



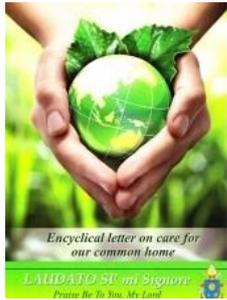
Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary

NGO with special consultative status in the **Economic and Social Council** of the United Nations since **2013** and with the **Department of Public Information** since **2006**.

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RSHM at the UN

April 2018



INTRODUCTION

In his 2016 Encyclical Pope Francis wrote “*The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development*” (Laudato Si # 13). In this issue of our News from the UN we focus on two major events during the last 2 months that are closely related to this challenge. Both the **Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (at the UN HQ in New York)** and the **World Social Forum (WSF) in Salvador, Brazil** focused on the struggles of peoples relating to the rights to land and natural resources. Those on the margins of our society today are often far from the centers of power, left out of the dialogue, and most at risk of “*being left behind*”. Both Forums prioritized their voices, and their struggles for justice.

RSHM were closely involved in both events. In this issue we are happy to share the experiences of **Srs. Mary Jo McElroy (NEP) – RSHM JPIC Coordinator; Ana Helena Andreão RSHM (B) and Rita de Cassia - Coordinator of REAJE, Brazil who participated in the WSF (Brazil).**

17th Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Indigenous peoples from around the world gathered at the UN HQ for two weeks in April during the **17th Session of the Permanent Forum of Indigenous Issues**. The theme of the 2018 session focused on their collective rights to lands, territories and resources. The people’s relationship to their ancestral lands are the source of their cultural, spiritual and social identity, the cornerstone of their wellbeing and the foundation of their traditional knowledge systems. These rights are vital for Indigenous People’s well-being and are at the heart of their struggles around the world. They are also key to addressing some of today’s most pressing global challenges relating to “*Care for our common Home*”, namely climate change and the preservation of biological diversity.



For (indigenous communities), land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best....” “Nevertheless, in various parts of the world, pressure is being put on them to abandon their homelands to make room for agricultural or mining projects which are undertaken without regard for the degradation of nature and culture”. (Laudato Si # 146)

During the Forum there was a strong call for Member States to advance Indigenous peoples’ collective rights to lands, halting the alienation of land in indigenous peoples’ territories and assisting in mapping the boundaries of their communal lands. Other recommendations stressed the importance of greater voice, participation and consultation with indigenous peoples. The Forum also urged United Nations funds, agencies and programmes to incorporate recognition of indigenous peoples’ collective rights to lands, territories and resources into their policies and programmes at the country level.

protect and advance indigenous peoples’ rights worldwide were adopted, **Mariam Wallet Aboubakrine, the Malian (Tuareg) Chairperson** of the United Nations **Permanent** Forum on Indigenous Issues said “*Despite some progress, indigenous peoples all over the world continue to fall behind.*” She highlighted the urgency of implementing the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.  [Watch a 1 min video.](#)

Rita de Cassia - Coordinator – REAJE *



RSHM presence at the World Social Forum (WSF) 2018

In March 2018 the World Social Forum returned to Brazil, “after a period of intense debate about the future of social struggles and the WSF process itself,”

The **Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary** were present at this return. With the theme: “**To Resist is to Create, to Resist is to Transform**”, the WSF 2018 took place in Salvador, Bahia, from March 13 to 17, with seminars, plenary sessions, workshops, cultural activities and conferences. We also had marches and demonstrations around the city.

This 13th assembly of the WSF assumed that the national and world context is practically the same, with the presence of: neoliberalism, nationalism, isolation, hatred, xenophobia, racism, sexism and various forms of discrimination and violence. And because this context is unfortunately global the WSF brought together peoples, territories and movements of resistance, in acts of resistance, “*but also with hope for another possible world of peace and social and environmental justice.*”



During these five days, we reflected and discussed, collectively, using themes, such as: democracy; development, social and environmental justice; human rights; feminism and women's struggle; peace and solidarity; black lives matter; and several others. The challenges and objectives of the WSF were so significant for us that we bring them into our hearts to implant in our daily actions.

* REAJE - Brazilian Province Network of those working in projects with the excluded

The actions are:

- To approach the struggles of resistance movements, promoting their convergence and unity in collective and complementary actions, preserving and valuing their diversity of identities, causes and expression, within a process of building anti-capitalist, anti-sexist and anti-colonial relations.
- To give visibility to the struggles of those who are invisible and have no voice: to the peoples and communities of

Mary Jo McElroy RSHM
JPIC COORDINATOR

Memories from the World Social Forum



On the first day of the Forum, I went to the tent called **Human Rights, Our Common Home**. The subject for the morning was **'Ecumenical Missions'** and several churches were involved in these missions – mainly Catholic and Lutheran. Going into the tent I saw that there were many indigenous people in their traditional dress. These were mainly **the Guarani- Kaiowá people from**

Mato Grosso do Sul, bordering with Paraguay. What was interesting was that those who went on the mission only spoke later and for a short time. They had brought the people they had visited on mission to speak to us. It was obvious that they had chosen to go to places where people's lives were threatened and where their way of life had already been changed and attacked. Their visits were to places supported by the CPT (Pastoral Land commission) and to indigenous peoples. They went in a spirit of respect for the traditional religion of these peoples. The session started with a prayer and blessing from one of the women leaders of the **Guarani-Kaiowá** and from the chiefs of several tribes. The prayers showed how they are intimately linked to the earth and all of nature and see the spirit of God in all around them.

The Guarani – Kaiowá people have suffered greatly from attacks from *'white men'* who have killed and injured them to get them off their land so it could be replaced by cattle ranches. The government's solution was to put them into reservations to protect them. I heard that in one reservation there are 17,000 people in only 3 hectares of land – which makes their way of life impossible. They traditionally move around the graves of their ancestors and, for them to live, they need forest land where they have a relationship with all the living creatures and trees and plants. These people came to talk because they wanted us to be aware of their situation. They suffered the massacre of Caaropó in 2016 where some were killed and others injured. And now they are being threatened again. They had been promised by previous governments that they would be given the right to go back to their own land, where they had always lived. One of them said, *'There is soya*



ancient traditions (indigenous, 'quilombos' {*communities of resistance of escaped slaves*}, riverside people), resistance movements of the cities, women, youth, etc.

- Contribute to greater resistance and political influence in the promotion of paradigms for development, based on social and environmental justice.

Let's continue, resisting and transforming (always)!



planted now where our cedar trees used to grow and there are cattle walking over the blood of our children'. They are preparing themselves for death, knowing that there will be guns and that some will be shot. They were asking for our solidarity and prayers.  [Read more....](#)

There was a striking display as we walked in the gates of the University – lots of pink crosses, to call attention to the number of femicides in Brazil (and some other countries) in the last few years. There was another killing while we were there - Marielle, a politician from the state of Rio de Janeiro, who was doing great work with the negro population in the poorest areas, helping them in their fight for their rights. Those close to her knew that it was the police and other politicians who had ordered her killing, although afterwards they tried to say that it was the people she was helping who did it. Her daughter and all the organisations at the WSF spoke out against the brutal killing. The person driving the car was also killed. This marked the forum – remembering all who lose their lives because of what they preach and because their action is disturbing the status quo.



Listening to the speeches of **Lula and Dilma** made me realise once more how most of the advances in improving the lives of the poor that had been made during their times as President had been lost and it was impossible to hope for a more equal society with the present government. Hope, however, is always present in the struggle for justice and those in the popular movement will not give up. It was inspiring to meet some of the people I had worked with in

Fast facts – Indigenous lands

- *Indigenous lands make up approximately 20 per cent of the Earth's territory, but contain 80 per cent of the world's remaining biodiversity*
- *95% of the 200 areas with the highest and most threatened biodiversity are found on Indigenous territories.*
- *At the current rate of deforestation, 5-10% of tropical forest species will become extinct every decade.*
- *If the current rate of deforestation continues, it will take less than 100 years to destroy all the rainforests on the earth.*
- *Community-claimed lands sequester roughly four times the world's annual emissions.*

João Pessoa. One was Anna, a member of the CPT (*Pastoral Land Commission*) always defending the rights of others to stay on their land, who was now sure that her family would not lose their land as it had been declared a 'quilombo' (*land where escaped slaves had settled*). Another was Creuza who had worked in the Curia and was involved in the team of those working against human trafficking. There were many young people there, working to build up a more just and equal society and to strengthen international links with similar groups. there, working to build up a more just and equal society and to strengthen international links with similar groups.

➡ [Look at the WSF webpage](#)

Ana Helena Andreão RSHM



Resist and create. Resist and transform

The **WSF in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil** was an opportunity to share the various experiences of resistance and form proposals to confront the authoritarian attitudes that are rising up in Brazil and the World. With the central theme "**Peoples, Territories and Movements in Resistance**", and the slogan "**Resist and create, resist and transform**", the WSF was an event of resistance against setbacks and attacks on democracy, particularly in Brazil. It represented the culmination of a long process of numerous preparatory events from every continent.

Brazilians and participants from other countries took to the streets of the capital of Bahia with varied themes and an agenda related to the fight against neoliberalism and with proposals to *build another possible world*. Women, LGBT community, indigenous people, blacks, union representatives, militants from areas such as health, communication, theatre and culture, marched towards the University, with the surrounding marquees. Flags of many colours fluttered at the end of the day with the final speeches from leaders and representatives of movements, talking of the struggles they represented. It was a meeting place for debates organized by social movements from various continents, aimed at developing alternatives for a global social transformation. Trade unionists, teachers, students, theologians were all present as well as the **Conference of Religious** with a specific theme: '**Say "No" to people trafficking**'. The campus was like a city of varied people, languages, cultures, with many different experiences.

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Two indigenous tribes from Brazil were represented in the small delegation sponsored by the **Panamazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM)** and the **Missionary Indigenous Council of (CIMI)** to attend the Permanent Forum of Indigenous People in New York. **Adriano Karapuna of Rondônia** and **Leila Rocha – Guarani Nandeva**, were among those giving powerful testimony during the official sessions as well as at several side events where Veronica RSHM served as translator. Their cases, together with others from Peru and Ecuador have been brought to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Washington.

➡ [Watch the video....](#)



In mid- March **Sisters Rosa de Lima Pereira, and Geny Alves RSHM** participated in the **8th WORLD WATER FORUM** which took place in Brasilia, capital of Brazil. About 30,000 people from 170 countries attended.

➡ [Read Rosa de Lima's reflection on the Institute webpage.](#)



The University campus hosted all these activities, welcoming the installation of tents, Fair-Trade goods, and stalls with products from new settlements, with space for the sharing of experiences of the settlers in the People's tent, which had artistic shows and many visitors. **Rita de Cassia, Mary Jo and I** lived the richness of this experience with various realities and we were able to celebrate with different beliefs and in various ways, whether with dances, marches or even in their sacred spaces. **The University of Bahia** created space for 202 activities involving thematic sessions, artistic interventions and workshops. "*The planet is going through a transitional phase and neither governments nor the economy are providing answers that match the needs of the planet and humanity. The WSF is the power of expression, the urgent and necessary cry for another possible world,*" explained Hazard, a member of the Brazilian Collective of WSF 2018.

Some highlights for me were:

- The '**World Assembly of Women**', aimed to ensure that women with other political agendas in the Forum were free to debate gender issues and feminist guidelines such as the criminalization of abortion, femicide, violence against women, machismo, with the theme '**Feminisms and Women's Struggle**'.
- The **opening march** followed by cultural presentations, artistic and musical performances intended to stimulate organizations, collectives, networks and all the people to express their struggles and their hopes.
- A **march** was organised to pay homage to **Marielle**, a young black woman from a favela, a **council member for the City of Rio, and an outstanding politician** who was killed on March 14, together with the driver of her car. The participants of the Forum were greatly disturbed by this news.
- '**Vida Brasil**', a non-profit organization, promoted the rights and the exercise of citizenship of the elderly, valuing aging and quality of life, as well as providing free and quality services to people aged 60 years or over.



At this time of social, political and economic recession, the **Former president Dilma spoke at the Forum**, as did **Lula**, who was already threatened with arrest, came to the stadium together with several artists and people of renown.

➡ [Watch the video](#)

Distribution: General Council Team; Provincials/ Regionals
JPIC Animators; Global Network of RSHM Schools; UN Interest Group
Translation: Mary Jo McElroy RSHM + Maria Luisa Pinho