

According to Ms. Tomama Yai, a member of the Ivorian Association for the Defense of Women's Rights, such a legal change would further push women into vulnerable position in a society where the common practice of polygamy continues to perpetuate the sexual privileges of men.  
Source: *Women's Watch*, June 1996

## NUN CLOSES HOPE AFTER WORKERS STRIKE

A project meant to educate and empower women was shut down after its workers, demanding better compensation and job security, staged a hunger strike and joined a labor union.

The Human Organisation for Pioneering in Education (HOPE) in Pune, western India, closed down its handi-crafts production center on 29 July after its 49 workers went on strike following an attempt to make one worker leave.

The trouble began when worker Teresa Pillai was asked to retire by Chavanod sister Noeline Pinto, the Roman Catholic nun who founded HOPE in 1974 to promote women's advancement through self-development. Pillai, 61, had worked with HOPE for the past 22 years.

"This incident brought a sense of insecurity among the women and they joined the Pune Industrial Employees Union (PIEU)," said Jesuit Father Walter Saldhana, president of the Labour Research and Consultancy Bureau in Pune.

Mahila Sangharasha Sanghata (Forum to Fight for Women's Rights) and the PIEU supported the strikers, saying HOPE was

running a small industry and demanding the minimum wage, gratuities and provident fund for employees.

Forum president Shilpa Umbrajakar said that it was "ironic that an agency that professed to empower women and to bring hope to the hopeless was not heeding their demand for minimum wages."

Yamuna Mufe, 43, who worked with HOPE for the past 18 years, said that all of a sudden the workers received a notice saying the center would be closed permanently and payment due would be sent by post.

According to Sister Pinto, however, "these women were not employees of HOPE in the real sense of the term. They were women in distress who were trained to be self-reliant."

"Our center is not a small-scale industry or profit-making firm but an infrastructure for women to use skills they acquired through HOPE," the social activist nun added.

She said that the handicrafts activities were discontinued after the PIEU began to disrupt the peaceful and smooth functioning of the center.

The workers were encouraged to help themselves by forming a cooperative, "but they preferred to lean on the benevolence of the center," she said.

Source: *Sunday Examiner*, Hong Kong, 20 September, 1996

## WORLD BANK IMPLICATED IN MASSACRE

According to a report released earlier this year by Witness for Peace and the International Riv-

ers Network, 376 people from the Guatemalan village of Rio Negro—about 10 percent of the 3,500 people in the region who were to be resettled for the dam—were killed in a series of massacres. The World Bank said that it was not aware of the 1982 massacre. But in 1985, it gave a second loan for the Chixoy Dam. The Witness for Peace report says: If the World Bank did know about the massacres, giving an additional loan to the project was at best a calculated cover-up, and at worst an act of complicity in the violence. If the bank did not know about the slaughter, then it was guilty of gross negligence. Either way, the bank is implicated in the horrors perpetrated against the village of Rio Negro in 1982. After an internal investigation prompted by the Witness for Peace study, a spokesman for the Bank denied any link between the resettlement for the Chixoy project and the murders, although he did mention that the staff were generally aware of violence in the area in 1982. He said that the civil disorder in the project area was considered to have been part of the widespread insurgency and counter-insurgency actions carried out in Guatemala in the 1980s. But villagers told Witness for Peace that the Guatemalan military went after the residents for resisting the project and refusing to be evicted. In one instance, in February 1982, 73 men and women from Rio Negro were ordered by the local military commander to report to Xococ, a village upstream from the reservoir zone which had a history of land conflicts and hostility with Rio Negro. Only one woman returned. According to the report, the rest were raped, tortured and then

