

## **Local Response to Human Trafficking Workshop In Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.....**

**by Clare Nolan, rgs**

Perhaps in no region of the world do migration and trafficking intersect with such hazard to the vulnerable as they do in the Asia Pacific region. Thus when the December 2008 Good Shepherd Asia Pacific Intercontinental Assembly (ICA) named trafficking and migration as two of its four priorities, there was a deep resonance to local reality and to existent Good Shepherd ministries.

Long before the ICA priorities were named, the Singapore-Malaysia Justice Peace Office had begun organising a two day training workshop entitled *Networking: Developing A Local Response to Human Trafficking*, hosted by the Singapore-Malaysia Unit. The training was attended by 38 Good Shepherd partners and friends as well as international Good Shepherd sisters who were in Malaysia at the time.

Clare Nolan, with international experience in trafficking from her years serving as Good Shepherd NGO representative to the UN, facilitated the workshop and presented on the issue: *Human Trafficking - A Global Overview Towards Local Responses*. She highlighted the linkages between trafficking and the global phenomena of violence against women, feminization and poverty, cultural tolerances to the prostitution of women, current economic systems, and ancient but still operant patriarchal systems. She defined the importance and practicality of Networking as an effective strategy of communication and collaboration to address such a complex and entwined phenomenon. Participants engaged in discussion and activities in order to apply the theory to their local situations.

A special half-day presentation on the entanglement of migration and trafficking was given by Irene Fernandez, founder of the Malaysian NGO, *Tenaganita*. Irene has just published a book, *The Revolving Door*, which examines the modern day slavery that refugees and migrant workers are subject to. She examined the dynamics of migration, including national laws, in all their contradictory aspects, noting how laws serve to defend the status quo of the powerful at the cost to society of social injustice, inequality, and exclusion of the vulnerable. Her presentation of the local situation in Malaysia was people-centered, historical and legal, rooted in experiences of victims, and, most importantly based in a framework of Human Rights. It is from the Human Rights framework that practices and policies can be challenged while compassionate services are offered. Irene provoked thought about many concrete directions that workshop participants could follow in shaping their own responses.

The workshop was a challenge to take the priorities of migration and trafficking seriously and apply, as Good Shepherd persons, effective solutions to the issue.