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Swedish military nurse Lt. Eva Lledgren holds Mimi in the Swedish military hospital in Mogadishu. Born prematurely, Mimi was found with her throat cut, abandoned in a Mogadishu street.



Chodar, a 4-year-old Tibetan refugee, clings to his mother in Katmandu, Nepal. Thousands of Tibetans flee Chinese Tibet each year, usually through high mountain passes under treacherous conditions. They cite Chinese discrimination and lack of opportunities for education and jobs as main reasons for leaving.



Children and teenagers wait patiently for work outside a glass factory in Firozabad, India. It is the center of India's multi-million dollar glass industry and is a microcosm of the child servitude widespread in the subcontinent.



In a slum section of Colombia's second-largest city, Medellin, a disconsolate youngster idles amid the squalor.

U.N. Population Conference

Who won at Cairo gathering? Observers gauge Vatican role

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

CAIRO, Egypt — Who won in Cairo?

It's a simplistic question, but one that was on everyone's mind as the International Conference on Population and Development wrapped up nine days of debate and negotiations in the Egyptian capital Sept. 13.

The final "Program of Action" contained enough to allow all sides to claim at least partial victory. Even the Vatican ended up joining the consensus on about half the document, saying it was "much improved," while rejecting sections on abortion, birth control and reproductive "rights."

But victory and defeat are measured on a different scale at the Vatican. Beyond the commas and clauses of the 98-page final document, there were larger goals at stake.

The Vatican, whose diplomatic voice is internationally respected, clearly spent some of its political capital in Cairo. A tiny state with only observer status at the United Nations, it repeatedly challenged several principles and provisions of the "Program of Action," slowing the debate and trying the patience of some delegates.

The Holy See took some tough shots in the media, too. After the conference stalled on the abortion issue, the *Times* of London, for one,

questioned why the Vatican was given a voice at U.N. meetings in the first place.

The Vatican accepted these calculated risks, not so much because they were bound to pay off, but because they involved fundamental principles worth defending in an international forum. In Pope John Paul II's judgment, it was time to put the church's prestige on the line.

As he reviews the Cairo results with delegation members, the pope will consider the achievements. In fact, the Vatican's pressure tactics made a difference in the final text. The family's role and re-

spect for religious values were rewritten to the Vatican's liking, and sections on abortion, while disappointing to the church, were at least diluted.

Equally important, however, was the fact that the Vatican held the media spotlight. For nine days, it was able to preach its message — that there is no such thing as safe abortion for the unborn, that sexual activity outside of marriage is wrong — over the heads of the 182 Cairo delegations to the world at large.

"Millions of people, not just Catholics, share these beliefs and are glad the Vatican is here expressing them," said Monsignor Diarmuid Martin, the Vatican's chief negotiator.

Did the Vatican's image suffer in the process? That was the conventional wisdom among con-

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