



# UPDATE

May 2013

## REFLECTIONS ON CSW 57

Even though the document that came out of the Commission on the Status of Women was not perfect (e.g. it did not explicitly defend girls and women from discrimination or violence based on their gender or sexual orientation) it IS a “win” for women. In her blog for a newspaper, Dr. Cheryl Saban wrote “When you contemplate what it really takes to get consensus on a ...document at the UN that places accountability squarely on its 193 member states to ‘do it right, or we will call you out publically,’ just close your eyes and imagine [your national legislative body] trying to pass a bill. Now think about them doing it while they are all speaking different languages...and attempting to accomplish this mission in two weeks’ time.” She said she was not sure the public has a sense of how complicated this whole process was...indeed, how complicated everything is at the UN!

As you read in the last *Update*, the topic of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) this year was on Violence Against Women and Girls. Who could disagree with ending that? The loudest disagreements came from conservative Muslim countries; at one point the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood said that adopting a proposal about equality in marriage and other human rights for women would result in “the complete disintegration of Egyptian society,” and an imam declared a fatwa. Egyptian women erupted into protests, and the strong women and men at the conference--determined to work through the problems of culture, language, and politics--worked through every word to finish an 18 page document that could be adopted by all 193 countries. Libya was the only country that did not approve, but did not block it.

## SUMMARY OF SURVEY:

We heard from all of our 18 communities, with a total of 726 responses. The responses in English came from 30 countries; French from 7; Portuguese from 4; and Spanish from 23 countries. Most of you who responded are aware of UNANIMA’s work and how your community interacts with it, think that its mission fits with that of your community, and think it important that your community is involved in global issues and the systemic causes of global problems.

Some things that were good for the UNANIMA staff to know: the *Update* is more popular than the website, and the *Facebook* page is least used by our members. In the *Update*, global issues are the most popular, followed by news from the UN and from other UI communities. In response to the question “Are you interested in collaborating with other UI communities in your region,” 307 were NOT SURE; 285 said YES, and 130 said NO. We had many volunteers for regional contacts, so we will be in touch with you when life slows down just a little here—and we’ll see if we can change some of the “not sure” responses to “yes!” We will also finish upgrading the website.

The areas of greatest interest to you in UNANIMA’s mission were women’s issues and poverty. Adding “environment” and “water” together would make that the next strongest, followed by trafficking/refugees. There were regional differences: women/ poverty were strongest in the Spanish questionnaires; trafficking/ women were the issues named by English speakers; poverty was the top issue of the Portuguese returns, and the French were equally divided among women / children / poverty. It was interesting to note that in the “free response” section (where you could name any three most urgent issues in your area) that—while the issues tended to be more specific--they almost always fell under one of major areas of UNANIMA focus. We are “on the same page.” Thanks for taking the survey!

## **UNANIMA at the WHITE HOUSE**

On April 9-12 UNANIMA was represented in Washington DC at a meeting organized by the U.S. Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in collaboration with the Bakhita Initiative (U.S. Catholic Sisters United Against Human Slavery) for 12 leaders of groups of women religious who work against human trafficking. The timing was great—for one thing, the Japanese cherry trees were in bloom (picture), and we got to attend a ceremony at the White House for the President’s Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. The occasion was the Council’s formal presentation of its report on “*Building Partnerships to Eradicate Modern-Day Slavery*.” The report begins: “There are more slaves in the world today than at any other point in human history, with an estimated 21 million in bondage across the globe.” (International Labor Organization). The report is excellent, with 10 specific recommendations for the President. You might find it online at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2013/04/10/receiving-advisory-council-recommendations-end-human-trafficking>



Participants committed themselves to specific actions that would assist more effective communication and sharing of resources about anti-trafficking in congregations throughout the USA. Michele Morek OSU represented UNANIMA International at this meeting.

## COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

For those who are waiting to register for the 20<sup>th</sup> session of CSD (this summer was supposed to be the last one) ...remember that Rio promised to “establish a **universal intergovernmental high-level political forum**, building on the strengths, experiences, resources & inclusive modalities of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and subsequently **replacing the Commission...**” *The Future We Want*, paragraph 84.

Nobody knows what that “high level political forum” will look like, but there is still no information available about the CSD provisionally set to meet this May. At a meeting attended by some NGOs this week it was repeated that the Commission is being replaced by the High Level Political Forum, and that decisions on format, structure and participants are to be completed by May 2013. It is probable that the CSD will meet just long enough to disband itself, so you might as well unpack those bags...sorry! --researched by Celia Martin NDS



## NEW EXPERIENCES WITH UNANIMA

We know you can't always get away from your ministry long enough to experience a full internship of three months, so the Internship Committee of the Board worked long and hard to develop an “Immersion Experience” that would involve less time. A description of this is being sent along with this mailing (in English only, sorry). Remember that for the best possible experience, a working knowledge of English has been recommended by the Coordinator, the Internship Committee, and previous interns! However, there is a possibility that if a sister without good English skills could pair up with one of her bilingual community members, something might be worked out for this short-term experience.

The Internship Committee also developed guidelines for a student internship experience, for a student going to school in New York. Those are also attached.

## COMMUNITY NEWS

- ❖ The **Holy Union Sisters'** American Province intranet is regularly used to transmit items about pending and current legislation, alerts, and general information about topics closely allied with UNANIMA goals: International Women's Day/Month, Violence Against Women Act; World Water Day, Farming; Immigration Reform, Dream Act.

- ❖ Claudette Darisse SASV of the **Soeurs de l'Assomption de Saint Vierge** went to great lengths to get her parish priest to put something in the bulletin or to make an announcement in church about the January 11<sup>th</sup> Day of Prayer to End Slavery / Trafficking – all unsuccessfully. But as she was talking over her failure with some women of the parish, she was overheard by some interested teenagers. We don't know *which* words will be heard, and we don't know *who* will hear them...so just keep talking, Sisters!
- ❖ The **Sisters of Providence** in Canada and the American Northwest involve their elderly and retired sisters in their anti-trafficking, reconciliation / restorative justice and JPIC consciousness- raising campaigns through prayer vigils in their infirmary chapels, the sisters' letter-writing advocacy to government officials, personal correspondence to prisoners, and in the preparation of their IJPC newsletter mailings.
- ❖ The **Sisters of Saint Anne** report that there is going to be a conference on human trafficking in Montreal. A high-ranking minister from Quebec and the UN Special Rapporteur on Migrants will be in attendance, and it will be recorded. Contact Lucille Goulet if you want to know more.
- ❖ Several **Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary** are in ministry at Holy Names Academy (HNA) in Seattle Washington. On a trip to a girls' school in Mombasa, Kenya, Sister Charlyne Brown became passionately aware of their need for clean water, and came home to inspire the school to take on a project of raising money for a well near a girl's boarding school in Giriama, Kenya. As of December 2012, the greater HNA community had raised about \$31,000...the students alone have raised more than \$8,000!,

## GOODBYE!

It was sad to see our interns leave, but we had a great “graduation.” And one of them did not go far away; the Sion sisters are loaning us Celia Martin, to serve as an UNANIMA volunteer for an indefinite period of time. She's a good researcher and— since she is also good at fixing things, is very handy to have around the office!

