Maryknoll addresses poverty in multilateral processes .....................3
Africa: Agriculture and climate change ..............................................4
Sudan: On brink of war again ............................................................6
Zimbabwe: Diamond field massacre .....................................................7
Tanzania: New challenges in mining sector .........................................8

Bolivia: “Black October” trial ...............................................................8
Latin America: Non-renewable natural resources ...............................10
Guatemala: Step backward for human rights? ......................................11

South Korea: Opposition grows to naval base ...................................12
Heed Fukushima and close Indian Point .............................................12

Alternative business and the solidarity economy ...............................13
Immigration: Great struggle for just policies ......................................14
Food justice: Oxfam embarks on new project .....................................16
Water, sanitation as human rights .......................................................17
Keystone XL pipeline decision point ..................................................18

Ten years later: Our response to attacks on 9/11/2001 .......................20
Martin Luther King, Jr.: Time to break silence ....................................21

HIV and AIDS: Save funding for PEPFAR, Global Fund ....................22

Resources ..........................................................................................23
Maryknoll addresses poverty in multilateral processes

In communities around the world, Maryknoll missioners have responded to the needs of desperately poor people and neighborhoods. In the last issue of NewsNotes we focused on some of the different ways that Maryknoll has responded to poverty. Whether their ministry was community organizing, advancing the rights of workers, accompanying people marginalized by the stigma of HIV and AIDS, promoting the dignity of women, encouraging children to claim the fullness of life, accompanying communities as they secured water or food, Maryknollers’ focus around the world was on the dignity of each person, each child of God.

Our faith calls us to measure this economy, not by what it produces but also by how it touches human life and whether it protects or undermines the dignity of the human person. Economic decisions have human consequences and moral content; they help or hurt people, strengthen or weaken family life, advance or diminish the quality of justice in our land. (Economic justice for all, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1986)

Maryknoll agreed with the bishops of the U.S. and, with others, worked to put a human face on the consequences of economic injustice. Their determination to address the root causes of devastating poverty and to propose more just and life-giving alternatives for economic life – examples of which they also encountered in local communities around the world – led them to participate actively in campaigns for debt cancellation and trade justice, as well as in multiple multilateral processes over the years.

Involvement in the early stages of the UN Financing for Development process; in meetings of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF); and in the UN Conference on the Financial Crisis offered opportunities for the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns and Maryknoll missioners from around the world to address the root causes of poverty. Repeatedly, Maryknoll brought local partners to major intergovernmental meetings to tell their own stories and to propose policy changes that would facilitate their exit from poverty.

In the fall of 2000, Maryknoll introduced their written proposals submitted to the UN Financial for Development preparatory process with the following words:

“Maryknoll missioners live and work in the barrios and slums of growing urban centers, in rural villages, in refugee camps, in indigenous communities - in dynamic places where people work hard for a life of dignity and often balance on the edge of survival. Many of the people we serve live beyond the reach of macroeconomic measurements, earning their sustenance outside of the formal economy. Often they are not represented by organized labor or by non-governmental organizations. In many areas, there is a remarkable level of local organization that strengthens the capacity of people and communities to survive and to hold on to values and customs important to their identity, but this knowledge and experience has little entree into the political or economic decision-making process...

“We speak not as economists, but as people of faith who have watched with concern the impact of economic policy decisions on the people and the natural environment in these communities. ...

“Time after time we have witnessed the disastrous impact on these communities of decisions made in distant or disconnected places. ... Without their input, profit and growth almost always take precedence over human and environmental well-being.

“The most impoverished people with whom we live and work and the environment are bearing the burden of trade liberalization and the intense promotion of international trade that now mark the global economy. In many countries we have seen good laws meant to protect the worker and the environment weakened or ignored. We have seen whole sectors of the economy in which poor people were participating, such as small scale and subsistence farming and small, locally owned businesses destroyed. Productive investment intended to build sustainable local communities, whether rural or urban, to create jobs, provide education and basic health services and enhance food security is essential to protect the dignity of the people who live there.

“We believe that economic development should be in function of human development and environmentally sustainable. A new global financial architecture, new economic institutions, a new policy paradigm and new power relations are essential to making this a reality.”
Africa: Agriculture and climate change

Last December, in a report to the Human Rights Council, Olivier De Schutter, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, pointed out that in the “context of ecological, food and energy crises, the most pressing issue regarding [agricultural] … investment is not how much, but how.” This fourth article in our series of six focused on African food security explores the impact of climate change on African agriculture and points to the critical need for investment in technologies that work to ensure food availability while increasing both incomes for smallholder producers and their resilience to climate change.

For many people in Africa, climate change does not pertain to some distant future. Climate change’s telltale signs including more frequent and extreme weather events, droughts and floods and less predictable rainfall are already having a severe impact on the ability of African communities to feed themselves. These factors are driving hundreds of people living in rural areas off their land causing them to become “climate migrants.”

Changes in average temperatures are threatening normal levels of agricultural production in many regions, particularly those dependent on rain-fed agriculture. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), arid and semi-arid areas in sub-Saharan Africa are projected to increase to 90 million hectares, and in Southern Africa, it is estimated that yields from rain-fed agriculture could be reduced by up to 50 percent in the next eight years. The current drought conditions in the Horn of Africa are caused by successive seasons with very low rainfall. Since meteorological data has not been collected over a number of years in this area, there is no scientific evidence to “prove” that the current drought is climate change related. However, surveys of local pastoral communities in Ethiopia show that this drought is part of a long-term shift; in the past droughts were recorded every six to eight years, whereas now they occur every one to two years.

The inequity involved in the climate threat to food security in Africa is profound. Compared to the rest of the world most African countries lag significantly behind in terms of the level of industrialization, fossil-fuel-based energy use and lifestyle patterns that cause climate change, yet the people of rural Africa are more directly suffering the consequences of higher global temperatures from mostly northern greenhouse gas emissions.

In spite of the fact that most people in Africa still live in rural areas and agriculture accounts for a significant portion of the GDP in most African countries, over the past 25 years, little attention was given to investments in African agriculture and rural development. In fact, many of the structural adjustment programs designed to provide debt relief demanded drastic cuts in public spending – including agricultural extension programs (see NewsNotes, March-April 2011). This trend is beginning to shift. According to the UN Conference on Trade and Development’s World Investment Report 2009, foreign direct investment in global agriculture went from $6 million annually in the 1990s to an average of $3 billion in 2005-2007. And after the 2007-2008 global food price crisis many more initiatives like the World Bank’s Global Agriculture and Food Security Program, the L’Aquila Food Security Initiative, Feed the Future, and others began to leverage significant funding for international agricultural development, with a strong emphasis on the African continent.

The focus of many of these investments has been on improving seeds and inputs to increase yields, basically expanding northern industrial agricultural models to less industrialized, southern and mostly African countries. According to studies, however, industrial agriculture contributes about 30 percent of the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change largely because of the role it plays in deforestation. One of the biggest culprits is industrial-scale livestock production as noted by a 2006 UN study, “Livestock’s Long Shadow” (NewsNotes, March-April 2009) because of the deforestation involved and because of the methane gas produced by ruminant animals.

Whether or not these new investments are climate appropriate is complicated by the fact that agribusiness companies are launching massive cam-
campaigns to “greenwash” their intentions by claiming that they are developing climate solutions to feed the world. One of these “inventions” is drought-tolerant seed. The irony of this is that many of the indigenous seeds that traditional African farmers have saved and exchanged over generations are widely known to be drought-tolerant or drought resistant. The seed varieties now being tested and used to invent this “new technology” have been in Africa for generations. The “added benefit” contributed by corporate technological development is that they are now being turned into patented hybrid varieties that will require farmers to return to buy more.

In The State of the World 2011 Brian Halweil and Danielle Nierenberg refer to seeds as “elegant vessels for delivering new technology to a farm.” Techniques for improving soils, making better use of rain-fed farms, growing crops other than grains, and other farm landscape investments could make all the difference for farm productivity, for sequestering carbon and for climate adaptation planning. But because few companies have figured out how to profit from rebuilding soils and aquifers, these projects have been neglected.

“Greenwashing” and hidden motives to make a profit are being watched closely by farmer movements throughout Africa and the world as climate change negotiations continue at the end of this year in Durban, South Africa. Last year in Cancún at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties, a “Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation” (REDD+) plan was approved which “encourages developing country Parties to contribute to mitigation actions in the forest sector by undertaking the following activities, as deemed appropriate by each Party and in accordance with their respective capabilities and national circumstances: (a) Reducing emissions from deforestation; (b) Reducing emissions from forest degradation; (c) Conservation of forest carbon stocks; (d) Sustainable management of forest; and (e) Enhancement of forest carbon stocks.”

All of this sounds good, but traditional and indigenous farmers who rely on the biodiversity of established forest areas worry that REDD+ views forests simply as “stores of carbon” rather than ecosystems. The wording is so vague that “sustainable management of forests” could include subsidies to industrial-scale commercial logging operations in community old-growth forests. And “the enhancement of forest carbon stocks” could result in conversion of land (including forests) to industrial tree plantations, with serious implications for biodiversity, forests and local communities. Traditional farmers also share a deep concern that the focus on income generation through carbon trading encourages northern industries to “pay to keep polluting,” or to be paid twice by establishing plantations of mono-cropped trees to get carbon credits and then later selling those same trees or their fruits for fuel, fiber or food.

As solutions to food insecurity are being evaluated and implemented it seems that although climate considerations are part of the talking points, productivity and profit still surface as among the top criteria. As children of God charged with caring for creation and for one another, the future looks daunting as long as solutions that copy industrial production, unequal distribution and overconsumption are used. Now is the time to work to improve the sustainability of ecosystems by imitating nature instead of trying to tame, control and harvest it for profit as industrial models tend to do. This means that there has to be a shift in focus from a “cash-based return on investment” to a “sustainable future-based return on investment.”

Climate change and Earth’s diminishing resources invite those of us in northern countries to make the shift in worldview that Jesus spoke about in Luke 12, the parable of the rich man who builds larger and larger storage bins to hoard the great abundance that his lands produced. The story doesn’t end well for the rich man, and Jesus goes on to say, “Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them.” Jesus gives us the hint that God will care for us with the gifts of creation – as long as we work with, and not against God’s abundance (which is meant for all of creation).

In this light, the world has a great deal that it can learn from thousands of traditional farmers in rural areas who model sustainability by having evolved and adapted to ever-changing environments, developing diverse and resilient farming systems in response to different opportunities and constraints over time. Their models of saving and sharing seeds, enhancing the organic content of soils, water harvesting and management, crop diversification, intercropping, pest management and climate forecasting are exactly the tools that should be studied, shared and disseminated to provide the best chance of future food and climate security.
Sudan: On brink of war again

“Thus says the Lord: In Ramah is heard the sound of moaning, of bitter weeping! Rachel mourns her children; she refuses to be consoled because her children are no more.” (Jeremiah 31:15).

In recent weeks, when South Sudan was beginning its journey as a new member of the family of nations, the cries from the also-new Republic of Sudan to the north intensified. In mid July, Bishop Macram Max Gassis, Catholic Bishop of El Obeid Diocese (Kordofan, Darfur and Abyei) wrote: “The international community should not close its eyes and repeat the words of Cain after having killed his brother Abel: ‘Am I the custodian of my brother?’ The more the international community shies away from tackling the issue of the Nuba, the more the situation will become a tragedy and many are already terming it ethnic cleansing.”

In August, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a report on egregious violations of human rights and humanitarian law in Southern Kordofan, particularly in and around Kadugli, where the population is predominantly Nuba. The violations listed include extrajudicial executions, arbitrary arrests and illegal detention, enforced disappearances, attacks against civilians, looting of civilian homes and destruction of property. A more recent threat to shoot down a medical helicopter is tragically illustrative of the situation.

While reports of horrific abuse of the Nuba people multiply, concerns are growing about what Eric Reeves calls “a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions” that “will occur sooner rather than later without an effective international response.” Already the violence is spreading.

In July, President Omar al-Bashir overturned an agreement signed by Nafi’e Ali Nafi’e and representatives of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) that addressed some of the issues precipitating the crisis in South Kordofan and committed both parties to seek a cessation of hostilities. Since then, the military campaigns in South Kordofan and, more recently, Blue Nile have continued.

Roots of the north’s persistent belligerence include an imminent economic disaster and a takeover by the military – according to Eric Reeves, a “creeping coup.”

North Sudan is facing economic disaster that includes an enormous external debt of $38 billion and a huge loss of oil revenue to South Sudan and is characterized by rising inflation, dwindling foreign exchange reserves, sluggish international trade and protests over reduced sugar and oil subsidies.

Creditors, including the U.S., promised Khartoum debt relief if it fulfilled its obligations under the comprehensive peace agreement (CPA), but Khartoum has failed to do so. “Without debt relief,” Reeves continues, “economic problems that are already deeply threatening become insoluble.” Some in the regime surely understand this, and so the decision to adopt the current militaristic and threatening posture towards South Sudan – just weeks after independence – represents a triumph of the worst impulses within the regime: nationalism, Islamism, embarrassment over ‘losing the south,’ contempt for the international community, and a belief that more of the southern oilfields can be brought by force into the north…”

Julie Flint quotes a “source” close to al-Bashir’s National Congress Party (NCP) calling this the “hour of the soldiers – a vengeful, bitter attitude of defending one’s interests no matter what; a punitive and emotional approach that goes beyond calculation of self-interest. The army was the first to accept that Sudan would be partitioned. But they also felt it as a humiliation, primarily because they were withdrawing from territory in which they had not been defeated. They were ready to go along with the politicians as long as the politicians were delivering – but they had come to the conclusion they weren’t. Ambushes in Abyei ... interminable talks in Doha keeping Darfur as an open wound. ... Lack of agreement on oil revenue ...” Flint claims that politics in northern Sudan is now “driven by a new dynamic ... A new configuration is propelling the new fighting – hinted at by the SPLM North in a statement in which it cited ‘the domination ... of the military junta’ over the [NCP] leadership.”

Faith in action:

The international community, including the U.S. government, must acknowledge the far-reaching implications for the region of events now unfolding in the Republic of Sudan. Please contact your Congressional representatives and the White House. Let them know that you care about the Nuba people and the future of both Sudans. Urge their full and immediate attention to the ongoing crisis.
Zimbabwe: Diamond field massacre

For 18 years, Global Witness (www.global-witness.org) has run campaigns against natural resource-related conflict and corruption and associated environmental and human rights abuses. They have been deeply involved in efforts to stop marketing in conflict (or blood) diamonds that are used to fuel violent conflict and human rights abuses. After years of campaigning and negotiations between diamond producing and trading countries, industry and civil society, the international diamond certification scheme known as the Kimberley Process was established in 2003.

In June 2010, Global Witness published Return of the Blood Diamond: The deadly race to control Zimbabwe’s new-found diamond wealth, claiming that Zimbabwe’s ruling party and military elite were “seeking to capture the country’s diamond wealth through a combination of state-sponsored violence and the legally questionable introduction of opaque joint-venture companies.”

“Zimbabwe’s Marange diamond fields,” they wrote, “stretch over 66,000 hectares in the east of the country. Although estimates of the reserves contained in this area vary wildly, some have suggested that it could be home to one of the world’s richest diamond deposits. Since the discovery of alluvial diamond deposits in 2006 in Marange, people living there have borne the brunt of a series of extreme and brutal measures taken by state authorities to secure control of the resource.”

But it wasn’t until August 2011 that the extent of the human rights abuses in the Marange fields became known. Then, the BBC and the UK television program, Panorama, reported on interviews with former soldiers who worked at a camp in the Zenge- ni area of the fields. The former soldiers described rape, beatings, mock drownings and burnings that took place on a regular basis.

The Panorama story explained that Marange diamonds have been banned from international markets since 2009, due to the devastating attempts by the Zimbabwean government to clear illegal diamond panners from the area in 2008, following the contested presidential elections. At the end of October that year, about 1,500 troops surrounded the diamond fields on foot and by helicopter, gunning down not only those who were mining for diamonds but also the 1,000 or so residents of the makeshift town nearby. This was part of “Operation Hakudzokwe” (Operation “You Shall Never Return”), a three-week attack in which people were beaten, raped, mauled by dogs and shot. Many were gunned down as they attempted to flee.

Based on testimony from 53 eye witnesses, some of whom were perpetrators, including military officers, the BBC wrote, “The massacre investigated by the BBC took place in late October 2008 when Zimbabwe was in the depths of economic crisis. Thousands of civilians had flocked to the diamond fields in the hope of finding gems.

“Among the victims were women and children, some working in a makeshift market which had sprung up to sell food and clothes to the miners. Unknown to them, several weeks before the killings began, the military had started laying a circular trap around the civilians. They laid strings of mines and ultimately stationed armoured vehicles, mounted soldiers and an infantry battalion in a circular pattern around the 2.5km area.” (BBC News)

Think Africa Press wrote that “between 69-105 bodies from the 2008 massacre were buried in a mass grave in Mutare, one of the towns nearest to the diamond fields. A worker at the cemetery described the burial: “The body parts were packed in black plastic bags. You could actually see the bones piercing through the plastic. Blood was dripping everywhere. It was disgusting.” Other bodies were left in shallow graves nearer Marange, some were loosely covered by leaves, whereas others were left in clusters by the sides of fields.

In June 2011, civil society organizations from West Africa, Central and Southern Africa, Europe and North America walked out of the Kimberley Process meeting in Kinshasa in protest of its failure to address human rights abuses associated with the diamond trade in particular.

In Zimbabwe, civil society remains committed to preventing conflict diamonds from entering international markets, to addressing challenges facing the artisanal diamond mining sector and to being a voice for communities in diamond producing countries and consumers.
Tanzania: New challenges in mining sector

Tanzania’s Prime Minister Mzengo Pinda has defended the decision of the government to open the Selous Game Reserve to mining, stating that the move has not violated the country’s laws including the 2009 Wildlife Act. However, Pinda was quick to note that UNESCO was still reluctant to give its permission.

Tanzania has vast mineral wealth, with deposits of diamonds, gold, coal, soda-ash, nickel, platinum, gemstones and now the recently discovered supply of uranium. In the mid 1980s the IMF liberalized Tanzania’s trade which resulted in the 1997 Mineral Sector Policy, through which Tanzania lost large sums of money as the mining companies were not under the dictates of safe mining practices or subject to just or incremental taxes. Recent changes to the tax code have finally ensured that mining companies will pay a more just tax on mined minerals, but serious environmental, social and cultural consequences of irresponsible mining are not yet being taken into account.

Now the discovery of uranium in a number of places in Tanzania is raising serious issues. Cognizant of this, the Foundation for Environmental Management and Campaign Against Poverty (FEMAAPO) held a public forum on uranium mining in Dar es Salaam on May 25. Estimates indicate that Tanzania has about 53.9 million pounds of uranium oxide deposits. At the 2011 prices of $41 per pound, the deposits are worth US$2.2 billion and could be a significant source of public revenue and jobs, as well as direct investment by mining companies in important community projects.

But other impacts detrimental to the environment, human health and world peace associated with the mining and uses of this particular heavy metal must also be taken into consideration. In addition to nuclear and depleted uranium weapons, uranium has a number of non-military uses -- for example, to produce nuclear energy, in radiation and other medical technology, in aircraft control and navigation mechanisms, in food irradiation and in some smoke detectors. While some of these purposes may well be legitimate, none are without risk, beginning with the miners and mining communities themselves. Tanzanians should be fully informed about uranium’s dangers before mining permits are issued, and the mining process itself must be subject to strict health and safety regulations.

Bolivia: “Black October” trial

On August 30, Bolivia’s Supreme Court sentenced five former generals to 10-15 years in prison for their involvement in the “Black October” massacre of 2003. Two former cabinet members were also sentenced to three years each, though these sentences may be suspended. The conclusion of the two year long trial brings a measure of relief to the over 200 injured victims and the families of those who were shot with bullets from military issue weapons. Days after the massacre, Sanchez de Lozada and two of his ministers fled to the U.S. where they have remained ever since. In total 16 ex-authorities are accused of participating in the massacres of 2003, but the fugitive status of over half of the collaborators (including Goni himself) left the Bolivian courts with only seven of the accused to bring to court.

The seven accomplices received sentences of up to 15 years without right to pardon on charges including genocide in bloody massacre, homicide, aggravated injury, deprivation of freedom, abuse and torture, crimes against the freedom of the press, and issuing resolutions contrary to the Constitution. Those sentenced include two ex-Ministers of State and five high military authorities: Erick Reyes Villa (ex-minister of Sustainable Development), Adalberto Kuajara (ex-minister of Labor), and former members of military high command Gens. Roberto Claros, Gonzalo Rocabado, Juan Veliz, Luis Alberto
September-October 2011

Aranda and Jose Quiroga Mendoza.

The case featured more than 2,000 documents of evidence and 328 witnesses, including testimony from current President Evo Morales and Sanchez de Lozada’s Vice President Carlos Mesa, as well as the victims. Given the abundance of evidence, prosecuting attorneys have proved the accused guilty by means of “autoria mediata,” or having ordered the repression.

Prosecuting attorneys began pushing for the trial to go through since 2004 when Congress voted to start a “Trial of Responsibilities,” a special process used to judge high elected officials. Though Goni’s defenders try to portray the trial as a politically motivated campaign by Evo Morales, it was actually started by Carlos Mesa and sanctioned by a two-thirds vote in a Congress dominated by Goni’s allies, using a law advocated for by Goni himself, all taking place more than a year before Morales came to power.

In 2008, the Bolivian Supreme Court sent a request for the extradition of Goni and two of his former ministers. Despite pledging to “expedite the judicial proceedings related to the extradition,” the U.S. government has not yet acted on the extradition. It is unlikely that Sanchez de Lozada will ever be extradited as he is very well connected in the U.S. He spent most of his life in the U.S. (he is called “Gringo” due to his heavy English accent when speaking Spanish) and studied at the University of Chicago. During his presidency, he formed strong bonds with political leaders in the U.S. When it became clear that an extradition was not forthcoming, the Supreme Court pushed forward against those defendants who remained in Bolivia.

Bolivia’s judicial reforms also interfered with the process of this case. Both lawyers for the victims are current candidates for the Supreme Court and Constitutional Tribunal in the October judicial reform elections, and were required by the 2009 constitution to resign from public office three months before the election. This deadline forced the lawyers to resign by July 26 in order to be eligible for the popular vote that will bring long-awaited reform to Bolivia’s judicial system. The turnover has left the trial in the hands of the Attorney General Mario Uribe, a figure whose presence throughout the trial has facilitated continuity in the momentum of the case and a carry-over of the political support the previous lawyers wielded.

While seven have now been sentenced, nine others who are charged in the case, in addition to Goni, continue to avoid prosecution. Former minister of government Yerko Kukoc died in June while a fugitive in the U.S. If any of the accused return or are extradited to Bolivia, their case will move forward.

While many Bolivians would like to see all the defendants duly tried in court, family members of 10 victims from the 2003 massacre are also suing Sanchez de Lozada and his former defense minister Sanchez Berzain in U.S. civil court. The prosecution is using the Alien Tort Statute and Torture Victim Protection Act as well as state law in Florida to process the cases in civil courts in the United States. The trial is currently pending the decision of the judge as to whether the victims have enough grounding to hold the trial in the U.S.

The recent sentencing serves as a momentous occasion for Bolivians, as demonstrated by the celebration of the protestors who have been waiting in vigil outside the Bolivian courthouse for several weeks praying for a just culmination to the case. It is one of very few instances in the history of Bolivia that the military has been prosecuted for human rights abuses. Yet the enormity of this moment does not come without potential problems, as some fear that the sentences could provoke some sort of retaliation from the country’s military powers.

Even with the sentencing of these seven, the struggle against impunity continues, both in Bolivia and throughout Latin America. This historic moment joins the efforts of countries such as Ecuador, where the 2007 truth commission was chaired by Maryknoll Sister Elsie Monge; Peru with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission examining abuses under the Fujimori dictatorship; Paraguay and its investigations into the Stroessner dictatorship; Brazil and its inquiries into corrupt politicians and police; and other countries such as El Salvador and Guatemala. The conclusion of this phase of the “Black October” case is a step toward a future free of impunity, where the militarily and politically powerful face the consequences of their actions, and the victims and their families receive justice.
Latin America: Non-renewable natural resources

The following article was written by Sarah Brady, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

As more transnational corporations receive mining concessions throughout Central and South America, concerns over the effects of this activity on nearby communities and environments have reached the ears of the Catholic Church. During a three day conference held in Peru this July, the Latin America Episcopal Conference (CELAM, its Spanish acronym) reflected on the issues afflicting their communities and solidified their mission within this context, stating their commitment to play an active role in the way extractive industries interact with the people and communities of Latin America. This pledge is detailed in the conference’s closing document, recalling the principles of the doctrine of Catholic social teaching that “the Church cannot be indifferent to the fear, anxiety, and misery of mankind, above all those of the poor and afflicted.”

“We have analyzed testimonials reflecting grave social and environmental problems,” states the document. The CELAM statement calls attention to an “accelerated expansion” of the extractive industries sector in Latin America, with roots in the current economic model of consumerism. This unrestrained pursuit of resources and profit creates a scarcity of natural resources and a great burden for the environment. The paper highlights the difficult reality of communities in Latin America who feel the effects of global warming the most. At the same time extractive industries pump more chemicals and wastes into the air, water and soils. The current exploitative economic model threatens livelihoods, human health and the health of the environment, and stirs much of the socio-economic conflict afflicting the region.

With this context in mind, the CELAM conference reaffirms the Church’s mission to be a voice for an alternative development model that is humane, comprehensive, inclusive and sustainable. Recalling the CELAM Aparecida conference, “The mission of evangelization cannot proceed separated from solidarity with the peoples and the promotion of their comprehensive development.” Some encouraging signs of emerging alternative models are highlighted, including the mobilization of local community groups to develop strategies in response to conflict, and growing citizen movements in industrialized countries that combat uninformed consumerism (such as “interesting international certification mechanisms” and fair trade goods).

Looking closely at the role of governments regarding extractive industries, the Lima document explores the concerning relationship between states and private corporations in Latin America. Throughout the region, private transnational companies have received large land concessions, tax breaks and loopholes, due to their power and influence over all levels of government. A lack of effective sanctioning of corporations that break national and international agreements pervades. Of particular concern is the violation of the process of prior consultation, where corporations are required to involve local indigenous communities in the decision making process, as mandated by the UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the International Labor Organization’s Convention 169. The Church calls on governments to break this trend by holding corporations responsible for their commitments.

The July CELAM conference details pastoral guidelines as a response to extractive activities. Among these is the commitment to push for stronger ethical dimensions in politics and the economy. The Church challenges governments to create better sanctions and parameters for regulating extractive industries. Latin America’s Catholic clergy have also made a long-standing commitment to facilitating dialogue and avoiding violence. As part of this effort to incorporate all voices into the discussion, the Church provides support for capacity-building and training of community members. Equally important is the facilitation of information regarding the benefits and risks of extractive industries through Church media and education, in order to inform the public as well as “promote alternative proposals and defend their [the public’s] rights through dialogue.”

In honoring the covenant between the Creator and all living things, we are called to care for all of Creation. The CELAM conference reasserts a commitment to care of the earth and the preferential option for the poor, engaging in this struggle through accompaniment and advocacy. In response to the overexploitation of nonrenewable resources, Latin America’s Catholic clergy challenge local governments and transnational companies to see the earth as a “common home,” rather than an unending source of economic resources.
Guatemala: Step backward for human rights?

As the Guatemalan judicial system attempts to push through high-profile human rights cases for the first time since the country’s civil war, thousands of Guatemalans take to the polls on September 11 to vote for a presidential candidate implicated in the abuses of the country’s past. Leading the polls throughout the campaign, Gen. Otto Perez Molina has claimed his stake in politics after a career as a high-ranking military commander during the violent regime of Rios Montt. The following article was written by Sarah Brady, an intern with the Mary-knoll Office for Global Concerns.

Recent polling shows Perez Molina from the Partido Patriota (Patriot Party) with 53 percent of the potential vote, a figure that would allow him to win the elections in the first round where a candidate must receive more than 50 percent of the vote to win.

Perez Molina is known to have been in a command position in the Ixil triangle in 1982 during the village-by-village massacre campaign, and also served as the head of the D-2 military intelligence division that carried out disappearances and extrajudicial executions. During his tenure, it is likely that Perez Molina gave the orders to disappear and torture Mayan activist Efrain Bamaca Velazquez. Investigations by the UN-sponsored Truth Commission have unearthed declassified U.S. documents confirming the torture of Bamaca during Perez Molina’s leadership of D-2. Efforts to prosecute those responsible for Bamaca’s torture and death have proceeded through several international courts and are awaiting trial in Guatemala. Since the end of the civil war, Perez Molina has escaped judgment through the use of false names, intimidation and the destruction of records. Given the efforts of Perez Molina and others of the military elite to obstruct justice, his possible election will likely be a step backwards for the war crime trials going forth at this time.

In 2009 a special program for the prosecution of key war crimes cases was created, under which several cases have begun to take shape. Currently the most high-profile case will be that of recently-arrested Gen. Hector Lopez Fuentes, whose trial is scheduled to begin on September 21. His was the first arrest of an intellectual author of the genocide during the civil war, and it will be important to raise media awareness and support for this trial. Other cases underway include the trial in a Spanish court against former dictator Rios Montt for genocide and crimes against humanity, the Bamaca case (a trial that has been stalled in Guatemalan courts), as well as a case involving the disappearance of labor activist Fernando Garcia during the civil war.

These trials have been progressing under the guidance of recently appointed District Attorney Claudia Paz y Paz. Unfortunately, the possible election of Perez Molina will pressure the judicial system to place the human rights abuse cases back on the shelf in order to protect the impunity enjoyed by the country’s elite. In addition, the lack of U.S. reaction to human rights abuses in Honduras following the 2009 coup might allow Perez Molina to believe he can get away with obstructing this important peace process. So far no efforts have been successful in bringing charges against Perez Molina himself, and those pushing for the cases to go through are avoiding the association of the trials with any part of the electoral process.

Perez Molina has gained political support by promoting a policy of mano dura (iron fist). As a country witnessing heightened violence and the ever-greater presence of drug traffickers, there is an appeal to the old guard military politics, which calls for a response to violence with oppression. This political perspective pushes electoral attention away from the hard realities of unemployment, corruption and poverty. The irony is that Guatemala’s dominant organized criminal group, the CIACS, is made up of former military intelligence and death squad officers. As Mexican organized crime pushes its influence further south, Guatemala’s criminal groups have found a greater motivation to secure their territory through political corruption, financially backing politicians willing to turn a blind eye. More and more politicians have become indebted to narcotraffickers in order to fund the excessively expensive campaigns.

The Peace Accords of 1996 ended the armed conflict but did not bring peace to Guatemala. Given that the unpunished perpetrators of these abuses make up the current political and economic elite, the growing structures of crime and violence that have begun to infiltrate the political sphere will continue to threaten the future of Guatemala. The possible election of Perez Molina is emblematic of this cycle of impunity and violence.
South Korea: Opposition grows to naval base

Jeju Island, deemed an “Island of World Peace” and home to UNESCO World Heritage sites, may soon house a South Korean naval base in the Gangjeong village, yet construction of the base has been met with significant civilian opposition.

The proposed US$950 million naval base, with expected completion in 2014, would house 20 Aegis destroyer warships, which originate in the U.S. and use computers and radars to track and guide naval weapons. Submarine activity and an aircraft carrier are also being discussed.

Those who oppose the base contend that the U.S. has pushed for its construction in order to maintain a presence in the region; a 1954 treaty between the U.S. and South Korea allows the U.S. complete access to South Korea’s military facilities.

The vast majority – 94 percent – of the island’s residents rejects the base. Organized ongoing demonstrations have been held for months to raise awareness of the potential destruction caused by the base and to express the residents’ strong denunciation of its construction. Many, including elderly residents, have been arrested for their nonviolent acts of civil disobedience to protest the base.

The grassroots campaign to stop the base’s construction has gained the support of South Korea’s religious leaders, including the Catholic church. On August 16, the Union of Catholic Asian News (UCAN) printed this report: “Bishop Peter Kang U-il of Cheju diocese has reiterated his opposition to the proposed building of a naval base on Jeju island in a letter issued to the media. ‘It is contradictory for the government to host the World Conservation Congress next year on the island, while planning a big naval port,’ the bishop wrote in his letter. In addition to environmental concerns, Bishop Kang said the cost was also contributing factor to his opposition. ‘Will this astronomical expenditure serve the nation?’ he wrote in the letter. Meanwhile, the Environmental Pastoral Committee and the Committee for Justice and Peace, both within the Seoul archdiocese, issued statements today opposing the Jeju island naval base, stating that the plan ‘lacks long-term policy in pursuit of short-term economic interest.’”

Learn more at www.savejejuisland.org.

Heed Fukushima and close Indian Point

On August 11 in Manhattan, about 150 people carried placards and banners demanding the closure of the nearby Indian Point Power Plant. One long banner read: “You are 35 miles from Indian Point. What would you do in a meltdown?” More than 20 million people live and work within close proximity to the plant, including everyone at Maryknoll, located only eight miles from the plant.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D) and former Rep. John Hall (D) were two of several speakers at the rally who addressed the risks of nuclear energy to public health and to the environment. Activists collected signatures and distributed information about the plant’s dangers.

The tsunami-triggered Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident in Japan in March loomed large over the rally’s crowd. A college student who was in Japan last spring shared his experiences during the Fukushima nuclear accident; the vivid description of the aftermath of the disaster impacted all those present at the rally. Although delivered from different perspectives, the goal of the message at the rally echoed one voice: “Heed Fukushima and close Indian Point.”

A detailed study of the nuclear fuel cycle and its dangers is necessary for a better understanding and acceptance of the message to phase out nuclear energy and invest in renewable energy resources, a message that has been ignored far too long. Proponents of nuclear energy have downplayed any potential dangers, and repeatedly claim alternative methods are too expensive. New York Affordable Reliable Electricity Alliance (NYAREA) Chairman Jerry Kremer stated, “If successful, these activists will drive electricity costs significantly higher,” but he failed to mention that nuclear plants are government subsidized; that financial support deprives the renewable energy resources sector of needed funds.

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is in the process of writing both a background paper and an official statement on the process and use of nuclear energy (and its connection to nuclear weapons); we hope to have these documents in the near future.
Alternative business and the solidarity economy

In his latest encyclical, Charity in Truth, Pope Benedict XVI expresses concern about the global economy and its overemphasis on profit at the expense of human and community needs. “Without doubt, one of the greatest risks for businesses is that they are almost exclusively answerable to their investors, thereby limiting their social value.” (40) The pope’s solution to this situation is not only government regulation of businesses, but the creation of new business models where human and community effects are considered a fundamental part of the bottom line. In many ways, he describes alternative businesses that are part of the rapidly expanding solidarity economy.

Pope Benedict writes, “Profit is useful if it serves as a means towards an end ... Once profit becomes the exclusive goal, if it is produced by improper means and without the common good as its ultimate end, it risks destroying wealth and creating poverty.” (21) It is clear that “[e]conomic activity cannot solve all social problems through the simple application of commercial logic. This needs to be directed towards the pursuit of the common good.” (36 - emphasis in original)

He also points out how merely relying on governments to make the economy more equitable is no longer enough:

“Perhaps at one time it was conceivable that first the creation of wealth could be entrusted to the economy, and then the task of distributing it could be assigned to politics. Today that would be more difficult, given that economic activity is no longer circumscribed within territorial limits, while the authority of governments continues to be principally local. Hence the canons of justice must be respected from the outset, as the economic process unfolds, and not just afterwards or incidentally.” (37)

Throughout the world millions of people involved in grassroots initiatives work every day to create an integrally just economic system through the formation of businesses in which workers are co-owners and/or are involved in making business decisions. These new forms of businesses are also committed to environmentally sustainable practices.

Worker cooperatives, employee stock ownership plans, community land trusts, community development corporations, municipal enterprises, local currencies, community development financial institutions, state banks, social enterprises and “B” corporations are some of the examples of these new business models that aim to “apply justice to every phase of their economic activity.” To learn more about these alternative business models, see www.community-wealth.org.

The city of Cleveland is a good example of how these businesses can work together to provide decent livelihoods and a stable local economy. A traditionally industrial town, Cleveland has been heavily affected by globalization, with its corporate leaders moving huge portions of its industries overseas in order to take advantage of lower wages and weaker environmental -- and other -- regulations. The result was massive deindustrialization, skyrocketing unemployment and urban blight. To rebuild the economy, city leaders decided to focus on “anchor industries” as the center of an economic renaissance.

Hospitals and universities are large institutions that are unlikely to be “offshored” like manufacturing industries. With local businesses established to supply these anchor industries, more secure jobs in the city’s poorer neighborhoods were created. It began with a laundry cooperative to supply a number of hospitals; now worker cooperatives install solar panels in these anchor institutions and retrofit buildings to be more energy efficient. A recently started urban garden run by a workers cooperative will supply food to the anchor institutions.

Without siphoning off money to pay exorbitant CEO incomes and corporate dividends, workers in cooperatives tend to make higher incomes while also building up equity ownership accounts.
worth tens of thousands of dollars – for many of the workers, the first time they have had any significant savings. And being co-owners of the business, they are more likely to stay on the job, creating much more stability in previously precarious neighborhoods.

“Benefit corporations” and “B corporations” are new models that balance the needs of all stakeholders in a business instead of concentrating only on providing profits for shareholders. While traditional corporations have one goal – create profits for those who hold stock in the corporations (shareholders) – “B” and “benefit” corporations consider all stakeholders in the corporation, from its workers, to the communities where it works, and the local and global environment.

“Rather than just being a business that talks about the ‘triple bottom line’ of people-planet-profit, we have put it into our corporate structure so that we are required to do it,” said one benefit corporation member. “We’ve made it so we are unable to violate our own business principles.”

“B” corporations are usually regular corporations which are certified by B Lab, a nonprofit organization, as meeting certain criteria in terms of social and environmental outcomes, in the same way fair trade businesses are certified by an outside agency.

Benefit corporations are a newly recognized class of business; their founding charters and statutes (unlike B corporations’ charters) include social and environmental goals. They are assessed by a third party as to if they meet those goals or not. At least four states (Vermont, New Jersey, Maryland and Virginia) officially recognize benefit corporations, and lawmakers in California, Hawaii, Colorado, Michigan, New York, North Carolina and Pennsylvania have introduced legislation to recognize them.

In an article printed in the June 27 issue of The Nation, Maryland State Senator Jamie Raskin explains well the benefits of being a benefit corporation: “[W]hy would public-spirited corporations embrace these exacting duties when they can simply roam free and do a little bit of altruistic good on the side? For one thing, Benefit Corporations can’t be held liable by courts for failing to place profits over everything else. This is an important shift in law. The fear of shareholder litigation has driven many public-spirited businesses, most famously Ben & Jerry’s, to take the high bid rather than the high road in a corporate takeover fight. Becoming a Benefit Corporation declares legal independence from the profits-über-alles model. More important, having Benefit Corporation status sends a powerful message to shareholders, employees, business partners and consumers about what kind of company you’re running. The signal generates instant branding, internal cohesion, consumer enthusiasm and links to a vibrant national B Corp network that brings in more than $4.5 billion in revenues.”

Most participants in these alternative business models would agree with Pope Benedict that “[w]ithout internal forms of solidarity and mutual trust, the market cannot completely fulfill its proper economic function” (35) and that “[w]hat is needed, therefore, is a market that permits the free operation … of enterprises in pursuit of different institutional ends. Alongside profit-oriented private enterprise and the various types of public enterprise, there must be room for commercial entities based on mutualist principles and pursuing social ends to take root and express themselves.” (38)

**Immigration: Great struggle for just policies**

The following article was prepared by Ashley McKinless, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

On August 5, the U.S. government announced that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was requiring all jurisdictions across the country to participate in the Secure Communities (S-Comm), whereby fingerprints taken at the time of processing in local, state, and federal jails are automatically sent to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to be checked for the arrested person’s immigration status. Several states – Illinois, Massachusetts, New York – and the District of Columbia have declined to participate in S-Comm.

Two weeks later, following an outcry from immigrants’ organizations and their allies, the Obama administration made public an interagency process to review the 300,000 plus cases in deportation proceedings. This process will identify low-priority non-criminal cases that should not be prosecuted under an exercise of prosecutorial discretion, as well as cases that may be eligible for actual immigration benefits. The process will focus the administration’s
resources on the removal of high-priority cases, such as convicted felons and individuals who pose a serious threat to national security. The administration was clear, however, that this decision would not change the need to reform immigration laws.

In May, the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act was reintroduced in the Senate after failing to overcome a filibuster last December. Since it was first crafted in 2001, the DREAM Act has been refashioned and amended to gain wider support. Changes were made to the most recent version of the bill in an attempt to gain the Republican support needed to reach 60 votes: In the 2010 version the maximum age of those who could seek to benefit from the bill was decreased from 35 to 30 years, the period of “conditional residency” required before one could become a legal permanent resident (LPR) was increased from six to 10 years, and instead of an LPR being immediately eligible for naturalization, he or she would have to wait another three years for that process to begin.

But the most significant change made to the DREAM Act over its 10-year history was the result of a strategic shift made in 2007, when lawmakers attempted to attach it as an amendment to the defense spending authorization bill. At a time when the war in Iraq was escalating and recruitment was down, then co-sponsors Sens. Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Richard Lugar (R-IN) proposed an additional path to legal status for undocumented youth besides the pursuit of higher education: two years of military service. Sen. Durbin stated, “Tens of thousands of well-qualified potential recruits would become eligible for military service for the first time. They are eager to serve in the armed services, and under the DREAM Act, they would have a very strong incentive to enlist because it would give them a path to permanent legal status.”

This move won over the Department of Defense, and the military option remains as a standard part of the bill today. However, it also became a cause for disagreement among those who have staunchly supported the broader aims of the bill. Many worry that given the prohibitive cost of higher education in this country—and the fact that the “Dreamers” would not be eligible for federal financial aid nor in-state tuition in all but 12 states—joining the military will become the de facto choice for undocumented youth seeking LPR status. And while the bill only calls for two years of service, the minimum enlistment obligation for the military is eight years, in which they would likely be deployed.

For these reasons, a number of faith communities and DREAM activists have called for a bill with “no military strings attached.” The Mennonite Central Committee continues to support the passage of the bill, but states it “would be strengthened with the addition of an option to serve for two years in the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, or to perform comparable volunteer service with a relief, development, and/or peacebuilding organization.” The American Friends Service Committee echoes this call, advocating for the addition of vocational program and community service alternatives, access to greater funding for education, and a conscientious objection clause for those who choose the military enrollment option. VAMOS UNIDOS, a group of Latino working youth in New York, has withdrawn support for the bill as it stands with a “militarization component.”

But others within the movement, especially younger activists and potential DREAM participants, view the protestations of their allies as “overstated and paternalistic.” José Luis Marantes, an organizer at the Florida Immigrant Coalition and Students Working for Equal Rights, stated that the act is “not about forcing people down that [military] path” and that Dreamers respect the desire of their peers to serve their country in the military. Even those who do not like the military option worry that pushing for another amendment might derail the entire bill and call for unified support for the present version. While Maryknoll understands these concerns, we continue to advocate for peaceful civil service as an alternative path to legal status and a conscientious objection clause to be added to the DREAM Act.

**Faith in action:**

Lawmakers and faith leaders recently announced the DREAM Act Sabbath campaign that will take place this fall. On September 23, 24, and 25, congregations and individuals in churches, mosques, and synagogues nationwide will be invited to focus a service or part of a service on the DREAM Act. Visit the website of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition to sign up to participate and check out a packet which will include theological reflections, sermon starters, stories of DREAM students, bulletin inserts, myths and facts about the Act, and a petition that people can sign to support the DREAM Act: http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/index.php/2011/07/01/dream-sabbath-launch/.
Food justice: Oxfam embarks on new project

Oxfam International has launched the GROW campaign which looks to correct the injustices that cause food insecurity by “growing better” (making significant improvements in agriculture), “sharing better” (by revamping food chain management and distribution), and “living better” (protecting resources and addressing climate change). By focusing specifically on land grabbing, climate change, food price spikes and enhanced support for small scale farming, Oxfam will traverse new advocacy territory taking on some of the biggest actors standing in the way of food security and real progress on protecting the planet. The following article highlights some of the campaign’s breadth and goals.

On June 1, Oxfam International launched “Growing a Better Future: Food Justice in a Resource-constrained World” (GROW). In spite of the slow but continual decline in numbers of hungry people the world witnessed prior to 2008, numbers have grown in the past three years, reaching almost a billion people. The GROW campaign takes a realistic look at where we are heading. Challenges like population growth, overconsumption and climate change will require a future food system that fits into a world of resource limits.

Specifically, in the United States work must be done around increasing investments that will truly benefit small holder food producers. Oxfam America’s five-point plan of urgent actions call for President Obama, the U.S. Congress and the private sector to take immediate steps to reduce the pressure on the U.S. economy, consumers and poor people around the world by investing in small-scale food producers; ending excessive speculation in agricultural commodities; modernizing food aid; stopping giveaways to the corn-ethanol industry; and regulating land and water grabs.

The majority of population growth through year 2050 is expected to be concentrated in the most cash poor and food insecure countries. Currently, a majority of U.S. initiatives to fight hunger respond to a growing population by pushing increased production through advanced agricultural technologies including fossil fuel intense inputs and genetically modified seeds. In many of the countries where Maryknoll missioners live and work concerns are raised around who the real beneficiaries will be: big multinational enterprises or local farmers?

Oxfam suggests that “growing better” in this case really involves “sharing better.” Today three companies - Archer Daniels Midland, Bunge and Cargill – control an estimated 90 percent of the world’s grain trade. In the first quarter of 2008, when the food crisis was at a critical peak, Cargill’s profits were up 86 percent; and this year, while food prices continue to rise and countries scramble to ensure food security, Cargill is heading for its most profitable year yet.

Oxfam proposes that policies and programs focus on prioritizing the needs of small-scale food producers in developing countries, where the major gains in productivity, sustainable intensification, poverty reduction, and resilience can be achieved. It is important to reverse the current misallocation of resources, where currently a good portion of public money for agriculture flows to agro-industrial farms in Northern countries.

Price volatility has been a critical issue leading to food price crises. Farmers are unsure how and what to plant with prices fluctuating as they have for the past four years. Oxfam recommends increased transparency to allow regulators to monitor speculators and limit their activities.

Food aid is another opportunity for the U.S. to “share better.” Oxfam’s GROW report shows that, according to U.S. legislation, 75 percent of food aid must be sourced, bagged, fortified, and processed by U.S. agribusiness firms with contracts from the U.S. Department of Agriculture ensuring that the largest portion of U.S. food aid dollars go into the pockets of U.S. agribusiness companies. Moreover, U.S. policy also stipulates that the food must be freighted by U.S. American companies on U.S.-flagged ships at taxpayer expense. Nearly 40 percent of total food aid costs are paid to U.S. shipping companies.

In terms of “living better” Oxfam is taking on what and how much people consume, especially people in northern countries since the planet is already at unsustainable levels of consumption. Humans must now recognize earth’s needs to rest and grow back some of its natural resources (fertile soil, animal life, biodiversity, forests and atmospheric space). The challenge is to work within current planetary limits so that there is space for future generations to produce and consume their fair share.

Read more and become involved at: http://www.oxfam.org/grow.
Water, sanitation as human rights

On July 28, NGOs and member states of the United Nations were invited to attend a roundtable discussion regarding the human right to water and sanitation. The invitation would have been difficult to resist since it featured Bolivia’s newly installed ambassador to the UN, Rafael Archonda, and Maude Barlow, renowned global advocate for the right to water. The occasion marked the commemoration of the first anniversary of the UN General Assembly Resolution of the Human Right to Water and Sanitation. MOGC staff member Sr. Ann Braudis, MM attended the discussion and wrote this report.

Bolivia, known for its indigenous character and its poverty, now is becoming known for persuasively presenting to the UN issues of fundamental importance to the entire global community. These same issues, such as water and sanitation as human rights, are ordinarily inextricable from questions of poverty and injustice.

Everyone would agree that water is a need but it must be declared a universal right in order to obligate governments to ensure that all of their citizens have water that is clean and safe. This follows the traditional thrust of the UN: To labor tirelessly toward building a world in which all that is required for the well-being of human life is articulated with clarity, where methods of implementation are established, and governments are chased into compliance.

Sadly however, as was clearly pointed out during the July 28 discussion, the passage of the water and sanitation resolution by the UN General Assembly was not a guarantee that nations would hurry to enact policies and legislation that would guarantee its implementation. A year later, only the governments of Bolivia, Ecuador and Uruguay have amended their constitutions to this effect.

This raises two questions: Why haven’t wealthy and industrialized countries moved quickly to embrace public policy enshrining these rights? What weakness at the UN is hindering implementation?

According to participants at the roundtable discussion, the major obstacle jeopardizing implementation is the dominant economic model of unlimited growth. While it would appear to be obvious that the planet cannot support unlimited growth, according to Ambassador Archonda, there is practically no sense of corresponding global conscience. Clearly formulated ethical principles lag behind the obvious; institutions such as universities, think tanks and churches that would be expected to take the lead in this regard are weak or under the influence of national governments aimed at increasing gross national product as a measure of economic stability and general well-being.

Examples of the misuse of water abound: Water for tourism, water for display and entertainment, water for massive irrigation projects to support agriculture in desert areas, large quantities of water for industrial purposes, and fresh water rendered unsafe through extractive technologies to release underground deposits of difficult to surface materials. Another fast developing abuse of water is the privatization of water distribution. One must be careful in the choice of words used to describe availability of water; access is not synonymous with having water. Access may exist without people having the means to actually have the water if the cost is determined by private suppliers on a for-profit basis.

What is hampering the UN’s ability to fast track implementation? Surprisingly, in part the answer to this question has to do with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which include water access. While the MDGs are laudable, measuring their success is subject to misleading statistical information. In Our right to water Maude Barlow states, “One of the chief measurements for access to drinking water used by the UN is to count the number of pipes installed in a country. But just because there is a pipe does not mean there is clean water coming out of it and even if it is, it may be very far away.”

This writer has witnessed this sort of perversity: In northern Philippines, in the indigenous community of Ucab, Itogon, the large-scale gold mining corporation that destroyed the area’s natural and abundant water source through its operations, donated a water tank to the community by way of compensation. It even had painted on it that it was a donation to the community by the company’s foundation. However, the tank was empty as there was still no water.
Keystone XL pipeline decision point

At a time when the world faces peak oil – the point at which oil supplies begin to decline – decision makers are in denial about switching wholeheartedly to alternative sources of fuel. This denial is highlighted by the decision that President Obama must make this fall about whether or not to approve the TransCanada Keystone XL Pipeline, which would carry oil extracted from Canadian tar sands across six U.S. states to oil refineries in Texas gulf.

In Canada, giant oil corporations are turning huge tracts of Canada’s pristine boreal forest (one of the few large, intact ecosystems on Earth) into a wasteland leaving open pit mines, smoke stacks and toxic lagoons through a process of high carbon fuel strip-mining. Forests are clear cut, wetlands are drained, and living matter and soil are hauled away to expose the tar sands (also known as oil sands). Oil is then extracted from tar sands through an energy intensive upgrading and refining process to turn it into transportation fuel.

For every one barrel of oil produced from tar sands extraction, oil companies remove and dump four tons of sand and soil. The pollution created by the tar sands extraction and refining processes causes cancer hot spots in indigenous communities and environmental degradation downstream. The companies responsible have failed to deliver on promises to mitigate some of this destruction by refilling tar sands mines and planting new vegetation.

People in the U.S. have been led to believe that we need tar sands oil to meet energy demands, in spite of the fact that three times more carbon dioxide is emitted from tar sands oil production as compared to the average barrel of conventional oil consumed in the U.S. The EPA has already rated the air quality unacceptable in the Texan Gulf Coast communities that surround the very refineries that will handle the tar sands oil. Replacing the crude oil currently being used by refineries with tar sands oil is expected to increase U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by 38 million tons of carbon dioxide per year (an amount equal to the annual emissions of six million cars).

A recent report by Oil Change International claims, however, that it is the global oil market driving demand, and that the oil and gas industry is misleading the U.S. public regarding the need for the Keystone XL pipeline for U.S. energy security and lower prices at the pump. The Keystone XL Pipeline will direct dirty tar sands oil to the perfect location for oil exports, profiting only the oil and gas industry. In its regulatory disclosures and presentations to investors, Valero, the largest exporter of petroleum products in the United States, reveals that it plans to refine Canadian tar sands into fuels for export.

Because global demand is high, Canadian oil companies want to double their tar sands oil exports to the U.S. and other countries by building the new TransCanada Keystone XL pipeline, to ship tar sands oil to U.S. Gulf Coast refineries and shipping...
facilities. The proposed pipeline threatens to endanger the health of communities, farmland and fragile ecosystems along its 1,700 mile path from Canada, through the states of Montana, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Pipeline breaks are not uncommon. The fact that the TransCanada’s brand new Keystone tar sands pipeline has spilled 12 times in 12 months and that regulators indicate that tar sands may cause more “wear and tear” on pipelines has citizens living in these six states concerned and angered. More than two million oil pipelines (mostly underground) crisscross the United States in various states. Recent breaks in these pipelines have caused dangerous leaks in Alaska and California and spills in the Yellowstone and Kalamazoo rivers. After several ruptures leading to contamination and evacuation Congress has worked in a bipartisan fashion to tighten pipeline safety. Two congressional bills include reporting requirements for maximum pressure and stricter requirements for pipelines crossing waterways.

On the other hand, the “North American-Made Energy Security Act” introduced by Rep. Lee Terry (R-NE) and passed by the House in late July, would require the administration to expedite its decision-making on the tar sands pipeline. On the U.S. administration side the permit process seems to be drawing to a close. In meetings with Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird in early August, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton indicated that after some safety enhancements, the State Department is likely to approve the pipeline.

President Obama alone must decide whether to approve or reject the Keystone XL Pipeline. Every day from August 20 to September 3, thousands of U.S. citizens – including environmental leader Bill McKibben, NASA’s Dr. James Hansen and religious leaders from every faith, plus the staff of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns – gathered in front of the White House, demanding Obama live up to his campaign promise to create a clean-energy economy. In this continent’s biggest civil disobedience action this century, 1,252 people were arrested in acts of peaceful resistance. The approved pipeline’s implication for climate change has global repercussions also: Activists picketed outside U.S. embassies and consulates, and 618,428 people around the world signed the “Stop the Tar Sands” petition asking President Obama to stop the pipeline.

Similar Tar Sands actions are being planned in Ottawa for September 26. For information or to join an action please go to http://www.moving-plan-et.org/, or learn more about the campaign at www.tarsandsaction.org.

---

Ten years later: Our response to attacks on 9/11/2001

A version of the following article appeared in the November-December 2001 issue of Maryknoll NewsNotes. Its message is as urgent now as it was then.

Shortly after the horrific events of September 11, 2001, having already expressed their profound sorrow and sympathy to all who lost loved ones in the terrorist attacks on the United States, Maryknoll leadership wrote,

In order to eradicate terrorism of all kinds, we have to address the hatred and exclusion that sustain it and foster global solidarity through understanding by promoting dialogue and defending human dignity...Surely these events will evoke deep reflection on who we are as an American people, and how we are in the world. Perhaps now is the time to ask “Why?” and to address the roots of anti-U.S. sentiment. What do we need to learn to transform ourselves and our world?

The fundamental posture that we would like to suggest for this reflection was dramatically and poignantly illustrated by the scramble for life in the rubble of the World Trade Center and Pentagon. In that dreadful context, as so many have noted, color of skin, nationality, language, title, level of income, gender and job description mattered not at all. The lines that too often divide human beings from each other disappeared. Each life was precious, worth saving.

Every step we take from now on as a people and a nation should be built upon this instinct and on the gospel mandate articulated in Luke 6 from the lectionary on September 13: “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To the one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from the one who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to every one who begs from you; and of the one who takes away your goods do not ask them again... As you wish that
others would do to you, do so to them.”

Out of the confusion, some positive direction began to emerge. First were the calls for restraint, for justice not vengeance, for diplomatic efforts toward international police and judicial cooperation that could hold the perpetrators of this crime against humanity to account. Even as the United States gathered a coalition in support of military action, wise people were pleading that we move in another, an “unexpected” direction, one strikingly reminiscent of Luke 6.

John Paul Lederach, whose experience as a mediator and proponent of nonviolent social change in situations mired in violence around the world, is worth quoting:

Anger of this sort [that could express itself in extremely violent terrorist actions], what we could call generational, identity-based anger, is constructed over time through a combination of historical events, a deep sense of threat to identity and direct experiences of sustained exclusion … our response to the immediate events have everything to do with whether we reinforce and provide soil, seeds and nutrients for future cycles of revenge and violence … Military action to destroy terror, particularly as it affects significant and already vulnerable civilian populations will be like hitting a fully mature dandelion with a golf club… The biggest blow we can serve terror is to make it irrelevant…[by strengthening the web of] relationships we develop with whole regions, peoples and world views.

As the war in Afghanistan intensified, the shape of “Different Pathway to Peace and Security” was articulated in a statement by that name from religious leaders:

Our hearts are heavy as we mourn the dead, comfort the bereaved and absorb the already horrific, yet now expanding, spiral of violence that threatens to devastate the human community. As the war in Afghanistan continues, we fear that the opportunity to forge a different pathway to peace and security rooted in social justice and human solidarity may be lost forever. We urge compassionate attention to the cost in human life and the damage to already impoverished communities. We insist that diplomatic efforts not be abandoned in favor of expansive military action.

As communities of faith with relationships on nearly every continent, we are impelled to view this crisis from a global perspective. Testimony to the inextricable ties that bind the human family together has been given dramatically by expressions of sympathy and gestures of support received from around the world - the painful job of binding wounds and calming fears is surely lightened by this global solidarity. But communities of faith are also calling for restraint, for alternatives to the military action that is bringing terrible suffering in its wake - in Afghanistan and throughout the region, for a redefinition of security, for global justice that alone can bring lasting peace.

We join them in that plea. The peace that we seek will be birthed out of justice, not out of war!

Justice demands that perpetrators of terror be held to account, but a vicious crime that took the lives of thousands of people from dozens of countries should be prosecuted under international law, not avenged by war. Humanity has made much progress in establishing and enforcing international norms for human rights and crimes against humanity. This is an opportunity for the United States to underscore an absolute commitment to the rule of law – to strengthening and participating in an international legal system necessary to the task of doing justice. The investigation, pursuit and prosecution of suspected terrorists and their supporters should be accomplished in a manner completely cooperative with the family of nations and making full use of international law enforcement mechanisms. The accused should be brought to justice in an international tribunal established to deal with terrorism.

Prudence dictates that the human family take immediate steps to regain a sense of physical security, but how will we define that security, who will be secure, and at what cost will we pursue it? Faith communities, educational institutions, businesses, neighborhoods - all U.S. Americans should initiate a period of national reflection on the meaning of security. Vast military, economic and political power did not protect people in the U.S. from the horrific attacks of September 11th; nor is military action likely to protect them from every possible threat in the future.
In fact, it may well exacerbate the danger.

Can we draw upon this tragic and traumatic experience to redefine personal, communal, national and international priorities? Can we probe with care the root causes of rage and despair that spawn such unconscionable acts and respond with our own commitment to international solidarity, the global common good, and the economic and political changes necessary to reflect that commitment?

Too much damage and suffering has been inflicted on the human community in the name of God. It is time to chart another course -- to make a new beginning and to generate the peace that we all so desperately seek.

New political and economic priorities will be required if the U.S. is to forge new relationships around the world. Millions of people, who are impoverished and politically or culturally excluded, see the process of globalization as a threat rather than a promise. They also see U.S. foreign policy as enormously problematic and will test the sincerity of our commitment to free the world from terrorism by the actions we take to heal wherever we can the festering wounds that breed terrorism. Many of us are convinced that the same process will heal our own wounds.

---

**Martin Luther King, Jr.: Time to break silence**

On April 4, 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered a speech during a meeting of Clergy and Laity Concerned at Riverside Church in New York City. Speaking out clearly against the war in Vietnam, Dr. King said, “I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today -- my own government. For the sake of...hundreds of thousands trembling under our violence, I cannot be silent... Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now.”

Over four decades later, in August 2011, the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial opened in Washington, D.C. Emphasizing Dr. King’s message of justice, democracy, hope and love, the memorial remembers him as a “great orator whose impact on the nation came from the eloquence and inspirational quality of his words.” Among the many quotes from Dr. King, the memorial website highlights the following, which he delivered in December 1964:

> World peace through nonviolent means is neither absurd nor unattainable. All other methods have failed. Thus we must begin anew. Nonviolence is a good starting point. Those of us who believe in this method can be voices of reason, sanity, and understanding amid the voices of violence, hatred, and emotion. We can very well set a mood of peace out of which a system of peace can be built.

Dr. King’s insights are painfully pertinent today to U.S. wars and drone attacks in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and throughout the Middle East, U.S. support for regime change in Libya, the development of AFRICOM, U.S. militarism in Latin America and the Pacific, the legacy of the School of the Americas, the U.S. military budget, and on and on.

Dr. King said that “we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a ‘thing-oriented’ society to a ‘person-oriented’ society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered ... A true revolution of values will lay hands on the world order and say of war: ‘This way of settling differences is not just.’ This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation’s homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into veins of people normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.”

**Faith in action:**

Jay Jansen, an 80-year old historian-musician, determined to do something about the fact that Dr. King’s words were largely ignored by “those entrusted with moral leadership” by organized religion, while “everyday, somewhere in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan or Libya children perish in air strikes,” initiated and began circulating a petition to pastors and preachers, available at http://kingcondemneduswars.blogspot.com/.
HIV and AIDS: Save funding for PEPFAR, Global Fund

Fr. Rick Bauer, MM, who has worked in Africa with people with HIV and AIDS since 1997, wrote the following letter to his Congressional representative, Nita Lowey (D-NY), and to the New York senators, Kirsten Gillibrand and Charles Schumer, urging them to support full funding for PEPFAR and the Global Fund, as well as the Ryan White Fund for U.S. domestic AIDS programs.

... Currently, I am the director of Catholic AIDS Action in Namibia and we have been the recipient of PEPFAR funding since 2004 and resources from the Global Fund since 2005. I can only imagine how hectic your time and schedules must be, especially right now, but humbly beg just a few minutes of your time to share with you my thoughts on the incredible and successful impact on these programs.

Catholic AIDS Action is the largest non-governmental provider of services for people affected by HIV in Namibia. We are currently providing home based palliative care services for 8,500 HIV+ clients and community based support for over 16,000 orphans and other vulnerable children (OVC), including comprehensive prevention services. We are able to do this through the professional skills and talent of 90 full time Namibian staff members who provide on-going supervision, support and training for over 2,500 Namibian volunteers.

Almost 90 percent of our home care clients are successfully on anti-retroviral treatment for HIV. With the support of CAA community volunteers, their adherence to this life-long regimen is outstanding, and their quality of life and life span significantly increasing. When there are complications or a need for referral to a health facility, the CAA community based nurse can provide this essential service. For children enrolled in our support program, they have a 97 percent school attendance rate, far above the national average of 85 percent. These most vulnerable children are cared for in their local communities, not orphanages, with the support of the community volunteer and extended family system.

We are able to provide all of these services, on a little over US$100.00 per client per year. PEPFAR is, without question, the most efficient and effective foreign aid program in the history of the United States. Sadly now, this is all in jeopardy.

It seems as if almost every day, I am called upon by the Namibian USAID office to figure out how to do “more with less.” The office has warned me, that despite the enormous effectiveness of Catholic AIDS interventions, we are to expect continued decrease in funding levels. In the not to distant future, I am going to have to make that decision of who is able to receive services, and who does not. I will have to decide which child is offered the opportunity for growth, development and education, and which child will be abandoned.

I am only too well aware of the effect of the current global economic situation and the difficult choices and decisions you must make as members of Congress. But I also know that one of the standards that you must engage in making these decisions is the effectiveness and efficiency of the funded programs. Both PEPFAR and Global Fund are meeting this high standard.

I am literally begging you to vote for the provision of the full $8.9 billion for FY2012 for PEPFAR that includes $1.3 billion for the Global Fund. Without these resources, Catholic AIDS Action and the beneficiaries I have the privilege to serve, and so many other quality programs throughout the world, will cease operations.

Before coming to Africa, I worked in the United States with people living with AIDS in programs run by Catholic Charities. Our clients were often the most vulnerable and desperate in society, frequently “rejected” by other services providers. But we were able to change lives, and literally give life, through Ryan White funding. And so I also beg you to fund the Ryan White program for U.S. domestic services for $2.3 billion.

If at any time, I can provide you or your aides with additional information, please do not hesitate to call upon me.

Thank you very much for your time and your consideration of these funding matters, which are literally a matter of life and death.

**Faith in action:**

Quote Father Rick in your own letter to your Congressional representative and senators calling for them to support full funding for these important programs.
Resources

1) Conscience in War Resource Kit: This resource represents collaboration between the 50+ members of Christian Peace Witness (CPW) and the Truth Commission on Conscience and War (TCCW) as well as other allies working on the issues of Selective Conscientious Objection (SCO). Each of the sections in this document offers portals to action. This document, in its digital form, is also interactive so you can add materials for others which you find are of value. 10 chapters available for free, online at the CPW website: http://www.christianpeacewitness.org/sco-resource-kit.

2) Who killed economic growth? This video, available on YouTube, is a six and half minute presentation by Richard Heinberg, Senior Fellow-in-Residence at Post Carbon Institute and best known as a leading educator on Peak Oil—the point at which we reach maximum global oil production—and the resulting, devastating impact it will have on our economic, food, and transportation systems. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQqDS9wGsxQ.

3) The Better Life Index: This interactive online tool is designed to visualize and compare some of the key factors—like education, housing, environment, and so on—that contribute to well-being in the 34 nations that comprise the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). It allows you to see how countries perform according to the importance you give to each of 11 topics that make for a better life. Free at http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org.

4) Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation distance-education program: Created by Duquesne University, in partnership with the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, this resource is available for those who minister to God’s children in difficult social, economic, or environmental conditions. Those who work in this arena need access to the best resources available on practicing social analysis in ministry, resolving conflicts, establishing peace and justice, and respecting the integrity of creation. The purpose of the program is to equip ministers worldwide—members of religious communities, diocesan clergy, lay ministers, seminarians—with knowledge and tools to assist them in their ministry. Three courses are now available online; the fourth is expected to be ready by December 2011: JPIC 200 - Foundations of Theological Reflection, JPIC 210 - Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding 1, JPIC 220 - Economics and People, and JPIC 230 - Water, Environment, and Development (in preparation). Learn more on the Duquesne University website: http://www.duq.edu/jpic/index.cfm.

5) Annual SOAW vigil, Nov. 18-20: Graduates of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC, or the School of the Americas) continue to kill hundreds and displace thousands of Hondurans. Mexicans and immigrants passing through Mexico are the target of drug cartels and death squads like the “Ze-tas” - another product of SOA training. In the midst of the continuing war in Colombia, fueled by SOA violence, union killings touched 51 in 2010. Join the annual gathering at the gates of Ft. Benning, GA, home of the SOA/WHINSEC; thousands will voice their opposition to this school and learn more about the work for justice and peace. This year, with anti-immigration laws like HB87 in Georgia increasing state terror in immigrant communities, the SOA Watch Vigil will make the connections between the struggle against racist immigration laws and oppressive U.S. foreign policy in Latin America. Find more details about the vigil at www.soaw.org.

6) Ecumenical Advocacy Days 2012: Plan now to attend Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD) in Washington, D.C., March 23-26, 2012. The theme is “Is THIS the Fast I Seek? Economy, Livelihood and Our National Priorities.” Join other Christians in seeking a global economy and a national budget that break the yokes of injustice, poverty, hunger and unemployment throughout the world — heeding Isaiah’s call to become “repairers of the breach and restorers of streets to live in”— during a weekend of workshops and information, followed by a visit to Capitol Hill on Monday, March 26. More information will be available at www.advocacydays.org, or contact the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.