

MEDICAL MISSION NEWS

Spring 2012

Mission Responses

The signs of the times—economic, environmental, cultural, political and spiritual crises—call and challenge us to respond relevantly in today's world and to make a difference. We want to focus on the marginalized in all areas: victims of human trafficking, refugees, migrants, people affected by calamities, the increasing number with mental illnesses or addiction disorders. Some of us are working directly with the victims of social injustice or natural disasters.

Sisters and Associates are looking for ways to bring about necessary changes leading to peace, justice and care for the Earth. This results from a deep desire that urges them to act justly and to love God's beloved creation. Others; scholars and artists, teachers and spiritual companions help to understand what "faith" can mean in our time. During the year there were unforeseen events that occurred in the different parts of the world that called for a response. Our sisters extended their assistance and support in whatever way possible.

- to more floods in Pakistan

With heavy monsoon rains and floods once again affecting millions of people in Pakistan, especially in the Sindh province. MMS in Pakistan participated in relief work together with the Mill Hill Missionaries. Two Sisters from our Lahore community went to offer help and hope to people who had lost their homes and often their livelihood as well



Pakistani Medical Mission Sister Rashida took food and mosquito nets to flood victims

- to young people with special needs

American Associate Jane's final project for the Hartford Seminary Masters in Spirituality has drawn her to a unique setting with special needs children. She is currently at a rehabilitation centre in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, while her husband continues as Headmaster of the Surabaya Indonesia International School. She writes: I am SO energized by all I see each day. 'My' students are a group of 6 young adults between 17 and 25. All are in wheelchairs, two have no speech at all and several have quite profound cognitive disabilities. However, they are the most joyful, enchanting group to be with. Yesterday, we did a session on poetry and one of the young women wrote a beautifully touching poem about her wheelchair. We translated it into English and today we will share it in both languages. Incredible when you know that all of these young people were hidden away at home and had never been to school until the last year or so. They all had to start by learning the alphabet. Clearly they are soaking up any and all information given to them with sheer delight.

On the other side of the classroom, there are about 12 very young children who are brought to the centre each day from the surrounding area. They all have profound disabilities, but again, are so happy to be in this very nurturing, loving environment. I had thought of using music with them. What a privilege it is for me to be here with such a group of students and teachers where there is so much to observe and learn



Jane with the young people at the rehabilitation centre

- to teenagers experiencing violence

American Medical Mission Sister Teresita founded the Center for the Empowerment of Women in Philadelphia five years ago. Its mission is, "To stop the silence and put an end to all violence against women and girls." February is National Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month in the U.S. To address this issue, the Center for the Empowerment of Women sponsored a "Spoken Word" event. It was a Poetry competition about teen dating violence. Young people between the ages of 13 and 21 were invited to share their feelings, philosophy, and experiences of dating. Teresita tells us: "This was a truly collaborative event, led by Aislin Lavin, my volunteer at the Women's Center, and Stephanie Bartusis, a poet and free lance journalist. Also Christina Stoltz, Director of a Pilates Studio, was a consultant and very generously offered her studio for the event."

The Kensington International Business High School's Guitar Club provided music both before and after the poets shared their pieces. A panel of four judges decided on the top three contenders, who received awards.

Teresita has been a nurse-midwife in Bangladesh, a local and state advocate for maternal-child health in Pennsylvania, and a 20-year faculty member at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing. This has been a whole new learning experience for her, including a new approach for dealing with the social problem of violence against women. It has been an introduction to a part of the culture that is using the art form of the 'Spoken Word' to give the message as to how to view such problems in society and it has also given a new vocabulary!

*At the
"Spoken
Word" event.*

*- sharing
experiences*



One of the contestants



- to the typhoon in the Philippines

Mud, mud, mud – inside and out

Filipina Medical Mission Sister Mary Jane writes about MMS response to typhoon Sendong that hit the Northern Mindanao region of the Philippines on December 17, 2011 causing many deaths and 500 missing people. My community was the MMS community nearest to the affected areas of Malaybalay City, Bukidnon. When the typhoon came, we experienced heavy rain and strong wind from the afternoon of December 16 to early morning of Dec. 17. Malaybalay did not experience any floods in the streets, and we were all safe. According to the local people, it was the first time for Bukidnon to experience a typhoon. The Diocese of Malaybalay, Bukidnon gathered donations of goods and cash for relief distribution.

Our community requested our youth groups, Medical Mission Youth (MMY) and the officers of the Parish Youth Apostolate to help in the sorting out of clothes. They spent two nights and a day making sure that the clothes were still wearable and usable. The Diocese conducted the relief distribution through their Social Action Center.

Continuous heavy rains followed the typhoon resulting in landslides and overflowing rivers. An earthquake with a magnitude of 5.1 was experienced in Surigao City. A week after the flash floods I was able to participate in the relief distribution together with 98 other volunteers: young people, community organizers, lawyer, teachers, church people and others. At an evacuation center hundreds of people were packed into a small basketball court, each family in an area 5 ft by 5 ft. A thousand families were given packages of rice, canned goods, noodles, drinking water and some items of personal hygiene.

Carmen and Balulang villages are located beside the Cagayan River. Hundreds of houses there were washed away by the flash floods leaving only posts or flooring



Mary Jane with a young woman happy to survive

of the houses. I met two young men who were among the survivors. They were both carried away by the flood waters. They shared that they heard voices shouting for help but they could not do anything because it was totally dark. One was able to hold on to a log and was found by a fisherman in the sea the next day. The other held on to a water container and was found in the sea by coast guards also the next day. Another man told me that he had been searching for his father everywhere, even in funeral homes. He was afraid that his father was already dead and might be one of those unidentified bodies buried in a mass grave. A lady pointed to me where her house was standing before the flash floods. Now, everything is gone. Nothing of the 100 houses built there was left. At least 15 from their neighborhood, mostly children were carried away and might already be dead. Before we bade goodbye, she hugged me tightly and said no words, just a loud cry and then a deep sigh, grateful that nobody was hurt in her family.

I don't know how much time it will take for Earth to restore herself, maybe it never will. For the victims, it will take a long time before they can recover from this tragedy and find their rightful place again. The little that we can do for them or share with them means a lot. Many believe that this is not just a natural phenomenon. We all have a part in this. As the Bishop of Malaybalay, Jose Cabantan said, "this is not just climate change, but a climate sin". We pray especially for those who have primary responsibility for the destruction of the Earth and in the loss of many innocent lives. We need to remember that part of the Earth has lost its life due to the misuse and overuse of our natural resources. The mud, the water and the cut trees killed hundreds of people. This event needs to be not only an EYE-OPENER but a HEART-OPENER too for all of us.

- to development for women

Indian MMS Rosalia has been in mission for 21 years working with a rural community that is 99% Hindu. In this fast-changing age, it is important to empower women and enable them to keep their land, however little they have, in order to preserve the values of family life, and their rich ancestral heritage. Selling land for purposes other than farming for an attractive price is a temptation. The Ishwari project offers the young women of surrounding villages a nine months training program "Integrated Development for Women," and they also work in a tribal village 30 km from Phulgaon. Students come from different villages and have been able to form microcredit groups. It has been a difficult but necessary task to persuade them to learn to read and write, so that at least they could sign their own bank accounts. A very experienced community development staff is working with many self-help groups of older women and young girls who come for the integrated development training programme.

The programme includes embroidery, arts and crafts, tailoring, culinary arts and some extra curricular activities. The women are also given sessions on health and making herbal remedies for common ailments. A doctor comes for a weekly health clinic and besides attending to the health needs of the people, talks are given on sanitation and nutrition.

All the activities are directed towards enabling the rural women to become self reliant. Most of the women and students come from simple rural communities and feel at home because of the simple structure. In Phulgaon inter-religious dialogue is fostered among those working together and in the wider community of 99 % Hindus by living the values of the gospel and celebrating important Hindu and Christian festivals with them. Rosalia's life is her message to the people – to go beyond religious , cultural, and social barriers and create a harmonious community where all are welcome to sit around one table.



Learning new crafts



A microcredit group



The doctor giving some health teaching



*Indian Medical Mission Sisters
Rosalia and Kalpana at Phulgaon*

- by forming self
help groups
- a state
government
award for Indian
MMS Rose



The presentation

Rose has dedicated her life to the social and economic empowerment of the rural masses. She has introduced rubber and coconut plantations to the people of the region, changing their destitution into prosperity and economic well-being. She has helped to improve the educational standards of the people and is a renowned torch bearer in the field of adult education. Her award is surely well deserved.

OBITUARY

The Rev Vincent Melia - Newcastle upon Tyne. Mrs Aileen O'Neill, Winlaton, Tyne and Wear.

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