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IIMA Project “The right to education of children living and/or working in the street”

The prominence of the civil society in advancing the interest of children in street situation has invited the attention of the United Nations on the matter. Consequently, at the 16th Session of the Human Rights Council held from 28 February to 25 March 2011, a full day of meeting was devoted on the rights of children living and/or working in the street.

As part of the civil society that has influenced various endeavours of the United Nations, the IIMA Human Rights Office in Geneva has been consistently leading its efforts towards the promotion and protection of the right to education of street children. Two (2) training sessions have already been completed in 2009 and 2010 for educators from Latin America, Asia and French-speaking Africa working with street children. In line with its mission of creating a definitive change in the lives of these children, IIMA continues to strengthen its advocacy in collaboration with other NGOs. IIMA, in partnership with VIDES International, Edmund Rice International (ERI) and the Foundation of Marist Solidarity International (FMSI) embarked on a new project for human rights defenders in the field.

These organizations acknowledge the increase in the number of children throughout the world who live or are at risk of living in street situations. Marginalization of these children has been aggravated due to lack of professional educators and adequate educational modalities. Accordingly, IIMA, VIDES, ERI and FMSI have put education in the forefront of their activities. They share the common conviction that in every child or young person, no matter how marginalized he/she might be, there are positive energies that, when adequately stimulated thru education, could nurture a new quality of life.

The project had the following objectives:

- to provide technical knowledge on UN mechanisms relating to the promotion and protection of children’s rights;
- to foster the establishment of networks not only among project participants, but also with diplomats, United Nations officers, and other NGOs representatives;



Participants and organizers of the 6th training course.

- to share with governmental bodies and other actors concerned the best practices experienced by human rights defenders in the field; and
- to provide guidelines that shall improve the educational strategies used for children, and notably street children.

The training took place from 27 February to 11 March 2011 and hosted eight (8) human rights defenders namely: Ms. Anna Grassi and Ms. Yuphadee Shariwapak from IIMA Thailand; Ms. Anna Theresa Cruz from VIDES Philippines; Mr. Steve Rocha, Mr. Shane Wood and Mr. Kevin Mascharenhas from ERI India, Australia and Ireland, respectively; and Mr. Manuel Mendoza and Mr. Vincente Falchetto from FMSI Spain and Brazil, respectively.

The participants shared their experiences, testimonies, good practices and main challenges, in their respective fieldwork with street children. They had a training on existing UN mechanisms dealing with protection of the rights of the child. Particular attention was given to the role of civil society in the work of the Committee on Rights of the Child and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Special Procedures and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The participants were trained on how to utilize and benefit from these mechanisms. They were also given the opportunity to attend meetings at the 16th session of the Human Rights Council. As a culminating event, participants were allowed to publicly speak about their work and practices in the field at the side event organized by the four organizations held on 4th of March 2011 at Palais des Nations. The project was concluded through a practical exercise whereby participants were trained to produce official UN written statements.

All throughout the training course, the participants eagerly engaged themselves in every activity showing their keen interest as well as potential in bringing about progress in their own community.

6th training course for human rights defenders working with children in street situation



The 6th training course organized by IIMA took place from 27 February to 11 March 2011 at its Human Rights Office in Geneva. It was carried out using a theoretical-practical approach.

Through the interactive lectures, participants were able to learn in detail the UN mechanisms to safeguard human rights. Whereas, the participation and attendance of the participants in public sessions of the Human Rights Council at Palais des Nations allowed them to observe the actual execution of the said mechanisms. This methodology was aimed to better protect and promote human rights in the field by training skilled human rights defenders who are capable of disseminating their knowledge to

others. In other words, they were not only expected to maximize their own skills but also become “multipliers” and trainers themselves, once back in their respective countries.

The participants coming from Thailand, Philippines, Ireland, Australia, India, Spain and Brazil belong to the four (4) NGOs, namely, IIMA, VIDES International, Marist Solidarity International and Edmund Rice International.

Sr. **MariaGrazia Caputo**, Director of IIMA Human Rights Office, opened the course emphasizing the importance of being based in Geneva. She explained that actual presence in the same place where the UN offices are allows an NGO to build a solid bridge between national and international efforts towards the promotion and protection of human rights. Through the Geneva Office, IIMA human rights defenders working in the field can better communicate to the international community the voices of those suffering from human rights violations. In the same vein, the Geneva Office can serve as an effective vehicle to inform the people in the field on policy decisions adopted by the international community. This will



Sr MariaGrazia Caputo

sufficiently equip the people on the ground with tools to level up their advocacy work to their own government.

She presented the training course highlighting IIMA's main objectives: to guide human rights defenders in utilizing the UN mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights, especially the right to education; to foster the development of a network with other NGOs committed in the same field; and to facilitate exchange of inputs that shall enable the international and national actions more effective and adequate through sharing of *best practices* applied in the field.



Sr Leonor Salazar

The training course was also animated by the presence of Sr. **Leonor Salazar**, General Director of VIDES International, who presented the organization emphasizing its strong inspiration from the Salesian Sisters values. VIDES is composed of young people desiring to have an experience as volunteers in the field to help vulnerable people living in difficult situations. The strong tie that binds IIMA and VIDES reflects the far reaching relationship and mutual respect between the Salesian Sisters and young volunteers in carrying out their activities for the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide.

The topics taken up during the training course were the UN system and its mechanisms created for the purpose of protecting and promoting human rights, such as the Human Rights Council, the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Procedures, the Universal Periodic Review and the Treaty Body system. Special attention was given to some international instruments that protect the rights of the child, namely the Convention on the Right of the Child and its Protocols.

In addition to the theoretical aspect, the training offered a practical segment consisting of the participation to the 16th Session of the Human Rights Council and to some meetings with other NGOs based in Geneva, such as Caritas International, International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE) and the Defence of Children International (DCI).

At the Human Rights Council, the participants had the opportunity to follow the Annual Full-day Meeting on the Rights of the Child, specifically on the issue of children living and/or working on the street; the presentation of the joint report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Pornography.

Finally, participants joined in a practical exercise aimed at enabling them to write a statement under UN the context. With the assistance of IIMA, participants were guided on the structure and basic information that shall form part of their statements to be submitted to one of the UN mechanisms, including therein recommendations they wanted to address to their governments.

Side event March 4th, 2011: Right to education of children living and/or working in the street

On the occasion of the 16th session of the Human Rights Council, IIMA organized a side event on the **“Right to Education of Children Living and/or Working in the Street”**.



Ms. Maria Francisca Ize-Charrin

The side event, held on 4 March at room XXIV at Palais des Nations, was made possible with the cooperation of VIDES, ERI and FMSI and under the sponsorship of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), the Embassy of Uruguay, the Permanent Mission of Holy See and the International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE).

The event was moderated by **Maria Francisca Ize-Charrin**, former Director of the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The panel of the meeting was composed of the Ambassador of



Uruguay, Laura Dupuy Lasserre; the Ambassador of Philippines, Evan P. Garcia; the Holy See representative, Mgr. Silvano Tomasi; and the representative from the OHCHR and responsible officer on the follow up of the Study on Violence Against Children, Imma Guerras Delgado.

Representatives from IIMA, VIDES, FMSI and ERI shared their experiences with children at risk in their respective countries: Philippines, Ireland, India, Thailand and Brazil. They discussed their particular practices on welcoming, assisting, rehabilitating, and reintegrating street children into the society, with education as an instrument to prevention.

The strategy has been again “positive denunciation”, i.e., presentation of best practices which might steer governments to prioritizing children’s issues and to ensuring the enjoyment of one or more of their rights.

The side event was opened by IIMA representative, **Daniel Charrin**, who stressed that sharing of best practices shall assist the States to demonstrate progress in their basic obligations: to respect, protect and fulfill the right to education for all.



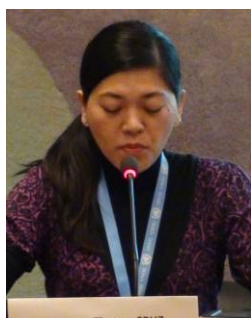
Mr. Daniel Carrin

The second speaker was **Laura Dupuy Lasserre**, Ambassador of Uruguay, a country strongly committed to protecting the rights of children in the Human Rights Council. She recalled that children who live and/or work in the street are in a risky situation. The eradication of this problem has been a big challenge that requires socialization of and economic support to families, and provision of free primary education. She also pointed out the necessity of guaranteeing equality not only in the access to the education but also in the quality of the education.



Ms. Laura Dupuy Lasserre

The first to give a testimony on children’s situation was a volunteer from VIDES Philippines, **Anna Theresa Cruz**. She discussed VIDES mobile library project, emphasizing its goal of making education available to all children, even to those who live and/or work in the street. Called “*Busina Mo, Dunong Ko*” (Your Horn, My Knowledge), the mobile library serves more or less 2,000 children living in the poor communities of Manila, the capital of the country. In the Philippine context, street children are categorized as follows: children who live and work in the street because they do not have homes; children that work in the street but have a family or a house to come back to; and completely abandoned children. The mobile library provides basic literacy skills, conducts reading and story telling sessions and assists out-of-school youths to return to school. Recently, it has accomplished various programs raising children’s awareness concerning their rights.



Ms. Anna Theresa Cruz

As immediately reflected in the words of the Ambassador of the Philippines, **Evan P. Garcia**, the best practice presented by VIDES recognized the effectiveness of reaching out to children thru education. The Ambassador related that the phenomenon of children living or working in the street cannot be separated from the problem of development, saying that the international community should assist countries in protecting their most vulnerable communities. The Ambassador then presented the responses of the Philippine government on the issue, targeting the most disadvantaged families. The government is ensuring that education for all children is provided. The government also provides financial support in the form of scholarships. And the success of these initiatives has been due to the government’s



Mr. Evan P. Garcia

ability to monitor the allocation of funds. The Ambassador concluded his speech by stressing the necessity to share best practices to eradicate, in a more effective way, the phenomenon of children that are living in a street situation.

The next speaker, **Kevin Masceranhas**, Director of Support and Integration Unit for New Communities, described the experience of ERI with the children of refugees, asylum seekers, and in general with the children of migrants that are living in temporary centers in Ireland. ERI provides legal advice and psychological support to families, young people and children. To facilitate the integration of newly arrived refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in the country, ERI teaches them the English



Mr. Kevin Masceranhas

language. The English language enables them to pass examinations at school and prevents further social exclusion and marginalization. ERI also works with youth between 18-21 years old classified as “aged out minors” who leaves their country of origin and are not accompanied by their parents or any family members.

Steve Rocha, Coordinator of the Social Justice of ERI, presented the program implemented by his organization in India. The project’s objective is to promote the right to education, health and the right of children to take part in decisions regarding issues of poverty and social exclusion. To achieve these objectives, ERI has created a platform where children can make their voice heard by the governments. A collaboration of NGOs has organized a number of national events, special gatherings, and campaigns on behalf of Dalit or “Out Castes” children who belong to the most vulnerable groups. Thanks to the project, the Minister of Finance increased by 17% allocations for programs aimed at reducing poverty; the children were invited to have a dialogue with the government; and acquired the ability to communicate their ideas and needs, taking an active and leading role in the political agenda.



Mr. Steve Rocha



Mgr. Silvano Tomasi

The participants then heard the intervention of **Mgr. Silvano Tomasi**, the Holy See representative. He pointed out the importance of persevering efforts in favour of more than 100 million children worldwide who are still living in street situation. During his intervention, Mgr. Tomasi suggested three steps to combat the phenomenon: first, redesign the approach to a less formal and structured model of education according to actual needs of children in street situations; second, implement at national level a new legislation specifically designed for children and young people at risk (*juvenile legislation*); and finally, to promote a cooperative network among civil society organizations to look after the

rehabilitation of street children and their reintegration into families.

Imma Guerras Delgado, representative of the OHCR, in her intervention, made a point on terminology used to refer to these children. She said that even experts, including UN experts, continue to speak of “street children” even after the UN has adopted the recent term “children in street situations” to suggest the temporary nature of their conditions. She further exemplified the need to increase and systematize data collection to fill the serious statistical gaps on the number of children who still live in street situation in different countries. Finally, Ms. Delgado drew attention of the governments on the necessity to establish structured partnerships with NGOs that carry out educational activities on the national territory in order to facilitate rapid dissemination of good practices effected by these NGOs.



Ms. Imma Guerras Delgado



Ms. Yuphadee Charuwipak.

The intervention of **Yuphadee Charuwipak**, representative of IIMA, captivated the audience with her experience in the small village of Phonsung, Thailand. In Phonsung, IIMA manages a big school which houses about 700 children at risk, belonging to very poor families or whose parents are separated or forced to migrate for work. For these children, the school has not only been a place to learn but also a home for guidance and support, as it allows them to live in a safe environment, away from drugs, from drug dealing, from other criminal activities, and generally from the street. Now, with a newly built school, IIMA is able to provide training to a higher number of children. The intervention of Ms.

Charuwipak was concluded with the recommendation to the Thai government to pay more attention to the right to education in the most isolated villages, like Phonsung, where children in the absence of opportunities can become easy victims of trafficking and exploitation.

Finally, **Vincente Falqueto**, representative of FMSI, illustrated the education program launched in a small town near Brasilia to help the children in the street. The project called “youth circuit”, established a center that serves children and adolescents between 7 and 20 years of age, without families or who belong to very poor families, practically making the street their home. The project also



Mr. Vicente Falqueto

includes activities for the families. Through the support of 12 people, including psychologists, educators, doctors, and technicians working in the center, FMSI is able to provide continuous formation to the children. The center holds cultural, musical, tutorial, psychological guidance and human rights education programs for personal, family and skills development of the children.

The project, undertaken in collaboration with government institutions and other NGOs, has facilitated the reintegration into society of many children by improving their academic performance and allowing them to have access to university. Ultimately, their children have become more sensitive to the issue of human rights and have taken part in several discussion forums on this issue.

The side event, attended by representatives of States and members of civil society, was followed by some interesting interventions from the audience. Civil society representatives took the floor to express their appreciation of the experiences presented by the five human rights defenders working in the field. A young Tuareg of Mali shared his personal experience as a street child who was born and had lived in the desert. The young man stressed that education is a development tool, essential to increase awareness of one's rights.

At the end of the event, the organizers noted with satisfaction the achievement of an important objective: to recognize education as a fundamental tool for the enjoyment of all human rights.

The training course viewed by participants

By the end of the training course, participants shared their views about the experience they had. They were asked to assess the global usefulness of the training course, considering either the theoretical lessons they learned regarding the different human rights protection bodies and mechanisms of the United Nations, or their participation to the 16th session of the Human Rights Council. They also gave their opinion on the side event and on the meetings organized with other NGOs active in the field of human rights. General appreciation was expressed respecting the fitting combination of theoretical and practical training. Here are some of their views:

Anna Grassi, IIMA Thailand: "The training course has been a great possibility to learn and to share experiences for the purpose of carrying out our educational mission following human rights based approach. It's a remarkable experience that should be done by many other Sisters."

Yuphadee Charuwipak, IIMA Thailand: "The training course has been very useful because it opened my vision about human rights through lessons held in IIMA Office and the participation to the Human Rights Council session. General atmosphere of the course has been characterized by fraternal sharing with all participants who work and dedicate their life to protect human rights worldwide".

Anna Theresa Cruz, VIDES Philippines: "The training course has been very informative and empowering. It not only added our knowledge but capacitated us to train others as well. The meeting with other NGOs was a bright idea as it opened doors for collaboration."

Kevin Masceranhas, ERI, Ireland: "It was very well presented. It gave us a global view of human rights mechanisms and, in particular, made us aware of existing instruments to defend and protect children rights."

Shane Wood, ERI Canada: "The participation to the Human Rights Council session, the theoretical training course and practical exercises have been really helpful. The lectures were very well-informed and gave excellent information with good illustrations."

Steve Rocha, ERI India: "I did pick up a lot of the energy from the passion and the experience of people here and of the people the course brought me in connect with. It has not only left me with hopes and dreams but also with practical tools and connections to make these sessions a lived reality for the people in the grassroots. My commitment will be to translate all these systems into Hindi and then proceed to spread in my country all knowledge learned during this training."

Denis Claivaz, ERI representative in Geneva: "our 3 Brothers could not stop expressing their gratitude to you, Sr MariaGrazia, and your team for a very fruitful training program. They specifically mentioned the professionalism of those giving the inputs and the hospitality of you and your Community. I want to add my specific thanks for all that you did to make this program a success."

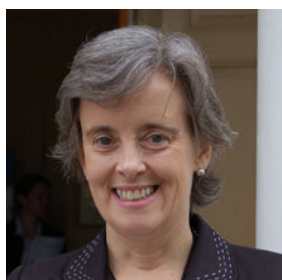
Joint Report on national complaint mechanisms for violation of children's rights

On the occasion of the 16th Session of Human Rights Council, IIMA attended the meeting about the growing problem of violence against children, which took place on 8 March at Palais des Nations.

Considering that challenges still persist in the area of eradication of violence against children and in order to maximize efforts, in 2010 the Human Rights Council invited the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children to collaborate with the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. The aim of this collaboration was to submit a joint report respecting national counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms where children can go to talk, complain, and denounce the violence suffered. Thus, during the meeting the two independent experts explained clearly and exhaustively the joint activities they have undertaken during the last year in this regard, including their individual reports on their respective mandates.

They underscored the obstacles that still remain and encouraged States to adopt recommendations to take specific measures at the national and international level and to implement the ones already existing but which require to be widely disseminated. They affirmed that all the counselling and complaint instruments should make the children the center of their interest and be more accessible to all victims without any form of discrimination.

The two experts then reported on the progress of their own mandates.



Ms. Marta Santos Pais

Marta Santos Pais, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children reported that her mandate was carried out with the indispensable support of national and international institutions. She was pleased to announce that in the past year, international instruments have been adopted, namely the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, the Roadmap to eradicate the Worst Forms of Child Labour, including sexual abuse and exploitation, and the General Comment on the Right of the Child to Freedom from all Forms of Violence adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Further, positive steps have been made by an impressive number of regional organizations, civil society, and other organizations that seek to uphold day by day, the rights of the child. In spite of everything, however, the Special Representative recognized the inadequacy of results realized until now.

Next, Mrs. Pais said that important developments have emerged in the field of prevention of violence against children. The same is true with respect to the monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations of UN Study on Violence against Children. However, as mandated, the Special Representative shall continue to promote the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child by 2012, and the realization of a global survey to capture the critical process of change in the aspect of prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children.

Finally, she claimed that, often, children are victims of violence in the place where they are expected to benefit from special care and protection but this area requires her to put more in-depth insights on the study on the prevention and elimination of violence within education and justice system.

Special Procedures is the general name given to independent experts who assess human rights situation and offer recommendations to governments to improve the enjoyment of human rights.

Najat Maalla M'jid, Special Rapporteur on violence against children, was nominated in May 2008. The mandate was appointed in 1990 by the resolution 1990/68 in order to investigate the exploitation of children around the world and to make recommendations to Governments, United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations.

The Special Representative to the Secretary-General (SRSG) on Violence Against Children, **Marta Santos Pais**, was nominated in May 2009 from Ban ki Moon. The appointment of this mandate was made following the recommendations of the UN Study on Violence Against Children (2006) in order to promote prevention and elimination of all violence against children, to encourage international and regional cooperation, and to ensure follow-up and monitoring of the Study's recommendations.



Ms. Najat Maalla M'jid

The Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Pornography, **Najat Maalla M'jid**, in her annual report, declared that although the ratification of international instruments by States has led to the adoption of initiatives and actions to curtail children violence, the same have not always provided adequate and effective safeguards.

Therefore, she strongly recommended Member States to create protection mechanisms that are accessible to minor victims and protect them from possible reprisals. The employment of duly trained personnel dealing with victims was also recommended.

She also called upon the need to integrate these mechanisms in a wider, global national strategy based on a multi-sectorial approach involving families and various actors of civil society, such as NGOs and local communities.

In particular, Mrs. M'jid pointed out the importance of elaborating a comprehensive action plan, concerning justice and police sectors; and education and health which take into consideration multiple typologies of intervention, with particular regard to the prevention.

Given the transnational nature of the phenomena of child sale and sexual exploitation, she underlined the exigency of developing a strict cooperation at the regional and international level, for the purpose of promoting exchange of information and expertise concerning judicial and police systems; of spreading good practices; and of harmonizing national legislations.

Finally, she reported on the situation of children in the four (4) countries she visited by September 2009, namely, the United Arab Emirates, Senegal, El Salvador and United States of America.

The Annual-day on the rights of the child

We call them “street children”, “children in street situation”, “street connected children” or “children of the street” but which ever term we use to refer to them, the common factor is that for these children, the street is the fulcrum of their lives, the source of both pain and sustenance. This year’s Annual Day on the Rights of a Child was dedicated to these children. For one whole day, on 09 March 2011, the Human Rights Council facilitated a general thematic debate on the “Rights of Children Living and/or Working on the Streets.”

At present, it is estimated that there are 100 million street children around the world in wealthy and developing countries alike but empirical data points to a much larger figure. As the number grows, exclusion, inequity and violence against a street child become more complex. To address this seriously evolving phenomenon, the Human Rights Council focused the dialogue, first, on the root causes that lead a child to go to the street; and second, on prevention strategies and responses. Special *Rapporteurs*, experts, representatives of the Secretary General and the International Labour Organization, States and NGOs joined and actively participated in the discussion.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pilay, opened the session by expressing great concern over the lack of reliable data collection and research device to undertake a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the situation. Given the isolation and fear that children in street situation experience every day, it must be truly difficult to get a glimpse of their real life stories. Father Patrick Shanahan, President of Street Invest, an NGO training professionals working with street children, introduced the participation approach in understanding street children as opposed to prescription approach. The former concentrates on the street child, the latter on the researcher’s perceptions. He advised that we must not attempt to impose solutions which are neither relevant nor useful to the reality of the street children. We must start to look into the reality of their life from their perspective rather than our own. Father Shanahan who had developed some eleven (11) years ago a head counting method, also shared his life-long and life-changing experiences with the street children of Africa.

Marco Antonio Da Silva Suoza, a social educator, added that an adequate response to children in street situation is to be present where they are, to respect their knowledge and giving them opportunities and

taking into account their opinion and capacity to transform their present situation. Professionals who work with street children must be humble, tolerant, able to listen, have leadership, authority, availability for dialogue and a critical look into the reality. Most importantly, they must believe that it is possible to change the reality of street children.

Speakers agreed that children living in the street, particularly girls, are extremely vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, including sexual violence by older street boys. Once in the streets, the children become prone to assault and trafficking yet they are considered as threats to the society. Often invisible and overlooked, they are seen as not having rights.

Poverty conspiring with hostile family environment, exclusion and lack of education force a child to the streets. Other factors were identified such as natural calamities, political crisis and migration. And the least that States could do for these children is refrain from subjecting them to punishment for their survival behaviours, such as begging, vagrancy, truancy and running away.

The discussion led to a caucus to hasten protection and promotion of the rights of street children and in so doing the international community has innovatively decided to actually include street children representatives in national policy and decision making processes.

IIMA and VIDES International intervene on human rights violation in Panama, Honduras and Lebanon

On 16 and 17 March 2011, at the adoption of the outcome documents for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), IIMA presented two oral statements on Honduras and Lebanon, and VIDES intervened on the situation of human rights in Panama, before the Human Rights Council.

Concerning Panama, **Maria D'Onofrio**, on behalf of VIDES International welcomed the constructive participation of the State at the UPR. Nevertheless, VIDES remains concerned about the human rights situation of indigenous peoples and those living in the most marginalized areas of the country, especially in the region of Darién. Disparities between main cities and remote regions still persist with respect to access to basic social services such as drinking water and sanitation, and education. With special regard to intercultural education, despite the adoption of national law N. 34 in 1995 and the efforts of the government to implement it, current system neither provides bilingual education nor recognizes the value of indigenous culture. In this regard, VIDES has perceived major issues concerning the teaching staff and, therefore, recommended Panama: to guarantee the teachers with adequate remuneration that shall allow them to fully cover the transportation and other expenses in performing their duties in remote areas; and to provide indigenous teachers with adequate training on the value of indigenous cultures to promote the creation of a truly multicultural society in Panama.

Anna Theresa Cruz, on Honduras, expressed IIMA's approval relating the government's acceptance of the majority of the recommendations given during the UPR. IIMA, however, remains concerned about the low quality of education in the country, the persisting issue of child labor, and the estimated 10,000 street children who survive thru begging, stealing and prostitution. It was, therefore, recommended that the Honduran government increase budget allocations for education, offer subsidies to disadvantaged families especially in the rural areas and indigenous communities, initiate awareness-raising campaigns, create alternative sources of income, and ensure children's right to adequate housing, nutrition and healthcare.

Daniela Maccioni, on the behalf of IIMA, congratulated Lebanon for its serious and responsible cooperation at the UPR and recognised the improvements achieved in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. Nevertheless, it was pointed out that many problems still remain in the field of education. Accordingly, IIMA recommended Lebanese Government to draft a law that brings the level of secondary education up to 15 years and to intensify efforts to guarantee free and quality education. Special concerns were expressed concerning Palestinian children's access to State education system since only 20% of them attend public schools. For that reason, IIMA urged Lebanon to undertake necessary measures to guarantee access to education for all. Finally, Ms. Maccioni raised the issue of discrimination in the

workplace which adversely affects Palestinian refugees and encouraged Lebanese authorities to take adequate actions in order to counter the problem.

Our first training course with IIMA

From the conceptualization until the assessment of the training course, we, the volunteers and interns, have strived to contribute to make the project as fruitful as it can be. In the process, we were able to bring out our finest abilities. Working as a team, we have learned how to maximize the best qualities of each one of us. We believe that we have done well as marked by the gestures of the participants. Each day during the training, we were greeted by the participants with a big warm smile as we usher them to their seats. The training course had been a suitable avenue to meet these human rights defenders from different places and backgrounds. Such pleasant acquaintance, we hope, will lead to a lasting friendship.



From left: Anna Theresa Cruz, Roberta Bompensa, Daniela Maccioni

As we were with the participants all along, we have gained a clearer perspective on how we could improve our work at IIMA. Since the reality of child rights violations in every corner of world are far from imagination here in the sophisticated city of Geneva, the testimonies of human rights defenders' respecting their firsthand experiences with children living in street situation are indispensable inputs in the decision and policy making process of the United Nations. Clearly, IIMA's project is another step forward in field of human rights advocacy.

Our internship at IIMA has conferred us with theoretical understanding of the complexity of the UN system. And then, our frequent participation in side events, the Universal Periodic Review and meetings with other NGOs, the Human Rights Council and Treaty Bodies provided us with actual exposure on how such theories are put into practice. But aside from all these, we can proudly say we have developed within ourselves a broad and mature standpoint on human dignity. Indeed, IIMA has laid down for us everything that shall cultivate our personal and professional development.

IIMA Human Rights Office

If you are interested in receiving more information on IIMA Human Rights Office activities you can consult our Blog:

<http://iimahumanrights.blogspot.com/>

And if you are interested in FMA activities come to visit our website:

www.cgfmanet.org



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