

NETWORK Connection

PEOPLE LOBBYING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE • MARCH/APRIL 2007



Our Children, Our Future

dear members

What a time these first few months of the 110th Congress have been! Through our joint advocacy we have achieved some significant victories including votes for a minimum wage increase and building the movement toward peace in Iraq. There are many more parts of our agenda that now have some political interest on Capitol Hill.

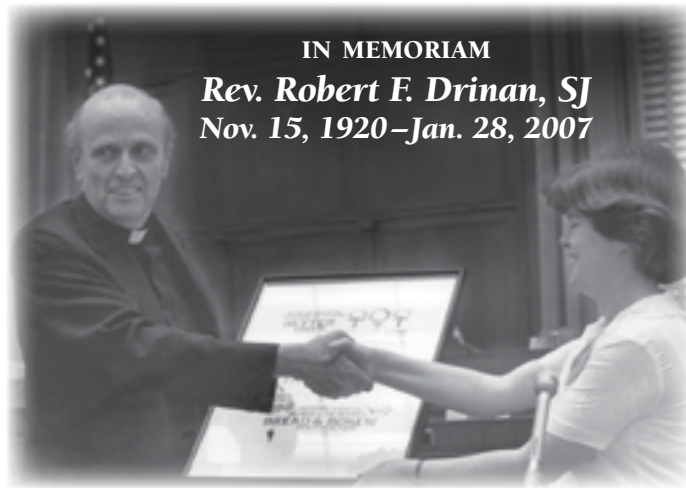
It was in the midst of this happy hubbub that we learned of the death of our friend Father Bob Drinan, SJ. Whenever he saw any of us, he would always mention how proud he was of our work before proceeding to give us ideas on how to move our agenda forward. I will miss his physical presence in our lives, but trust that he will intercede for us and all those in need.

This dual reality tells me that we live on the cusp of change—birthing and dying. It made me think of my little poem:

Only between winter and spring,
summer and fall
is daylight
balanced with
darkness.
Poised on the edge
of birthing
and dying,
our world hurtles
in a brief balance
before
rolling on
to the next phase
of disequilibrium.

May this phase of disequilibrium be good for the working poor families in our country.

Simone Campbell, SSS



Cherished friend of NETWORK for many years, Fr. Drinan was a Member of Congress, internationally known human rights activist, accomplished author and Georgetown University law professor. We are profoundly grateful for his life and legacy of justice. ABOVE: Congressman Drinan accepts NETWORK award from Peggy Comfrey, CSJ (1974).

Contents

3 envisioning

You Could Save My Child

Simone Campbell, SSS, hears the anguished cry of an Iraqi mother.

4 cover story

Making Health Coverage for All Children a Reality in 2007

Marian Wright Edelman presents the Children's Defense Fund's new health initiative.

8 focus on the hill

110th Congress Quickens Its Pace

The new Congress is off to a fast start. What comes next?

10 toward a global community

There Are No More Children

Shahla Waliy speaks about the tragic loss of childhood innocence in Iraq today.

12 highlighting people

Fire in the Heart

Helen Peterson tells the story of Mary Jo Copeland, a woman who truly radiates God's love.

13 spread the word

Meeting Children's Needs

Copy and distribute this call to activism for all our children.

15 making a difference

Double Vision

Jessica Guentzel tells the story of lessons taught and learned as she and her twin sister worked with children in the U.S. and India.



NETWORK

A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

NETWORK—a Catholic leader in the global movement for justice and peace—educates, organizes and lobbies for economic and social transformation.

NETWORK Board of Directors

- Elizabeth Avalos, BVM
- Marie Clarke Brill
- Simone Campbell, SSS
- Joan Carey, SSJ
- Cathleen Crayton
- Patricia Crowley, OSB
- Jackie Griffith, SSJ
- Linda Howell-Perrin, LSW
- Barbara Jennings, CSJ
- Barbara Lange
- Marie Lucey, OSF
- Lourdes Mendoza
- Kateri Mitchell, SSA
- Suzanne Sassus, CSJ
- Aisha Smith Taylor
- Sandra Thibodeaux, MMB
- Mary T. Yelenick

NETWORK Education Program Board of Directors

- Kit Hinga, SSJ
- Dorothy Jackson, SCN
- Kathleen Phelan, OP
- Margaret Phipps
- Mary Ann Smith, MM

NETWORK Staff

- Communications Coordinator/Editor—Stephanie Niedringhaus
- Coordinator of Annual Giving—Hanna Rutz
- Director of Major Gifts and Planned Giving—Lindsay Gonzales
- Executive Director—Simone Campbell, SSS
- Field Associate/Editorial Assistant—Jessica Guentzel
- Field Coordinator—Jean Sammon
- IT Coordinator—Joy Wigwe
- Lobbyists—Marge Clark, BVM; Catherine Pinkerton, CSJ
- Lobby Associates—Morgan Gregson, Elena Lacayo
- Office/Membership Coordinator—Ann Dunn

NETWORK Education Program Staff

- Jean Sammon (part-time)

Articles in NETWORK Connection may be reprinted. Please include the following on the reprints: "Reprinted with permission from NETWORK, a National Catholic Social Justice Lobby, 25 E Street NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20001, www.networklobby.org." Please send us a copy of the reprinted article.

January/February 2007—Vol. 35, No. 2

NETWORK Connection

ISSN 0199-5723

Published bimonthly by NETWORK

PHONE 202-347-9797 FAX 202-347-9864

E-MAIL: connection@networklobby.org

WEB SITE: www.networklobby.org

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO NETWORK

25 E Street NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20001

Annual dues: \$50/\$60 international.
Copyright © 2007 NETWORK.

Design: Eugenia Kim

Cover photo by Earl Dotter.

Comments on this issue? Ideas for future issues of Connection? Let us hear from you!
connection@networklobby.org

You Could Save My Child

By SIMONE CAMPBELL, SSS



“You could save my child,” offered an Iraqi mom in the pediatric oncology unit in Baghdad in December 2002, as I thanked her for allowing me to play with her little son, Hyder. This message, possibly even an accusation and certainly a plea, seared my soul. I was overwhelmed by this responsibility and my powerlessness in the face of our government’s refusal to let needed medicines enter Iraq during the period of sanctions. Since that day, I have been haunted by this anguished statement.

I have since heard this statement repeated over and over by mothers around the world. Mothers plead for their children everywhere—in Sudan and Somalia, Bangladesh and Myanmar, Ecuador and Brazil, Spain and Russia. The world over, their plea is for their children’s survival and growth. This plea is not mirrored in most people with political power. In fact, leaders’ lexicons include “collateral damage” and “unintended consequences” that lead to the death or maiming of the next generation. Children, the hope of our species, are often lost in their parents’ struggles

and our political leaders’ grand visions.

In the United States, like the rest of the world, the real health and other needs of children who are in middle class or working poor families often get lost in the political machinations of medical-industrial giants and politicians seeking re-election. Children’s education gets lost in standardized tests and teacher punishment. Children’s basic security gets undermined by poor housing and limited opportunities as parents struggle in low-wage jobs.

In the world’s richest country, it is a scandal that we are not investing in our future by responding to the needs of our own children and children around the world. Through investment in housing, healthcare and education, we can make a future of hope for these emerging global citizens. At NETWORK, we work daily for responsible policies in housing and healthcare and collaborate with others who advocate for quality education. With the advocacy of our members we attempt to partner for change—creating a world focused on the common good.

It is not an easy slogan or a photo

of a politician kissing a baby that will make a difference. No, we need to invest ourselves in the children around us. We need to give our hearts to the teens with the piercings or purple hair. We need to give our hearts to the crying baby on the bus or the loud children on the street. We need to give our hearts to children in church or at the neighborhood center. Risking a conversation is important for our long term growth. It builds relationships that are at the core of the reign of God. For, as we know, it is children who are at the heart of the mission of Jesus.

So I have come to know that the Iraqi woman was begging all of us to respond to the all too real needs of her child and of all children. Are we willing to walk this searing path of relationship, exercising responsibility wherever we can? If we are, then we will not need to shrink from the statement of reality: you could save my child.

Simone Campbell, SSS, is NETWORK’s Executive Director. Photo by Rick McDowell.

Making Health Coverage for All Children a Reality in 2007

BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

As the new political year gets off to a start, many leaders are spending a lot of time talking about what they want to accomplish for the American people. Our leaders do not know how to extricate from the Iraq and Afghanistan quagmire, stop nuclear proliferation in Iran and

North Korea, or bring a lasting peace in the Middle East. But we do know how to solve the crisis of uninsured children. It is disgraceful and costly to let more than nine million children in America—the richest nation in the world—go without health coverage. Another uninsured baby is born every 46 seconds. As Congress must act to reauthorize funding for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) this year, it has a

special opportunity and responsibility to take the next logical, moral, and achievable steps to ensure health and mental health coverage for all children in America as a significant down payment on health coverage for all Americans.

CDF offers its proposal as Congress prepares to reauthorize funding for SCHIP, a program CDF championed in 1997. Children's Medicaid and SCHIP have made significant progress in



Covering *All* Children in 2007: A Logical, Moral and Achievable Goal

WHY ACT NOW?

Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) have made tremendous progress in improving children's health insurance, currently providing coverage to over 30 million children. **Yet more than 9 million children in America, almost 90 percent living in working households and a majority in two-parent families, are still uninsured. Millions more are underinsured.** Chronic budget shortfalls, often confusing enrollment processes, and dramatic variation in eligibility and coverage from state to state prevent millions of currently eligible children from living healthy and realizing their full potential in school and life. As Congress prepares to consider reauthorization of SCHIP in 2007, the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) believes there is a special opportunity

for our nation and leaders in all parties to take the next logical, incremental, smart and just steps to ensure health and mental health coverage for *all* children in America as a significant down payment on health coverage for all.

WHAT WOULD THE CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND PROPOSAL DO?

It would ensure affordable access to comprehensive health and mental health care for all children in America. It would simplify and consolidate children's health coverage under Medicaid and SCHIP into a single program that guarantees children in all 50 states and the District of Columbia all medically necessary services. A child's chance to survive and thrive should not depend on the lottery of geography.

improving children's health insurance in the past decade. Currently over 30 million children are covered by Medicaid (25 million) and SCHIP (5 million). But one in nine children in America is still uninsured. Almost 90 percent of them live in working households, and a majority in two parent households. Millions more children are underinsured. Chronic budget shortfalls, enrollment processes that can often be confusing, and dramatic variations in eligibility and coverage from state to state prevent millions of currently eligible children from leading healthy lives and realizing their full potential in school and when they become adults.

According to a Hart Research poll conducted for CDF, more than three-fourths of Americans think it is "important" or "extremely important" for elected leaders in Washington to provide health care
continued on page 7



WHO WOULD BE ELIGIBLE?

- **All children with family incomes at or below 300% of the federal poverty level** (\$60,000 for a family of four in 2006) would be eligible. Children with family incomes over 300% could buy into the program.
- **Pregnant women at or below 300% of the federal poverty level** would be eligible for prenatal, delivery and post-partum care for at least 60 days after birth to ensure babies are born healthy and new mothers get the health and mental care they need to care for their child.
- Youth who have transitioned from the **foster care system through age 20, and other special needs children covered by current law**, would be eligible.

WHAT BENEFITS WOULD BE INCLUDED?

- All children enrolled in this new program would receive

comprehensive coverage of all medically necessary care equivalent to current Medicaid benefits.

WHAT WOULD BE THE COST FOR FAMILIES?

- Children in families with incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (\$40,000 for a family of four in 2006) would **pay nothing for coverage or services.**
- Children in families with incomes between 201% and 300% of the federal poverty level would have **no premiums for coverage but could be charged some affordable amount for services.**
- Children in families with incomes over 300% of the federal poverty level who enter the program would **pay both premiums for coverage and some affordable amount for services.**

continued on page 6

What would it cost to cover ALL children in 2007?

- ❑ Less than 3 ½ months of the cost of war in Iraq
- ❑ 16 days of military spending in 2007
- ❑ 5 months of the tax cuts to the richest 1 percent in 2007 (with average incomes of \$1 million)
- ❑ 5½ months of an estate tax repeal
- ❑ 25 days of spending on Medicare prescription drug benefits in 2007

FOR \$26 BILLION, ALL CHILDREN IN AMERICA COULD HAVE HEALTH CARE COVERAGE IN 2007.

CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND



continued from page 5

HOW WOULD THE CDF PROPOSAL STREAMLINE ENROLLMENT?

- All children currently enrolled in **Medicaid or SCHIP** would be enrolled automatically.
- All children currently receiving services under **certain federal assistance programs like school lunch and food stamps** would be enrolled automatically with opportunity for families to “opt out.”
- All parents would also have the **option to enroll their child at birth, school registration, or issuance of a Social Security card.**
- Applications would be short and **simple to complete; children would be presumed immediately eligible for**

services; and obstacles to enroll and stay enrolled would be eliminated.

OTHER KEY PROVISIONS

- There would be **no additional cost to states for child coverage expansion or enhanced benefits.** Funds for coverage expansion and improvements would come from the federal government.
- All eligible children would be **guaranteed coverage** under this program regardless of their state of residence.
- To improve children's access to health and mental health services, **payment to health care providers would be increased to the same level as Medicare.**

continued from page 5

for all children in America now. Almost seven in 10 think the federal government is doing “too little” to help children who don’t have health insurance coverage. It’s clearly time for a change and for our leaders in both political parties to catch up with their voters. CDF’s proposal would ensure comprehensive health and mental health coverage for all children in America. It would simplify and consolidate children’s health coverage under Medicaid and SCHIP into a single program that decreases bureaucracy and guarantees children in all 50 states and the District of Columbia all medically necessary services. A child’s chance to survive and thrive should not depend on the lottery of geography.

In the same research poll, when Americans were asked to choose among a variety of possible reasons for providing health insurance to all children, they thought the most important was that “children cannot take care of themselves,

and it is especially important that they get regular medical care so they grow up healthy.” And when they were asked to choose which statement came closest to their view about why it is important to provide health insurance to uninsured children, some said it was “the right thing to do” or “the fair thing to do,” but even more said it is “the smart thing to do.” Health care coverage for all children is certainly the smart thing to do, and the Congress and President have fallen behind what the country wants and needs. How we take care of our children speaks to our very values as a society. With your voice telling Congress that health coverage for all children is a must do in 2007 for your vote in 2008, we can do it, and show our children we care.

Marian Wright Edelman is President and Founder of the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) and its Action Council whose Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.



CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND



ABOVE: Marian Wright Edelman.



The Children’s Defense Fund Asks That You Contact Your Members of Congress

Here is a sample letter:

Dear [Decision Maker],

I’m writing to you today to tell you that I will hold you accountable with my voice and my vote for enacting urgently needed comprehensive health and mental health coverage for all children now.

It is unjust, morally intolerable and economically costly that more than 9 million children lack health coverage and a baby is born without health insurance every 46 seconds in our rich nation.

- Almost 90% of uninsured children live in a home where at least one parent works;
- The majority of uninsured children live in two-parent households;
- Reading scores and school attendance of uninsured children improve dramatically after they become insured;
- The tax cuts Congress and the President enacted for the top 1 percent of all taxpayers will cost \$61 billion this year, enough to provide health coverage to all the 9 million uninsured children

We can and must do better in protecting the health and well-being of all our children. Enact urgently needed comprehensive high-quality health coverage for all children now!

Sincerely,
[Your Name]
[Your Address]

110th Congress Quickens Its Pace

BY MARGE CLARK, BVM, CATHERINE PINKERTON, CSJ, AND SIMONE CAMPBELL, SSS

Even before the 110th Congress began its work, House leaders established several goals for the first 100 hours of its deliberations. They worked quickly and within the first 50 hours, they were able to pass legislation affecting congressional ethics, the minimum wage, the Medicare prescription drug program, student loans and other issues. The Senate began to consider two vital issues: the minimum wage increase (S. 2) and a reduction in drug costs for seniors (S. 3). After years of dealing with slow-acting legislators, NETWORK was heartened by the quickened pace. But this is just the beginning. There is much that still needs to be done if we are to address the needs of so many people who struggle with poverty, violence, war and injustice. Let the pace continue...

NETWORK's Agenda Moves Forward

NETWORK worked hard for two of the "First Hundred Hour" issues: the minimum wage increase and for cost reductions for senior citizens' drugs.

The new Congress has brought America's lowest-paid workers a step closer to a living wage by passing the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007. After more than 9 years without increase, this bill will raise the federal minimum wage from \$5.15/hour to \$7.25/hour over a two-year period. While the House version of the bill (H.R. 2) was passed without any amendments or tax breaks, the Senate passed its version (S. 2) with tax incentives for businesses. Since the bills differ, they must be taken to conference before being sent to the president for his signature. NETWORK supports efforts to raise the federal minimum wage, as one step toward attaining a living wage.

We continue to urge Congress to repair the mistakes in Medicare Part D. One step being taken is H.R. 4/S. 4, which would repeal the law prohibiting

the Health and Human Services (H.H.S.) Secretary from negotiating prices for prescription drugs. It also would prohibit the Secretary from establishing an exclusive list of drugs to be covered under Medicare Part D. Medicare Part D plans will still be able to obtain discounts below the negotiated price, a privilege already available to veterans.

Budget

Budget season is also upon us. Some years, it seems to last from the president's annual budget request in February to the Christmas recess. We are hopeful that the budget process will move more smoothly and quickly this year.

The 109th Congress failed to complete its most critical responsibility: passage of the FY 2007 budget. The House never introduced the final appropriations bill for Labor, Health and Human Services and Education, which funds the vast majority of social

needs programs. The Senate only completed appropriations related to defense and homeland security. Therefore, the 110th Congress has been forced to fund the government for the rest of FY 2007 through a Continuing Resolution, based on the previous year's funding level. The Continuing Resolution is proving detrimental to a number of social services programs, but has spared losses in areas such as low-cost housing, Pell Grants and Head Start.

Work on the FY 2008 budget commenced with the presentation of the President's budget request on February 5th. It is now the task of the appropriations and authorizing committees to determine the levels at which programs under their jurisdiction will be funded. This is an important time for NETWORK members to be in contact with their Members of Congress to advocate for the needs of those with the least economic power.



"You've got to learn not to sweat the small stuff... like your salary."

Need up-to-date information about legislation in Congress? Check out NETWORK's Legislative Action Center at <http://capwiz.com/networklobby/issues/bills/>. ★ To learn what happened to legislation you followed in the past, go to <http://capwiz.com/networklobby/issues/votes/> and enter your zip code in the "Key Votes" field.

Accepting NETWORK awards for their 100% rating on NETWORK's voting record: (left) Rep. James McGovern (D-MA) with Lobbyist Marge Clark, BVM and Associate Elena Lacayo; and (right) Rep. John Lewis (D-GA) with Intern Timothy Prendergast, Lobbyist Marge Clark, BVM and Intern Janet Cashman, SCL.



Trade and Globalization

A January 30th hearing on trade and globalization called by Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY), chair of the Committee on Ways and Means, was a welcome signal. It showed that exploring trade in relationship to globalization will be a key avenue of discussion in the 110th Congress, as indeed it should be. The tone of the meeting was a welcome departure from such committee sessions in previous years. Here, committee members of both parties became heavily engaged in the dialogue following presentations by six highly qualified witnesses.

Congress is faced with approving several trade agreements already negotiated by the president—Peru, Columbia and Panama, among them. However, the Democrats have signaled their reluctance to approve such agreements unless the president strengthens provisions on labor and environmental protections. This is a strengthening of the Democrats' position regarding the Central American Free Trade Agreement, which passed by a small margin in the last session.

Another issue key to current trade deliberations is the question of extending the president's trade promotion authority (TPA or "fast track"), which expires June 30th of this year. TPA, which was denied to President Clinton but later given to President Bush, authorizes the president

to enter into trade negotiations with a nation and then bring any agreement to Congress for an up or down vote without debate. Fundamentally, granting fast track authority to the president is constitutionally questionable in that the Constitution gives Congress jurisdiction over commerce. Further, limiting the participation of Congress in crafting trade agreements jeopardizes the effectiveness of these agreements.

Iraq

The escalation of the war in Iraq continues to be center stage in Congress. At first, the Senate Republican leadership did not want to address the issue of the president's plan to increase troop levels, so they extended debate on the minimum wage bill in order to forestall it. It appears that there is a growing bipartisan consensus to disagree with the president's policy. However, the administration has enough money in the current budget and supplemental to at least begin the troop increase.

General funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will take up much of the time of the policy and budget committees as Congress considers the "Supplemental" funding bill and the FY 2008 Budget. The House expects to have hearings on the budget for the wars and the best way forward.

NETWORK continues to advocate for peace building and economic development as the alternative to military action. We are heartened that Congress is beginning to see these as important elements for the long term. It is expected that the FY 2007 Supplemental funding bill will be out of the House by the end of March and out of the Senate by the end of April, but these dates can slip as the issue becomes more contentious.

Immigration

With the change in the Congress, comprehensive immigration reform is alive and well. It appears likely that the Senate will begin to address the issue in March and report something out in April. It appears that the bill that most likely to be proposed is based on last session's McCain-Kennedy bill and the bill that passed the Senate. While NETWORK was not 100% in favor of the end result because of problems with implementation, it was certainly an important step forward. We are working with our coalition partners to improve the bill and ensure its passage this year.

Marge Clark, BVM, and Catherine Pinkerton, CSJ, are NETWORK Lobbyists. Simone Campbell, SSS, is NETWORK's Executive Director.

Want timely information about key issues in Congress? NETWORK members can sign up for our weekly email legislative hotline. Send your name, zip code and email address to jsammon@networklobby.org.

There Are No More Children

By SHAHLA WALIY

One year ago, in March 2006, NETWORK was instrumental in bringing a delegation of Iraqis to Washington to speak with U.S. lawmakers and the media about what was happening in their country. As we know, conditions in Iraq have worsened since that time. The violence and lack of basic services have affected everyone, especially the children. We recently asked Shahla Waliy, a member of last year's delegation, to update us on how Iraqi children are faring today. Her response was heartbreaking...

The main problem with children in Iraq is that they have lost their childhood. There are no more children. They are not outside playing with toys or playing in the street. They don't even go to little shops for candy. Instead, they are trying to survive.

Fear is the dominant feature in their lives. It used to be that when Hummers drove by, they would run and wave. Now they don't. It's too dangerous. They are afraid of the militias and of being kidnapped.

Children see bodies in the street and hear the hammer of militias' guns. They know about criminal actions and friends who have been kidnapped. There are so many stories of children who have seen their parents killed or kidnapped or arrested. All of this moves them out of childhood to another stage of life, where they only know fear. They have lost something that is very precious.

And there's nothing for the teenagers to do. In Yarmuk, which is a neighborhood in Baghdad, there used to be clubs where people were able to find entertainment. Those clubs were turned into military bases and political offices so the entertainment is gone.

It's dangerous for children and teenagers to go to libraries so they can't get books. And they can't even watch television in their homes because in many places, neighborhoods only get electricity for one hour a day.

Going to school, which used to be a regular part of being a child, is now very difficult. There is violence in the streets and children are kidnapped and raped because they are easy targets. Parents try to take their children to school but it is very dangerous. Some are only able to go to school for one or two days in the week, and in many schools there are few desks or books.

Because many children are not going to school, we have a growing problem of uneducated street children. Seeing the violence drags them into other areas, sometimes to becoming criminals or to joining militias. If the situation remains like this, I don't think there is a bright future for them.

In the schools, teachers are obliged to tell the students about what is happening today. My friend's nephew, who is in primary school, never thought about distinctions among the friends he played with—whether they were Shi'a or Sunni. One day, he came home from school and told his parents that his teacher said he must be separated from his friend because of their religious backgrounds. He asked his mother, "Why? Are they





bad?" His mother tried to explain the realities of war and what is happening in Iraq. But that's a lot of information for a little child. It is a burden for him.

Children are not getting healthcare. There is no health system. Most of the doctors have left, and health facilities are either not working or working with very limited resources, taking care of emergencies only. Many mothers now give birth at home or are in the hospital for just a short time. We used to have vaccination programs for children, but today routine healthcare is secondary. The priority is just to survive.

Many sick children need to get out of Iraq to neighboring countries or Europe so they can get treatment or operations. This is one way people outside of Iraq can help.

Children in my family have left their homes, but the situation for so many children still in Baghdad is much worse. They are depressed. They are going through trauma. If they stay in Iraq, they are traumatized. But if they leave they are separated from their friends, and there can be a language barrier.

To help the children of Iraq, people must work to stabilize the whole country. We need to rebuild the infrastructure, healthcare and education, and to stop the violence. All the problems will be better if we can stabilize Iraq.

Having served as the Iraq director of Counterpart International, Shahla Waliy is currently a graduate student in the U.S. Shahla was interviewed by the Education for Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC) during her March 2006 Washington visit, and excerpts of that interview appeared in the May/June 2006 issue of Connection. This article is drawn from her telephone conversation with NETWORK Communications Coordinator Stephanie Niedringhaus on February 2 of this year. Photos by Rick McDowell.

The Brutality of War

The new generation in Iraq has been burdened by a war that is shattering the innocence of their youth. They have lost necessities such as basic health care, food and education. They have lost family and friends due to violence and religious segregation. Loving memories of birthday parties, family vacations and candy shops are replaced with recollections of mortar blasts, brutal deaths, and terrorism. They are a generation seared by fear and hate—lost in the abyss of war.

- Stunted, underweight and underfed, many of Iraq's poorer households are malnourished. UNICEF reported that children are the major victims of this food insecurity, as one out of three children in these households is chronically malnourished. Tragically, infants aged 12 to 23 months old are affected most severely, hindering cognitive and physical development.
- Thousands of infants die because hospitals lack standard cheap equipment. Doctors report children with lost limbs, left without prostheses. Save the Children reports that Iraq has one of the highest mortality rates and that children die who could otherwise be treated by medication worth two dollars. Powdered formula milk is expensive, and problems with intermittent electricity and gas supply makes boiling water for mix-

ing with formula difficult. Drinking water is most likely contaminated due to dormant waste and sewage.

- For many families, the risk of sending their children to school is too great. On January 29, 2007, The New York Times reported a school explosion in Baghdad in which five girls were killed and 20 left wounded. "She hugged and kissed me," a teacher spoke of one girl, "[and] then went out and the bomb hit. After a few minutes, she was dead." Interior Ministry officials confirm that schools in the area have been attacked at least six times during the month of January.
- In a haunting reaction to violence, many children are becoming numb to bloodshed and emboldened by sectarian passions. Christian Caryl, reporting in the January 22, 2007 issue of Newsweek, wrote about the generation of Iraqi children who "may well become the violent jihadists of tomorrow. These are young people shaped by daily bloodshed."

At least one million children in Iraq have seen their lives ravaged by conflict. What will become of this burdened generation? What would these children's lives be like without war? We are left to wonder how many more childhoods will be lost.

—Jessica Guentzel

Fire in the Heart

By HELEN PETERSON

I was first introduced to Mary Jo Copeland fifteen years ago by my mother, who made knitted hats for Mary Jo's organization. Inspired, I decided to take my students to see her work firsthand, so we left the farm country of southern Minnesota for the warehouse district of downtown Minneapolis where she worked. It was a long way from a small town lacking a single traffic light, but our apprehensions about the inner city evaporated when we met Mary Jo.

On Fire

Jesus warned about being lukewarm, and with a contagious fire within her heart, Mary Jo was anything but tepid. She walked briskly to greet us, telling her story of an unhappy childhood, a beautiful marriage, and turning to volunteer

Mary Jo Copeland washes the feet of those who come through her door, a practice she does daily. "Jesus washed his Apostles' feet," she explains. "He came to serve, not to be served. Can we do less?" BOTTOM: Mary Jo prays before every meal. More than 1,000 people are fed each day at Sharing and Caring Hands.

work after her children were grown. She told of red tape and paperwork that used to stymie her ability to help. She shared her deep faith and devotion to the Virgin Mary, which inspired the transformation of this spirited mother of 12 into a catalyst of God's Love.

Nicknamed the "Mother Teresa of Minnesota," Mary Jo single-handedly founded Sharing and Caring Hands to address the needs of impoverished people in the inner city. Built entirely by faith and donations, her center grew from a 2,000-square-foot storefront to a 27,000-square-foot day shelter, teen center and transitional housing facility. Mary Jo continues to identify where those who are poor need help and is fundraising \$30 million for a new children's residential facility.

Because of her unhappy childhood, she holds a special place in her heart for children—taking delight in holding their hands, singing and praying with them. Her pockets bulge with dollar bills to surprise them.

Sadly, she constantly sees children with growing needs. Children who used to reside at the shelter for 45 days now stay up to a year because their parents, 85% of whom are working, can't afford new housing. Children transfer schools four to five times a year—unable to keep up socially or academically. For some, the shelter is the best home

they've ever had. They don't have to live in a car, in a home with insect infestation, or jammed in with relatives.

Prayer Is the Center

Each day begins in church at 4 a.m. as she prays and attends Mass to "recharge" her "spiritual batteries." Afterwards, Mary Jo opens the facility, listening to the 500 people who line up daily to tell her their stories. They need eyeglasses, rent money, a place to stay, funeral help, dental care, showers, food, and—most importantly—love. Seeing Jesus in their faces, she directs help their way. Twice a day, she gets on her knees, washing and massaging their weary feet.

Changing Hearts

Recently, I visited Mary Jo with my students, a journey I've made dozens of times. She greeted and prayed with us, sharing her story. Her steps were brisk and she looked much like when I first saw her. Her hair, now slightly graying, was still neatly pinned. Again, students were transformed and inspired, an affect she's had with thousands of students through the years. With a passionate voice, Mary Jo asked, "What will God ask you at the end of your days? It will be simply, how much have you loved, and shared and cared. Be that beacon of light who reaches out in kindness to others wherever they are. A smile and an outstretched hand is the beginning of a miracle in the unspoken need of another heart."

Helen Peterson is the Campus Ministry and Religion Communications Director for Loyola Catholic School in Mankato, Minnesota. She has been a close friend of Mary Jo Copeland for over 15 years.



Children in Need

- 12.1 million children—one out of every six—live below the official poverty line.
- 17.9% of American children are hungry or at the risk of being hungry.
- An American child is more likely to be poor today than 25 or 30 years ago; more likely to be poor than an American adult; and more likely to be poor than a child living in Canada, Germany, France, Britain or Spain.

—The State of America's Children 2004, *the Children's Defense Fund*

U.S. Catholic Bishops have stated that

Very many poor families with children receive no government assistance, have no health insurance, and cannot pay medical bills. Less than half are immunized against preventable diseases such as diphtheria and polio. Poor children are disadvantaged before birth; their mothers' lack of access to high quality prenatal care leaves them at much greater risk of premature birth, low birth weight, physical and mental impairment, and death before their first birthday.

—*Economic Justice for All*, #177

As members of the Body of Christ, it is our responsibility to care for those who are most vulnerable. Children in poverty are more likely to experience poor health, unemployment, drugs and criminal activity, and a shockingly high number suffer young and violent deaths. Many are unable to keep up in class so they drop out of school or finish high school functionally illiterate.

And tragically, children who grow up in poverty are significantly more likely to be poor as adults than children who did not grow up in poverty. So the cycle continues.

Catholic Social Teaching tells us that “the fulfillment of the basic needs of the poor is of the highest priority” (*Economic Justice for All*, #90), and it is clear that concern for our children is concern for our nation's future. Because children do not have a voice in the government, it is our job to make sure that their needs are met.

Contact your Members of Congress today to ask them what they are doing about child poverty.

WRITE:

**U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515**

**U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510**

CALL:

Capitol Switchboard: 202-224-3121

E-MAIL THROUGH THE NETWORK WEB SITE:

www.networklobby.org

We encourage the reproduction and distribution of this back-to-back fact sheet.

NETWORK
A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

NETWORK—a Catholic leader in the global movement for justice and peace
25 E Street NW, Suite 200 • Washington DC 20001
202-347-9797 • www.networklobby.org

Meeting Children's Healthcare Needs

The State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) is cooperatively financed by both state and federal governments to provide comprehensive health insurance to more than six million children. This year, approximately 17 states will not receive enough federal funding to cover the cost of SCHIP and over 630,000 children are in danger of losing access to healthcare services.

Last year, the 109th Congress passed a bill (H.R. 6164) that addressed a portion of this shortfall by redistributing unspent SCHIP funding from the previous two years. Unfortunately, this money will only make up for the shortfall until May 2007. NETWORK will closely follow the SCHIP funding issue, and will work to ensure that all states receive adequate funding.

There are many ways for you to get involved in supporting our nation's children. You can stay updated through NETWORK's weekly legislative updates, and you can make sure you are aware of your own state's status concerning children's healthcare coverage. Check with local agencies, especially hospital social workers, to understand SCHIP policy in your area. At a local level, it is important to write letters to the editor about this issue, as they are a great way to educate and inform your community. By writing letters to your state legislators and encouraging others to do so as well, you can also be effective at the state level.

The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) has proposed a plan that would ensure that all children in the United States have access to affordable comprehensive healthcare, regardless of their geographical location. This plan would effectively combine children's coverage under SCHIP and Medicaid into one plan. By working together, we can ensure that the right for all children to live healthy lives is met.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: www.cbpp.org/6-5-06health2.pdf

Children's Defense Fund: <http://www.childrensdefense.org/site/PageServer>

Families USA: <http://www.familiesusa.org/issues/medicaid/medicaid-action/>

By NETWORK Lobby Associates Elena Lacayo and Morgan Gregson

We encourage the reproduction and distribution of this back-to-back fact sheet.



NETWORK—a Catholic leader in the global movement for justice and peace
25 E Street NW, Suite 200 • Washington DC 20001
202-347-9797 • www.networklobby.org



RICK MCDOWELL

Double Vision

Two Twins. Two Continents. One Shared Vision for the Common Good.

By JESSICA GUENTZEL

My twin sister Theresa and I didn't do anything out of the ordinary. Thousands before us had ambitious dreams of changing the world and conquering injustice. Thousands have taught children to read, to tie their shoes, and to always remember to say "please" and "thank you." It's been done before. But that's what made our experience exciting—knowing that anyone can follow Jesus' example of showing unconditional love.

Diplomas in hand, we left the College of St. Benedict in Minnesota, challenged by the call of Catholic Social Teaching. We had the same vision to serve, but this vision led us to destinations 8,454 miles apart. Theresa mentored orphans in Calcutta, India, moonlighting as the local nurse. I moved to a poor elementary school in western Tennessee. We each tapped into the pure, unprejudiced love within the children's hearts as we helped them understand that they didn't have to be grown-up or affluent to make a difference.

During Lent, my students and I set a goal to raise \$500 to purchase a cow from Heifer Project International, a non-profit that works to end hunger and poverty. Because many families struggled financially, my students had one rule: they couldn't ask their parents for money. Each child set a personal fundraising goal that they considered practical and attainable. Jessica, one of my top students, set a goal of one penny, which I knew wasn't unreasonable. Her family struggled, and her well-worn uniform seemed to have been passed down, barely surviving the rough playtime tumbles of her older brothers. Her story resembled those of many of my students. I

wondered how often they felt they couldn't do something just because their families couldn't afford the "right" clothes or the latest video game.

The class and I got busy. Individually, they collected cans, found coins on the sidewalk, and made lemonade. As a class, we scripted a letter to send to people we knew. Each child received a copy

of our script with the promise that I would make sure a recipient was found for each letter written.

At the end of our 40 days, Jessica had written the most letters in her class, an action that didn't cost a penny. She was also the top fundraiser, surpassing her goal by \$349.99. Together, the class purchased not one,



Sushmita gives Theresa a playful kiss.

but two cows—along with rabbits, ducks and chickens. They understood what their contributions meant and smiled, knowing that someone, somewhere, was able to feed their family better.

Meanwhile, across the Pacific, little Pinky, one of India's "untouchables," waited patiently at the orphanage one day for my sister Theresa to heal her scabies. Behind Pinky stood Shushmita, a child from the upper caste with a tiny cut on her finger. Theresa gently scolded Shushmita when she wanted to go first, and Shushmita stomped furiously to the end of the line. Pouting, she peeked around the others, intently watching Theresa work. Shushmita returned each day afterwards, asking to stand at Theresa's side. She learned to carefully clean and disinfect other children's wounds before Theresa bandaged them, and soon asked to do all of the cleaning. Not only did she now want to help the other children, she would pout if she couldn't do so.

One evening, after the children went to bed, my sister and Rod, a fellow nurse, cleaned up the clinic. Rod commented to Theresa, "You know, this is why I do this and why I love what I do. We are lucky. We get to live the Gospel every day."

In the end, all of the children taught us an important lesson—to expect great things from humble beginnings, an open heart, and a child's vision of the common good.

Jessica Guentzel is NETWORK's Field Associate and Editorial Assistant.



Author and her third graders celebrate their success at a park.



Pinky dancing.

NETWORK recommends



Traveling with the Turtle; A Small Group Process in Women's Spirituality and Peacemaking by Cindy Preston-Pile and Irene Woodward, Pace e Bene Press, Oakland CA. www.turtle.paceebene.org or 702-648-2281.



Lives for Sale DVD, a documentary on immigration and human trafficking that appeared on PBS in January 2007. Produced by Maryknoll Productions and Lightfoot Films in association with Faith & Values Media. www.livesforsale.com or 1-800-258-5838.

calendar

Mar. 8-10, St. Louis, MO
Simone Campbell, SSS, NETWORK's Executive Director, facilitates workshops on law, political issues and religious life for treasurers, attorneys and leaders of religious communities at the Legal Resource Center for Religious gathering.


Mar.16, Detroit, MI
Simone Campbell, SSS, facilitates a workshop on law and leadership for new leaders in religious communities at the Leadership Conference of Women Religious meeting.

THE POVERTY LINE

One in six children lives like this.


Right here in America. In a family that's barely hanging on. Coming home to too little to eat. Losing hope. And too many people are doing nothing to help. You could change that. Join the numbers who care.

Go to www.povertyusa.org and get involved.



**Catholic Campaigns
for Human Development**

*For a three person household,
the poverty line is \$15,577.*



Where There's a Will, There's a Way!



Making an enduring gift to a ministry you care about is a meaningful way to continue the generosity you have shown during your lifetime. "Planned gifts"—made through a will, trust, life insurance plan, retirement plan or by other means—help build the justice movement. To further NETWORK's mission, please consider making a lasting contribution that will support justice.

Without the support of people like you, NETWORK can't continue to be a leader in the movement for justice and peace.

For more information and a free booklet, *How to Make a Will That Works*, fill out the envelope in the center of this magazine, or contact Lindsay Gonzales, Director of Major Gifts and Planned Giving, at lgonzales@networklobby.org or 202-347-9797 x214.

NETWORK
A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

25 E Street NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC, 20001
PHONE 202-347-9797 FAX 202-347-9864
www.networklobby.org

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 6962
WASHINGTON, DC