

Mercy Global Concerns

Assessment and evaluation of Fall 08 In-Service Program for Sisters of Mercy

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Constituency with whom I work: Diverse Roman Catholic faith community in Pawtucket, Rhode Island; Catholic grammar school (pre K to 8th grade).

I had the privilege of attending the Mercy Global Concern workshop, “Bridging the Gap between Policy and Practice,” which was organized by Deirdre Mullen, Director of Mercy Global Concern, in New York City from October 13th – 24th, 2008. I did so with incredible respect and belief in the mission of the United Nations whose preamble reflects the ideals world governments, I feel, must strive for in an increasingly hostile world, made smaller by humanity’s access to technology. The values spoken of in the UN’s preamble are human rights, equality, justice, respect and tolerance. To that list I would add protecting the world’s resources so future generations can take pleasure in what we enjoy today. In today’s increasingly interdependent world, the need for international law and international governing institutions that promote the common good are essential for the sake of humanity.

One focus of this workshop was on The Millennium Development Goals agreed to in 2000 by member states of the United Nations to address the growing needs of our world’s poor people. These goals:

- ❖ Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- ❖ Achieve universal primary education
- ❖ Promote gender quality and empower women
- ❖ Reduce child mortality
- ❖ Improve maternal health
- ❖ Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- ❖ Ensure environmental sustainability
- ❖ Develop a global partnership for development.

are potentially transformative and humanly possible if we and the government leaders of the richest countries in the world have the will, determination and courage to change our behaviors. Perhaps today’s

world financial crisis will lessen the worldwide gap between rich people and poor people (as one of the presenters at the workshop, namely, Angela Hartigan, RSM said, “A poor person is you with less money.”) and raise the consciences of humanity to question why:

- 25,000 people die every day of hunger – that’s over 1,000 people an hour or one person every three and a half seconds.
- Over 1.2 billion people in our world live on less than \$1.00 a day.
- 20% of the earth’s people in rich nations use 75% of the world’s resources and produce 80% of the world’s waste.

Yet there is sufficient food and resources to provide for everyone on the planet. This workshop reinforced the fact that what we lack is the political will and personal conversion necessary to use these resources equitably and to distribute them fairly.

This workshop not only increased my knowledge of the state of affairs around our world, but it stimulated my heart to find ways to try to alleviate global suffering. For in the words of one of our presenters, Margaret A. Farley, RSM, “suffering that does not have to be—suffering that results from poverty and exploitation, violence and abuse, human indifference and false judgment, cruelty, and abandonment. Here is the suffering that cries out for an end not in death but in change.” So the question for me after this experience is, “What am I doing to alleviate global suffering?”

The workshop also:

- ✓ Increased my awareness of the mission of the United Nations and the many NGO’s that maintain consultative status at the United Nations. I intend to log on to the United Nations website weekly to stay connected, informed and involved in their efforts.
- ✓ Invited me into and enabled me to personally experience being part of a Mercy global community



and challenged me to stay in touch and offer my support to Sisters of Mercy from Wales, Tonga, Jamaica, Newfoundland, Australia, Johannesburg, South Africa, Ireland, England, New Zealand, United States, Zambia, Philippines, and Kenya.

- ✓ Presented concrete examples of Mercy sponsored programs which bridge the gap between policy and practice, i.e., All-Africa Conference, Sister To Sister, Mercy Center in the Bronx, and Mercy Haven on Long Island, NY.

I approached the writing of this paper with a broader sense of hope than I would have had if I wrote it immediately following the Bridging the Gap workshop (October 13-24 2008) because of the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States. I believe he will restore hope and energy to a nation that at its heart, I believe, would love to see this country and its citizens work towards bridging the gap between policy and practice in the areas of extreme poverty and hunger, education, healthcare, sustainability and violence, in particular against women in our own country and around the world.

The issue of violence, in particular against women around the world, was passionately addressed by Carol Rittner, RSM on the last day of our gathering. I had never heard the dreadful statistics relating to sexual violence against women as a weapon of war. I hope and pray we, Sisters of Mercy worldwide (some 11,000 strong), have the courage to use our collective voice to ensure the fullness of life and equality in church and society for women worldwide.

How will you use this experience?

I will share what I learned with my Mercy community, with my family, friends, colleagues and with my faith community via our Sunday parish bulletin, homilies/reflections given (each Wednesday I preach at a Communion service), and in individual conversations. This year our school community decided to learn more about the Earth Charter and to promote its values in the school, hoping to create awareness of the need to work towards creating a sustainable future for our planet. I will attempt to work with them on continuing to promote the values of the Earth Charter in our community.

I will send a congratulatory letter to President Elect Barack Obama urging him to fulfill his campaign's promise to pay our U.N. dues in full and on time in the future. I will challenge him to provide the "bold and effective leadership" that he spoke of in his June 24, 2008 letter to Josh Weston of the United Nations Association of the USA. I will plea with him to provide the leadership necessary to ensure that the United States of America is doing its part as global citizens to ensure that the Millennium Goals are achieved. I will also implore him to promote the values spoken of in Earth Charter for the sake

of future generations of the human family and our world. I will encourage him to turn his words into actions:

“Many of the gravest threats faced by the United States are transnational threats: the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, climate change, and global pandemics like HIV/AIDS. These threats are bred in places marked by other transnational challenges: mass atrocities and genocide, weak and failed states, and persistent poverty. By definition, these are challenges that no single country can manage. A strong and competent United Nations is more vital than ever.”

1. **My participation has (please tick where applicable)**
 - a. Given me new ideas to try on my return to my home base √
 - b. Revitalized me to continue my work √
 - c. Motivated me to keep in touch with my colleagues from the seminar √
 - d. Stimulated my interest in international affairs √
 - e. Given me a broader perspective for my work √
 - f. Provided me with a community of support √
 - g. Empowered me to make a difference on my return. √

2. **My participation has increased my understanding of:**
 - a. The work of the Sisters of Mercy √
 - b. The United Nations √

Thank you! Again what a privilege!