House
53 Mountjoy Square
Gardiner St.
Dublin 1
Tel: 01 8780425

Fax: 01 8780423

Email: vpj@eircom.net

Websites:

www.vpsj.ie

www.vote.ie

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JUST.NOW

Summer 2007 Justice Briefing

God's Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God,
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs-
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! Bright wings.

Gerard Manly Hopkins (1844-1889)



Summer Joy

'Summer suns are glowing'-
fine for Northern hymns:
not so good when blowing
sand clogs up our stream.

How shall those who're farming
Grow what they must eat
When through global warming
Harvests fail in heat?

'Everything rejoices'-
so it used to be:
but the bird's sweet voices
now fail silently.

Somewhere, planes and cars are
Burning fuel fast:
This, they say, brings profit;
But folks starve at last.

In your mercy, Jesus
Our mistakes forgive.
Bring us to our senses!
Let the people live!

Christian Aid

Trafficking in Women

Sr. Philomena Okuu, a Nigerian Daughter of Charity working in Ghana, in a recent letter gave the following account of a horrific incident of trafficking -

'I am also involved in creating awareness of trafficking in human persons, especially, women and children. It is a slave trade of this century, operating in a very dehumanising and subtle manner. You will get sick when you hear some of the stories. A girl from Ghana told her story of how she was deceived with a promise of a job in a restaurant in Germany to cook Ghanaian dishes, only to be forced into prostitution and used for pornography. She said that she never saw any restaurant but was rather forced into prostitution. Her documents were seized and she was kept with other girls in a hideout. Nobody knew they were there and they were never allowed out. Three times a day, they would bring in animals - dogs, horses, baboons and chimpanzees - to have sex with them and filmed throughout the encounter. There was no treatment for anyone who got sick. If any died, they chopped her up into pieces and threw her away. It was only in God they hoped for rescue until the hideout was discovered and raided by the police. They were arrested and taken to hospital and she tested HIV AIDS positive. She was deported to Ghana to die. Before she died, she wanted to tell her story so that people would know what happened to her and so that others would not fall into the same trap'.



Trafficking of women for the purpose of sexual exploitation is a worldwide phenomenon. The U.N. estimates that approximately 4 million women and children are trafficked annually within and between countries for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Ruhama

Ruhama was founded in 1989 in Ireland as an agency to work with and for women involved in prostitution and who are victims of trafficking.

Ireland has a serious trafficking problem which, has increased in the past 7 years. This assessment is based on

- ❖ The changing scene within the sex industry; in some areas of the sex industry, particularly indoors 100% of the women are foreign nationals.
- ❖ A high proportion of foreign national women in indoor prostitution are from Eastern Europe, their countries of origin are well know sources in countries for traffickers.
- ❖ Other women are from Asia, Africa and South America, usually from countries and regions noted as high risk of trafficking.
- ❖ Anecdotal evidence gathered from professional, media and other credible sources.
- ❖ The increased number of women awaiting of the Ruhama service Transported from their homes, many women lured by the promise of a better life are forced through threats, deception and violence to engage in prostitution.

Acknowledgment and recognition of the issue in Ireland is hampered by:

- ❖ Its invisible nature (99% of all visitors are trafficked into indoor prostitution, operates out of brothels, flats, etc).
- ❖ Difficulty in identifying victims.
- ❖ Inadequate legislation and resources.

Many contacts are first made in the Ruhama Outreach Van which operates four nights a week throughout the year.

Trafficking in Women

Ruhama's Support Work to Victims of Trafficking

- Access – Ruhama networks with other service providers to improve referral mechanisms and access for women.
- Safe Accommodation – on a case-by-case basis as Ireland does not have a recognised safe house.
- Legal Assistance – usually with resident issues.
- Health Issues – offers information and accompaniment to a range of services.
- Counselling – women need time to overcome the initial trauma before engaging in therapy.
- Education/Training – e.g. classes in English, Computers.
- Social integration – high level of support in areas of befriending and social integration.
- Repatriation – for women who choose to go home, working alongside I.O.M.
(*International Organisations for Migration*)

What Can You Do?

- ❖ Advocate for adequate legislation and resources.
- ❖ Raise awareness of issue (Ruhama will provide information)
- ❖ Volunteer – street and prison outreach, befriending women, counselling, education, fundraising.
- ❖ Engage with Ruhama in advocating for legislation on trafficking.



An Election Campaign with a Difference

Since September 2006 the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice has been engaged in an election campaign with a difference. We crossed the length and breadth of Ireland facilitating workshops, training community leaders to facilitate the programme in their local areas, distributing brochures and posters all with one goal in view – to encourage people alienated from the electoral process to use their vote as their voice.

We the members of the V.P.S.J. staff were not alone in the campaign. The 150 community leaders trained to facilitate the Active Citizenship Programme – Voter Education Programme were very active in their electoral areas. Many used very creative approaches – organising registration drives in shopping centres, questions and answers with candidates also establishing “voter cafés”. Some spoke on local radio and a few appeared on T.V.

Increase in Voter Turnout

The outcome of all that sustained and hard work was 0.5% increase nationally in voter turnout. As this figure represents the national average it can be assumed that the increase was higher in disadvantaged communities. With the increase in turn out came a substantial decrease in the number of spoiled votes. It was interesting to discover as we travelled about that many traditional voters are not informed about the transfer system. While the V.P.S.J. and our colleagues in the NANC cannot take all the credit for the increase in voter turnout, because of our work many people in disadvantaged communities, disability groups and the traveller community voted for the first time in 2007.

Where were Ethics in the Election?

The Irish Times (2.6.07) points out that –

‘Ethical issues played no role in the elections yet the challenges of social breakdown, immigration, social exclusion and poverty are as much a problem today as they were last month and will probably be next month too. Making society richer is not equivalent to making it a better place’.

The dominant issues raised by voters and candidates included health 45% crime 25% and the economy 23%. Other issues such as the cost of living 18% education 18% environment 13% and housing ‘played second fiddle’. Poverty, social exclusion and disability were largely ignored by the media and by the candidates. The ‘culture of contentment’ as described by JK Gabradh may account for a people’s ultimate complacency in light of clear problems. The challenge now is to continue to work for a more just and inclusive society and not to lose sight of the poverty and social exclusion experienced by the Irish people.

Prayer and Reflection

Prayer for Respect for Creation

Lord God, creator of all the earth, you have given us the mountains and trees, the waters and the good earth which supports our crops, our animals and ourselves. Never let us lose our love for our land, which is our mother. Help us to protect the land from abuse and to enrich the soil when we abuse it. Make our mother, the earth, fruitful again.

Prayer of Commitment

We commit ourselves to care for all the gifts of Creation. We commit ourselves to explore and understand environmental concerns. We commit to work with others for environmental justice for all. Come Holy Spirit, enkindle in us the fire of your love. Send your breath over the waters and we shall be re-created. And we shall renew the face of the Earth.



Our Land, Our Mother

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Who Am I?

I am a woman, I am alive
I am struggling, I am hoping

I am created in the image of God
just like all other people in the world;
I am a person with worth and dignity.
I am a thinking person, a feeling person,
a doing person.
I am the small I am that stands before
the great I AM.

I am a worker who is constantly challenged,
faced with the needs of the church and
society and the global community.
I am angered by the structures and powers
that create all forms of oppression,
exploitation and degradation.

I am a witness to the moans, tears, banners
and clenched fists of my people.
I can hear their liberating songs, their hopeful
prayers and decisive march toward justice and
freedom.

I believe that all of us - women and men young
and old, Christian and non - Christian are called
upon to do responsible action;
to be concerned
to be involved
NOW!

I am hoping I am struggling
I am alive
I am a woman.