



# Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

# NewsNotes

*A bi-monthly newsletter of information on international justice and peace issues*

**March-April 2009**  
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## Global impact of financial crisis

Maryknoll Sister Luise Ahrens writes from Cambodia, *Some of the garment factories are beginning to close (Wal-Mart and GAP). That means those young women will either go back to their villages, or if the family really needs money, turn to the bar girl, prostitution areas for ways to make money to support their families. For some time, the money from these young, mostly women, people has been the first disposable income many village families have ever had. So, this downturn is going to change the way things are happening -- enrollment rates in school, better fertilizers, etc.*

President Obama moved into the White House in the midst of an economic meltdown of unprecedented proportions. While in the United States the pain has been real and visible, people around the world – millions of whom were already dangerously close to the edge of survival – have been affected in devastating ways. Maryknoll missionaries live in these marginal communities and saw the potential for disaster. Seven years ago, Maryknoll leadership, in a public statement on trade and investment, wrote:

*We speak as people of faith who have watched with care the impact of economic policy decisions on the people and the natural environment in the local communities where we live and work. We are committed to upholding the right of all people to meet basic needs and to live in dignity and harmony with the rest of creation ... Investment intended to build sustainable local communities, whether rural or urban, in order to create opportunities for work, in contrast to speculative investment, is essential to protect the dignity of the people who live there.*

They said they were *profoundly skeptical* that many benefits of globalization would *accrue to the poor without significant transformation* of its assumptions, goals and process.

Yet, rather than investing in local capacity to meet real needs in a sustainable way, the increasingly integrated global economy was built on the unrelenting pursuit of tremendous profit for a very few by minimizing production costs and accountability to local communities and the earth; concentrating decision-making power; and maximizing flexible access to cheap labor and resources. Unregulated, excessive speculative investment in a wide and increasingly risky array of financial products, rather than investment in a real economy that provided more local job

security and protected the earth, became the norm. While a small percentage of the global population was experiencing enormous prosperity, human communities on every continent, and increasingly the earth herself, remained exceedingly vulnerable.

Clear values for economic life flow from the Gospel and Catholic social teaching. Echoed by many other faith traditions, these norms have been universally violated, but should become the basis for the new economic order that is so desperately needed. The U.S. Catholic bishops' pastoral letter on the economy written over 20 years ago said:

*The quality of the national discussion about our economic future will affect the poor most of all, in this country and throughout the world. The life and dignity of millions of men, women and children hang in the balance. Decisions must be judged in light of what they do for the poor, what they do to the poor, and what they enable the poor to do for themselves. The fundamental moral criterion for all economic decisions, policies, and institutions is this: They must be at the service of all people, especially the poor. ... human dignity, realized in community with others and with the whole of God's creation is the norm against which every social institution must be measured.*

Thus far, attempts to bail out crashing financial markets, restore capital and lending capacity to major banks, support the failing auto business and slow mortgage foreclosures have failed to adequately reflect our concern for those who are extremely poor or our fragile earth. While we support serious efforts to rescue the U.S. middle class and to invest in a greener economy, we are deeply concerned about the well-being of factory workers in Phnom Penh and hundreds of millions of others who are even more vulnerable.

We are equally concerned about the future of our planet. We know now more than ever about the earth's limited carrying capacity and about the intrinsic interconnection between humans and others in the earth community. We cannot go back to business as usual.

To pull out of the ashes a national and global economy that ensures the dignity of every person and the integrity of creation will challenge the most creative thinkers in the Obama administration and beyond.

## Myanmar: U.S. should consider dropping sanctions

*Myanmar's political and economic environment has deteriorated since a junta was installed in a 1962 coup. U.S. sanctions on the country, formerly known as Burma, have failed to dislodge military rulers or empower the National League for Democracy (NLD), which won the country's 1990 elections. The ruling clique lives comfortably, getting all the consumer goods it wants from China and Thailand. U.S. sanctions restrict the generals' freedom of movement and place the international banking system off limits. But they also burden local business people, already hurting from the world's financial meltdown. As the U.S. seeks closer dialogue with the rest of the world, it should talk directly with the junta, with a view toward improving the human rights situation in Myanmar and ending U.S. sanctions.*

The U.S. often views international issues in black and white, e.g., the junta in Myanmar vs. the NLD, or General Than Shwe vs. detained Nobel Peace laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Curiously, even as U.S. policies tend to further isolate Myanmar and push it deeper into China's orbit, the U.S. is building a \$62 million embassy in Yangon. The U.S. needs to realize that some military officers in Myanmar favor democracy, and some business people support the military junta.

Lifting sanctions could be made conditional on the junta releasing Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest or putting the NLD in power. Since the educational system has been neglected for 50 years, however, reshaping Myanmar overnight as a democracy could be disastrous. Setting in place a process aimed at greater popular participation would be more achievable. However, specific conditions should perhaps not be made public until quiet negotiations have made real progress.

Attitudes in Myanmar vary. Some ask that sanctions remain in place and that humanitarian aid continue to be sent through nongovernmental organizations. Others suggest that if the U.S. lifted its sanctions, Myanmar might not lean so far toward China, and that dialogue might do more to change the political system.

The worldwide economic crisis has made the issue of sanctions more urgent. As unemployment has risen

in China and Thailand, Myanmar's major trading partners, consumer buying there has decreased. As a result exports are down from Myanmar, whose average wage is less than \$1 per day, and jobs are drying up.

Open debate in Myanmar is hampered by government bans on public gatherings and by the junta's blocking of news websites and e-mail, although savvy young people can get around the firewalls. However, youth spend most of their time on line playing computer games. A generation is growing up with little knowledge of their country's history or of Aung San Suu Kyi, who has spent some 16 years under house arrest.

Deliberate neglect has decimated Myanmar's education system. An ignorant population is easier to control than one that is well educated. Higher education employs so-called "distance learning." University students typically attend several weeks of classes on campus before returning home to continue their "distance education." At the end of a semester they return to the university for three more weeks of rote learning, and then sit for final exams. University campuses are empty six months of the year.

Words can be dangerous in Myanmar. Terms such as "peace," "dialogue" and "peaceful conflict resolution" raise red flags. The junta's attitude seems to be, "We are not at war, so why would we need 'conflict resolution'?" For example, a small church-sponsored group traveled to Bangkok for a seminar on peace and development. When they returned to Yangon an inspector spotted a book on the topic in their luggage. Three team members were arrested and jailed overnight as a warning. The army is said to be more afraid of the Church than of the Kachin Independence Organization, the political arm of the separatist Kachin Independence Movement.

Slightly smaller than Texas, Myanmar faces major obstacles to progress. Yangon itself is without power 12 hours or more each day, hampering efforts to develop an industrial base. The population includes half dozen ethnic groups, each with its own language. Some of the groups are fighting for independence, and the government has faced simultaneous insurgencies for decades. Both the junta and insurgents use child soldiers, and both press the populace into



service as porters in the mountains, where the insurgencies play out.

Amid ethnic conflict and political oppression, the people develop novel ways of cooperating. In an area experiencing conflict between insurgents and the government, for example, the rebels might agree to stop fighting if the government will loan trucks and the people will pay for petrol and provide rocks to build a new road.

Human rights violations sometimes overlap with environmental degradation. For example, bribes are paid on both sides as the country sends its prized hardwoods to China in exchange for arms and other goods. Despite a logging ban, hundreds of trucks will suddenly appear in a protected area, work through the night clear-cutting the site and leave before dawn.

The confluence of two rivers from China and India form the headwaters of the Irrawaddy River in northern Myanmar. One river is pristine and the other is brown, the result of mining waste from gold

mines upstream. The river is also polluted with mercury from the mining operation, which has sickened or killed persons downstream who ate fish from the river.

The Church tries to walk a fine line. It did not officially support the so-called “Saffron Revolution” of August 2007, which brought thousands of Buddhist monks and other Burmese into the streets to protest fuel price increases. Through education and health programs, capacity-building and training in critical thinking, however, it seeks to prepare citizens to assume a larger role in public life in the future.

Such openness is far from the minds of the generals or Ye Myint Aung, their emissary in Hong Kong. The consul-general reportedly described the Rohingya, a Muslim ethnic group in Myanmar, as “dark brown” and “as ugly as ogres.” Despite such arrogance, if the U.S. really wants to help Myanmar’s 47.8 million people and not just punish a few at the top, it should hold its nose and begin to dialogue with the government.

## Nepal: Unity is found wanting without king

*“Coming together is a beginning. Staying together is progress. Working together is success.” According to industrialist Henry Ford’s reasoning, Nepal has taken its first step as a new republic, but it might be faltering on its second. With 64 political parties, the government seems in disarray without a unifying symbol like the king, who stepped down from the throne last June. Citing slow progress on drafting a new constitution, and questioning some of the actions of Maoist Prime Minister Prachanda (Pushpa Kamal Dahal), the populace expresses little confidence in the near future.*

Many Nepalese say they don’t expect much change over the next few years. Political parties seem more eager to promote their own agendas than to cooperate on programs that could benefit the country as a whole. They might try to block Maoist initiatives to prevent the governing party from claiming any significant progress or success. India, which hosted the 2006 peace conference that ended Nepal’s decade-long civil war, is perceived as manipulating Nepal’s political parties for its own interests.

Many Nepalese have put their expectations on

hold until a new constitution is written. The government solicited suggestions for the charter, and the Church submitted proposals calling for equal treatment and equal rights for minority groups. (There are more than 100 ethnic groups in Nepal and nearly as many languages.) Meanwhile, Church spokespeople and others credit the Maoists for advancing the status of women. Women are gaining more prominence in society, and some have the confidence to speak before a male audience – something unheard of during the monarchy.

Without the king to unite the country’s disparate groups, however, the Maoists could face strong opposition from other major political parties. In addition, some breakaway groups in the Terai, on the Indian border, seek to organize an independent state.

Only half the country has electricity, making progress difficult in any case. Power in Kathmandu is scheduled for eight hours daily, apportioned in a series of rolling brownouts, but on many days capital residents have just four hours of power. Only one percent of the country’s potential hydropower has been tapped, and Nepal faces daunting challenges. The nation’s electrical grid had little maintenance

during the civil war, and demand for electricity is increasing. Further, heavy flooding last August and September due to late monsoon rains washed away roads and took down power lines bringing electricity from India. There has been speculation that Prachanda is considering importing giant diesel-powered generators from China, but estimates are the electricity would cost 4-10 times more than at present.

Prachanda sought to strengthen friendships abroad, visiting China, India and the U.S. during his first month in office. However, it did not boost his popularity at home when he purchased a bed reportedly costing more than 110,000 rupees (\$1,450) in a country whose per capita income is less than \$1 per day. Reports of widespread nepotism have brought further criticism.

Individuals, businesspeople and institutions are often victims of intimidation by young Maoists. Cadres visit a community with sound trucks announcing they will be making rounds to levy assessments. With fresh memories of murders and disappearances during the insurgency, there seems little choice but to pay. Prachanda denies ordering such activity, and some suggest the young people are only flexing their muscles to make a name for themselves in the Maoist party. Meanwhile, the Young Communist League has given itself a facelift by renaming itself the Young Communist Democratic League.

The country still enjoys lively debate in the press, but news people find themselves coming increasingly under attack. One journalist noted the Maoists benefited during the insurgency from news reports of excesses by government forces. More recently, however, journalist Uma Singh was murdered in a widely publicized case, and other journalists have been beaten in their offices. Some in the profession suggest the Maoists' aim is self-censorship and the end of a free press.

While a free press is reputed to be the fourth pillar of democracy, the public has not rushed to journalists' defense. The perception is that the profession favors its own, decrying the death of a journalist more loudly than the kidnapping of a business person or the killing of a school teacher, so the outpouring of public sympathy has been limited.

Prachanda himself downplays attacks on journalists in which no one is killed, and he notes that



Prachanda, Nepal's new prime minister

more journalists were killed in post-conflict situations such as South Africa than in Nepal. Yet, as journalist and editor Kanak Mani Dixit has pointed out, there "are no 'Asian values' versions of democracy and press freedom; both must be absolute."

Nepal's abundant rivers and exquisite rice terraces, verdant in season, provide tranquility and spectacular beauty, but the reality is mixed. The rigid structures of caste and class change slowly, and overburdened women still carry heavy loads such as firewood as their husbands walk alongside unencumbered.

In the Kathmandu Valley towering chimneys mark brick making ovens in the midst of rice fields. The industry clearly depletes the soil as the rich land is converted into handmade bricks. The poor and uneducated come from distant villages to work as beasts of burden at the factories during the six-month dry season. They return home with perhaps 25,000 rupees (\$325), having earned 77 rupees (\$1) each day shaping the bricks and transporting them on their backs.

Health workers from nongovernmental organizations offer lectures and provide medical treatment to the workers during their lunch breaks. Factory bosses sometimes tell the health teams to keep their presentations short so the laborers can get back to work. (The admonition is hardly necessary, however. The workers take little time off, as it means carrying fewer bricks and earning less for the day.)

On a clear day patients at the Hospital and Rehabilitation Center for Disabled Children outside the capital can see the magnificent peaks of the Himalayas that surround the Kathmandu Valley. Surgical teams correct conditions in children ranging from severe birth defects to more recent injuries. Within days, it seems, the patients are breezing through the wards, down the hallways and outdoors into the sunshine, heedless of their crutches or prostheses.

The Nepalese must now try to heal the wound of losing 13,000 loved ones to violent conflict. With the confidence that stems from knowing one's past as well as one's potential, the people have chosen to set aside the crutch of former institutions and try to bridge their ethnic, linguistic and political differences. Can they reunite, celebrating the magnificence of their diverse culture, and step forward into a bright new day?

## El Salvador: Impending presidential election

*Many saw January's legislative and municipal elections in El Salvador as a preparation for the presidential showdown planned for March 15. If anything, the results indicate that the FMLN is stronger than in many years and that its candidate, Mauricio Funes, has a good chance to win. However, troubling events during the January elections also show that the presidential election will not take place without controversy.*

The FMLN lost the mayor's race for the capital, San Salvador, but won most of the other large cities. Overall, it will govern 96 cities (up from 59, an increase of 60 percent), which bodes well for Funes in the presidential election. But the division in the national legislature might make it difficult for Funes to pass anything too radical as president. While the FMLN now has 35 seats in the national assembly, having added three members to its bloc, it does not have a majority in the 84-member body. Right to center-right parties will still dominate the national legislature: Despite losing two seats, current ruling party ARENA still has 32 deputies, with the right wing PCN holding 11 seats and center-right PDC with five seats.

Observers noted several problems in the election process itself. To start, the Assembly convoked the 2009 elections ahead of schedule and before the 2007 census data was released. Therefore the division of legislative seats was based on 1998 census data, when rural areas were more populated, resulting in a disproportional representation in favor of more conservative rural areas.

Numerous witnesses reported seeing ARENA members bringing in people from other countries to vote, as well as driving Salvadorans from their home towns to other cities where their votes for ARENA would be more valuable. This may explain ARENA's surprising victory in San Salvador where the FMLN candidate was far ahead in pre-voting polls.

Many polling centers were said to be poorly managed with reports of people being allowed to enter and stay in the section reserved for voting, adding to the general confusion. Several parties illegally passed out propaganda materials in the voting centers; lunches for election workers were delivered together with party flags. Also, the indelible ink in many polling stations used to prevent people from

voting more than once was not clearly visible and many tables did not check for these marks anyway.

In San Isidro, Cabañas, election officials closed the city's polls at 10 a.m. to avoid illegal voting by non-residents. Legitimate voters were able to complete their ballots a few days later, but people have less confidence in the validity of the results.

International interference was lighter than in past elections (see *NewsNotes* September-October 2008), but some observers complained about a foundation linked to the German right wing Christian Social Union party supporting pro-ARENA activities in some parts of the country.

In February, Democratic U.S. Reps. Raul Grijalva (AZ) and Marcy Kaptur (OH) circulated a letter to President Obama, requesting that the U.S. government maintain neutrality with respect to El Salvador's March 15 presidential election and seek a positive relationship with whichever candidate is elected by the Salvadoran people.

The letter to President Obama emerged in light of efforts by ARENA to manipulate the official foreign policy of the U.S. toward El Salvador for partisan ends. Groups tied to the ARENA government have aired TV ads and made statements in the mass media falsely stating that Salvadorans in the U.S. will be deported, that remittances will be halted and that relations with the U.S. will deteriorate if the opposition wins the election.

The March 15 presidential election promises to be a tense one. Funes has long been the favorite in polls, but his numbers have dropped recently, so the margin of victory should be small. The withdrawal of the National Conciliation and Christian Democratic party candidates favors Rodrigo Avila, the ARENA candidate, as both those parties would have drawn votes away from him. With the myriad problems in the January legislative and municipal elections, complaints of fraud are likely.

So far, the U.S. has been far less vocal in these elections than in the past, which is a positive factor. March 15 will see the first presidential election to take place in the Western Hemisphere since President Obama's election in November; it is an opportunity for Obama to send a message about what we hope will be a respectful foreign policy vision towards the region and El Salvador specifically.

## Kenya: Parliament rejects special tribunal

*On February 11, Kenya's Parliament rejected an amendment bill to establish a Special Tribunal to try in Kenya the suspected organizers and financiers of last year's post-election violence. Last year's violence caused 1,133 deaths, over 300,000 internally displaced people (IDPs), and a loss of at least \$1.5 billion to the national economy. So far no one has been arrested for any of last year's carnage.*

To pass, the proposed amendment needed 145 votes in the 222-seat parliament, two-thirds of the full assembly, but received only 101 votes. Despite the unusual presence of President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga, who are both Members of Parliament (MPs), to spur their colleagues to affirm the bill, 27 MPs did not vote by avoiding Parliament that day, and many members of Kibaki's Cabinet voted against the bill. The Special Tribunal was supposed to be convened by March 1, which is not possible without an amendment enshrining it in the constitution. Absent a tribunal in Kenya, Kofi Annan, chairman of the Panel of Eminent African Personalities, will turn over the names of the suspects, including five Cabinet ministers, six other MPs, and a number of businessmen, to the International Criminal Court (ICC) at The Hague.

The bill was defeated by two different factions in Parliament: First, all Kalenjin politicians, who said that the Tribunal was aimed solely at certain individuals and communities (i.e. Kalenjin), implying that Kalenjin leaders would be allotted most of the blame and guilt. Dr. Julius Kones, a leading Kalenjin MP, also disingenuously claimed that the only purpose of the tribunal was to discredit Kalenjin politicians who might be seeking to run for president in 2012.

The other faction defeating the bill was a group of backbenchers led by Imenti Central MP Gitobu Imanyara, who said, "We do not have faith in Kenya's justice system, and we want those involved in the violence to be tried at The Hague." As the bill was going down to defeat, this group was gleefully shouting, "The Hague, The Hague."

Annan stated, "I am disappointed that the Constitution amendment bill was defeated in Parliament.

This is a major setback to the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into the Post-Election Violence (CIPEV), and a blow at efforts aimed at ending the culture of impunity in Kenya, which is a central objective of the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation process." He singled out in particular agreements under Agenda Item Four of the National Accord of February 2008, which pertain to long-term solutions to critical issues such as land and the constitutional review.

He further said, "The Panel will now review the actions it should take in line with the spirit, letter and intent of that report."

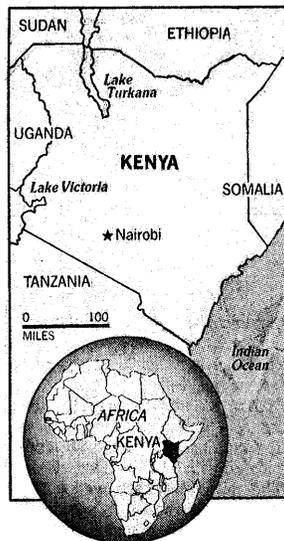
It is not certain that the ICC will agree to try the Kenyan suspects, despite ICC Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo saying last November that the ICC would do it if Kenya did not. The Netherlands' ambassador to Kenya, Laetitia van den Assum, said, "ICC cases until now have focused on countries that are in serious civil war or emerging from it. Investigating Kenya would definitely be something new for the prosecution. The

ICC has notable budget limitations, and right now is focused exclusively on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) [several militia leaders], Uganda [Joseph Kony and his lieutenants] and Sudan [President Omar al Bashir and others facing charges of crimes against humanity in Darfur]."

If the ICC can't take on the Kenya cases at The Hague, other options are available. Prime Minister Odinga said, "Defeat of the government bill is only a temporary setback. The government is still determined to set up a local tribunal. Those pushing for The Hague option are merely delaying justice."

On Feb. 16, MP Imanyara made another proposal: that Kenya adopt the Sierra Leone model of trying suspected organizers of violence by requesting the UN to set up and run a special international tribunal within Kenya to prosecute perpetrators of the 2008 violence. The MPs who opposed the Constitutional amendment bill are considering a recommendation that Parliament pass a motion urging the foreign affairs minister to petition the UN Security Council on this matter.

Annan said that he will consult with Kenya's



president and prime minister and with the other members of the Panel of Eminent African Personalities. He may take the case to The Hague, or he may follow the example of Sierra Leone, and use UN headquarters -- the UN Environmental Program (UNEP) is located on the outskirts of Nairobi -- to establish a Special International Court in Kenya. Another possibility is to use the special court that was set up in 1995 in Arusha, Tanzania, only a four-hour drive from Nairobi, to try perpetrators of the Rwanda genocide.

Dissatisfaction with the current government in Kenya is growing to alarming proportions. Corruption almost seems to be getting worse, with the most recent manifestations being the sale of government maize to Sudan for private profit while a reported 10 million Kenyans are facing severe food shortages and the embezzlement of government payments to an oil company, which caused a huge fuel shortage. In February British investigators cancelled their investigation of the 2003 Anglo Leasing Scandal because Kenya's government refused to cooperate in the investigation. (The Anglo Leasing Scandal refers to 36 Kenyan government payments amounting to \$800 million to the overseas accounts of politicians closely allied to President Kibaki for goods and services that were either non-existent or grossly overpriced.)

In February, the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation Monitoring Project issued a report, saying, "The dominant perception is that after politicians shared power they were not keen to fast track reforms. Comprehensive reforms are a must, and

should be seen to be taking place if the country is to avoid another wave of political violence."

On February 19, at a national prayer service and fund-raising for victims of two horrific fires in February, Christian, Muslim, and Hindu religious leaders publicly castigated the country's political leaders directly to their face. Each religious leader, of what is called the Inter-Religious Forum, stated the following: "When you joined hands to sign the National Accord, Kenyans expected the best leadership ever. However, Kenyans are concerned that they are witnessing the opposite. You have been reluctant to punish your friends who are greedy; you have neglected the Internally Displaced Persons; you have not acted decisively on insecurity and extra-judicial killings. We call upon the President and Prime Minister to take responsibility for the status of the nation." Never in Kenya's independent history have united religious voices issued such a scathing indictment of the country's political leaders.

In January, Kenya's Catholic bishops said, "If the allegations of the export of maize by individuals who seem to be above the law are true, then we condemn these as criminal acts and demand appropriate action."

These forthright statements are indicative of a national consensus that matters must change immediately, especially the culture of impunity. Perpetrators of violence and corruption must be brought to justice. Although the citizenry's national anguish continues, the circle of justice is steadily tightening about those who thought they could avoid prosecution.

## Uganda: Rebels wreak havoc in region

*"At around 5 a.m. the LRA [Lord's Resistance Army] came, moving from house to house and collecting people. They selected two men, smeared them with palm oil, closed them in a hut and set it on fire. The LRA tied men and women and beat them. Some were killed; others, including children from 10 years onwards, were forced to go with them and carry the food the LRA had looted from them. The food they could not carry was burnt." (Testimony of Congolese refugee in southern Sudan, recorded by a Comboni Sister)*

A recent analysis by the Genocide Intervention

Network calls the rate of deliberate killing of civilians by the LRA in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Sudan over the last few months among the highest in the world today, worse than Darfur and Somalia, possibly even Iraq.

ResolveUganda ([www.resolveuganda.org](http://www.resolveuganda.org)) writes, "It can sometimes be difficult to put a human face on events unfolding half a world away. This is especially true in the remote regions of Sudan and the DR Congo affected by LRA attacks escalating in the context of 'Operation Lightning Thunder,' an offensive involving Uganda, South Sudan and the DR Congo against the LRA. The grisly picture became a

little clearer with the release of 'The Christmas massacres: LRA attacks on civilians in Northern Congo' by Human Rights Watch that documents the attacks and exposes the unacceptable ways that civilians were left unprotected from LRA violence sparked by the ongoing military offensive against the rebels."

According to Resolve Uganda, while USAID disbursed \$800,000 to UNICEF to help protect children in the DRC affected by LRA violence and to support reunification of separated families and services for victims of sexual violence, the U.S. has given little indication that ending the LRA violence is a priority, even as it continues to defend its support for the Uganda-led operation that sparked the latest rebel attacks. Ambassador Mary Carlin Yates, a longtime diplomat and AFRICOM deputy who reports directly to commander Gen. William E. "Kip" Ward, defended the U.S.-supported offensive against the LRA and said that the mid-December attack on the LRA also has diminished the rebel group's ability to abduct children who are forced to serve as fighters. (*Stars and Stripes*, Feb. 14, 2009)

Ugandan army spokesman Capt. Deo Akiiki also defended the offensive, which he said succeeded in destroying rebel base camps and food supplies.

Many humanitarian and human rights groups have been highly critical of the offensive, arguing that not enough was done to protect civilians from the LRA rebels, who "hacked, bludgeoned and bayoneted their way through nearby villages as they fled the joint military operation involving troops from Congo, Uganda and Sudan." (*Stars and Stripes*)

The report from Human Right Watch documents over 850 civilians killed and over 150 children abducted by the LRA since December 2008 and calls for more UN peacekeepers to be deployed in areas affected by the violence.

In a Feb. 17 UN Security Council communiqué, John Holmes, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief, said that the LRA had reacted to the military operations by the Ugandan People's Defense Force (UPDF) and the Armed Forces of the DR Congo (FARDC) by mounting "horrific and unprovoked attacks" against civil-



Photo from the book *Transcendent Spirit: The Orphans of Uganda* by Douglas Menezes

ians. The so-called Christmas massacres triggered a wave of displacement, and the casual brutality and total disregard for human life were appalling. Many women were raped before being killed, and 160,000 people were estimated to have fled their homes.

The Northern Uganda Advocacy Partnership for Peace (NUAPP) in Britain, a coalition including World Vision UK, Christian Aid, and Conciliation Resources, urges that the international community ensure that the path to a peaceful solution remains clear. "The Juba Peace Process," NUAPP said, "has brought significant gains in terms of addressing the roots of the conflict, dealing with the complex issues of justice and reconciliation and the creation of a more secure environment in northern Uganda, leading to the return of 1.3 million formerly-displaced people. The UN Security Council is encouraged to continue its support to Joachim Chissano, [former Mozambique president, who was a key player in the Juba peace talks] and to explore creative ways of reinvigorating the peace process, with or without the mediation of the government of Southern Sudan. Essential mediation infrastructure (such as the cessation of hostilities monitoring team) which has been disbanded needs to be reconstituted or replaced. The government of Uganda is encouraged to continue implementing the Juba Agenda Agreements, including its provisions to establish a Special Division of the High Court and to create a comprehensive judicial system, which is intended to deal with the complexities of the ICC indictments and the traditional justice system."

#### **Faith in action:**

Write to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton urging the United States to give high priority to Africa's Great Lakes region and to the greater Horn of Africa by assigning a senior diplomat as special envoy to the region and giving maximum support to the Juba peace process and the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Accords in Sudan. The U.S. should contribute to the protection of civilians in the region and to processes of reconstruction and stabilization.

## Zimbabwe: Cautious optimism for unity government

*Zimbabwean opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai was sworn in on February 11 as prime minister in a unity government with President Robert Mugabe, following months of political tensions after disputed presidential elections last March.*

In response, the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance said that they “welcomed with cautious optimism the finalization of the SADC led talks which opens the way to the implementation of the Global Political Agreement and the formation of a Government of National Unity.

“We realize that this is not a triumph of African solutions and principles but a reproach because it indicates that the voice of the people as stated democratically through the ballot box in March 2008 has not been recognized or respected.

“It is our sincere hope and prayer, however, that God Almighty will intervene and this transitional arrangement will lead to real democracy and consequently to justice, reconciliation, peace and prosperity to our troubled land. At present the people of Zimbabwe are rather suspicious and anxious. They need confidence building measures to be put in place to indicate sincerity and the political will to transform the country.

“We as representatives of the Christian constituency are anxious to see that this agreement works. The people of Zimbabwe have suffered enough. We would, therefore, like to see a number of actions by the inclusive government to prove that they hold the welfare and the interests of the people of Zimbabwe above their own political power. We would like to see

- the rule of law established in the country immediately and all political prisoners released forthwith
- measures be taken to reform arms of government to be apolitical in their delivery of services
- that the NGOs be free to distribute food and other commodities without interference from government
- that the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe return to its original mandate of keeping the resources and distributing them as directed by the government instead of meddling in politics and serving partisan interests
- that the framework of issues of transitional jus-

• tice and reconciliation be worked out together with the Church to heal the cancer at the heart of the nation

- that the constitutional reform process is commenced as per schedule contained in Amendment 19 and that the process will allow the people of Zimbabwe to contribute meaningfully to the constitution making process.”

On February 12, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, called on Zimbabwe’s new Government of National Unity to restore immediately the rule of law and address abuses committed over the course of the recent political crisis.

Pillay voiced concern over the disappearance of opposition officials, the reported use of torture to extract false confessions and infringements of the independence of the judiciary. She noted that undue pressure had been put on the judiciary to keep several people, including human rights activist Jestina Mukoko and journalist Shadreck Anderson Manyere, as well as members of the opposition, in custody.

She called on the new government to meet its obligations under international law, including the prohibition of torture and respect for the independence of the judiciary.

Concern was also expressed over the “politicization” of the police and their failure to undertake credible investigations and arrests of individuals alleged to have committed serious violations during the election violence in June and July. These include hundreds of cases of alleged summary executions, torture and sexual violence, including rape, the great majority of which are believed to have been carried out by supporters of Mugabe’s Zanu-PF party.

### **Faith in action:**

The African Union (AU) will serve as guarantor for this new government. It is critical that they take immediate action to ensure Zimbabwe’s unity government takes steps in the right direction. Go to <http://www.one.org/zimbabweandtheau/> to sign a petition calling on the newly-elected African Union chairman Muammar Gaddafi to ensure that the African Union executes its role as guarantor of the new Zimbabwe unity government.

## Sudan: International investing land grab

*The January 9 issue of the Financial Times (FT) reported that a U.S. businessman, Philippe Heilberg, a former Wall Street banker and chairman of New York-based Jarch Capital, has secured a vast tract of “extremely fertile” land in southern Sudan from Gabriel Matip, eldest son of Gen. Paulino Matip Nhial, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA). The political stakes and moral ramifications of this acquisition are high.*

According to a Jan. 12 Reuters article, Heilberg expects high returns from the approximately 400,000 hectares of land in Mayom county and anticipated Jarch being involved with the land for “decades.” Jarch said in a statement that agriculture in southern Sudan is exempt from U.S. sanctions provided that the Khartoum government does not have any interest and no imports or exports pass through nonexempt areas. Jarch said it will only deal in southern Sudan.

FT reported that Heilberg’s company “counts on its board former U.S. State Department and intelligence officials, including Joseph Wilson, a former ambassador and expert on Africa, who acts as vice-chairman; and Gwyneth Todd, who was an adviser ... at the Pentagon and at the White House.”

Under the deal, Jarch has agreed to lease the prime farm land and buy a 70 percent interest in South Sudanese company LEAC for Agriculture and Investment Co., Ltd. LEAC has the right to grow cereals, oil seeds, vegetables, fruits and flowers and can process these products for both local and export use. (Reuters)

Prior to starting his own companies, Heilberg worked for American International Group (AIG) during the 1990s. He was a partner in the commodity division of AIG called AIG Trading Group (AIGTG). The commodity division focused on for-

eign exchange, metals (both precious and base), and energy trading.

FT continues, “The deal is a striking example of how the recent spike in global commodity food prices has encouraged foreign investors and governments to scramble for control of arable land in Africa, even in its remotest parts.

“Laws on land ownership in South Sudan remain vague, and have yet to be clarified in a planned land act. For this reason, some foreign experts on Sudan as well as officials in the regional government, speaking on condition of anonymity, doubted Mr Heilberg could assert legal rights over such a vast tract of land. The deal is second only in size to the recent lease of 1.3m hectares by South Korea’s Daewoo from the government of Madagascar.

“Mr Heilberg is unconcerned. He believes that several African states, Sudan included, but possibly also Nigeria, Ethiopia and Somalia, are likely to break apart in the next few years, and that the political and legal risks he is taking will be amply rewarded.

“If you bet right on the shifting of sovereignty then you are on the ground floor. I am constantly looking at the map and looking if there is any value,” he said, adding that he was also in contact with rebels in Sudan’s western region of Darfur, dissidents in Ethiopia and the government of the breakaway state of Somaliland, among others.

“The company was embroiled in a dispute with the South Sudan government over its claims to exploration rights for oil.

“Mr Heilberg said Jarch had no expertise in agricultural development but would be seeking joint venture partners to cultivate the land, which is in one of the remotest parts of Sudan, in a region bordering the Nile River but with no tarred roads.”

## Special series: Ecological economics, part 2

*In the first article of this series, we looked at the problem of using GNP or GDP as an indicator of well being. In this article, we look at the concept of uneconomic growth, or “illth,” an important idea for understanding ecological economics and the limits to growth.*

In a speech at the University of Maryland, ecological economist Herman Daly said, “We cannot avoid producing ‘bads’ along with goods. If we stop depleting, we die of starvation. If we stop polluting, we die of constipation.” The important question is how to keep this necessary use of resources “within

the natural capacity of the ecosystem to absorb our waste...and to regenerate resources that we can use again.” It is when the economy surpasses this natural capacity for regeneration that economic growth becomes “uneconomic” growth. Instead of producing wealth, uneconomic growth produces “illth,” a term originally coined by John Ruskin, a 19th century philosopher to mean the opposite of well being.

Ecological economists spend much of their time focusing on the flow of resources – from extraction to production to disposal – also called “throughput.” How large is the economy and its throughput in relation to the earth’s ecosystem? How large could it be? But most importantly, is there an optimal size beyond which the growth of throughput begins to have more costs than benefits? These questions are never considered in classical economics, but are fundamental question that we face today as a human community.

A major concern today is that much of the economic growth currently taking place in the U.S. and Europe is uneconomic growth. It is creating more “bads” than goods. To measure this, Daly and others created the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW) which measures 19 items including but not limited to income inequality; public spending on health and education; costs associated with pollution, commuting, etc.; the depletion of natural resources; and the loss of farmland and natural habitats. The ISEW is one of the most advanced attempts to measure economic well being.

When they made graphs comparing the United States’ ISEW to its GDP, they found something very interesting. While the graphs ran together from 1929 until the mid 1960s, after that, GDP continued to grow while the ISEW remained stagnant until the mid 1970s. Since then GDP has continuously grown, while the ISEW actually declined. This means that while the economy has continued to grow, the well being of people in the U.S. has not improved and has even worsened. This is what is meant by “uneconomic growth.”

This does not mean that it is impossible to improve well being in the U.S. and other overly developed countries, but it does mean that governments in these countries need to pay attention to more than simple GDP growth. They need to identi-

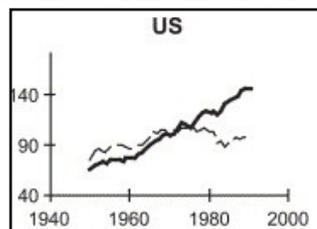
fy and increase those parts of the economy for which the marginal benefits still outweigh the costs while decreasing the parts of the economy where the costs of growth outweigh the benefits from that growth.

As we move from an “empty” world to a “full” one, the limiting factor in production will increasingly be natural capital, not human-made capital. For example, while in earlier times, the amount of fish caught was limited by the number of fishing boats, now it is limited by the number of fish in the sea. Irrigated agriculture was once limited by the amount of pumps and pipes used, whereas today, it is limited by the amount of water in the reservoirs. As we move into a full world, economic logic remains the same in terms of wanting to economize what we have less of, but we have not caught up with the fact that natural resources are limited and therefore cannot be considered “free.” It is important to study the nature of natural capital and environmental goods and services so as to allocate them better.

For centuries, humans have used science to bend the natural world to our will. We must now use science to change our ways to be more in harmony with the natural world. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment represents an excellent beginning in using science for this means. By measuring the condition of and trends in the world’s ecosystems such as water, food, forests, flood control, and natural resources, we are better able to understand the full costs and benefits of our economy and make necessary changes to be more synchronized with the natural world.

One workable solution would be to use two sets of national accounts instead of just one. One account would measure the benefits from growth, while the other would measure the costs, including environmental and health costs. The goal of each country would be to find an optimal level of activity where benefits are maximized and costs minimized.

Whatever we do, it is essential to begin to address the size of our economy before it overruns our planet’s resources. As Daly wrote, “Some say that it is idle to talk about maintaining a steady state at some limited scale unless we first know the optimal scale at which to be stable. On the contrary, unless we first know how to be stable, it is idle to know the optimal scale. Such knowledge would only enable us to recognize and wave goodbye to the optimal scale as we grew through it! If one jumps from an airplane one needs a parachute more than an altimeter.”



--- indicates ISEW  
— indicates GDP

## Special series: Corporations in the U.S., part 2

*In the first article of this series we discussed how, for over 100 years, corporations in the United States were created in order to serve the public good. Corporations had severe limits placed on them and were regularly disbanded for breaking the strict rules of their charters. Yet, despite our founders' intentions, since 1886 courts have drastically decreased the ability of the legislative or executive branches to control corporations. As we show in the following article, an errant summary of an 1886 court case that pitted a railroad against a California county resulted in corporations obtaining the same constitutional rights allowed to humans.*

In his book, *Unequal Protection: The Rise of Corporate Dominance and the Theft of Human Rights*, Thom Hartmann writes about the conclusion of the 1886 case, "No laws were passed by Congress granting that corporations should be treated the same under the constitution as living, breathing human beings, and none have been passed since then. It was not a concept drawn from older English law. No court decisions, state or federal, held that corporations were 'persons' instead of 'artificial persons.'"

"The Supreme Court did not rule, in this case or any case, on the issue of corporate personhood. In fact, to this day there has been no Supreme Court ruling that could explain why a corporation - with its ability to continue operating forever, a legal agreement that can't be put in jail and doesn't need fresh water to drink or clean air to breathe - should be granted the same Constitutional rights our Founders explicitly fought for, died for, and granted to the very mortal human beings who are citizens of the United States..."

"But something happened in 1886, even though nobody to this day knows exactly what or why."

Ratified in 1868, the 14th Amendment was ostensibly created to extend constitutional rights to former slaves. Section 1 of the Amendment states in part, "No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws..."

Yet soon after its passage, railroad barons sought to expand the amendment's protections to

cover corporations as juridical "persons" under the law. After numerous failures, a simple tax case provided the opportunity.

The 1886 case cited by Hartmann - Santa Clara County vs. South Pacific Railroad - was a rather tedious case about taxes on a fence running along a railroad. The county planned to tax railroads at a higher rate than citizens, but the railroad sued, arguing that the South Pacific Railroad should be considered a "person" under the recently passed 14th Amendment and, as such, could not be taxed at a different rate.

Despite being settled on other grounds, the case has provided corporations the opportunity to acquire incredible rights and privileges. Its ramifications are rarely discussed, yet they have radically changed the power and influence of corporations in the U.S. and around the world.

Before arguments in the Santa Clara case, Chief Justice Morrison Waite, a former attorney for the railroads, was heard saying, "The court does not wish to hear argument on the question whether the provision in the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, which forbids a state to deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws, applies to these corporations. We are of the opinion that it does." Yet in the official decision of the court, it clearly states that the case was not decided on the 14th Amendment issue.

In personal correspondence between Waite and J.C. Bancroft Davis, a court reporter who also served as president of the board of directors for the Newburgh and New York Railroad Company, the chief justice reiterated that "we avoided meeting the constitutional question in the decision." Yet in his book *United States Reports: Cases Adjudged in the Supreme Court at October Term 1885 and October Term 1886*, Davis began his summary of the case with, "The defendant corporations are persons within the intent of the clause in section I of the Constitution of the United States, which forbids a State to deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protections of the law."

Despite not having any legal weight, Davis' summary of the case has since become accepted as jurisprudence. Various authors have different theories of which of the three principal characters (Waite, Davis, or Justice Stephen Field) is most responsible

for this monumental non-decision. But what is clear is that it has resulted in corporations gaining constitutional rights in case after case in the 123 years since. Indeed, of the 307 14th Amendment cases brought before the Supreme Court from 1886 to 1910, only 19 dealt with African Americans while 288 were lawsuits brought by corporations seeking to expand their newly acquired rights as Constitutional “people.”

As we will see in future parts of this series, the results of granting corporations the same rights as

everyday citizens has drastically reshaped our law system and radically shifted the relationship between we the people, the government, and corporations. In a 1912 book *The Fourteenth Amendment and the States*, Charles Wallace Collins wrote, “Although [the 14th Amendment] was a humanitarian measure in origin and purpose and was designed as a charter of liberty for human rights, it has become the magna carta of accumulated wealth and organized capital.”

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## NGOs urge review of landmine, cluster bomb ban

*In February, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns and 66 other organizations issued a strong call for President Obama to reconsider U.S. opposition to global treaties prohibiting the use, transfer, and production of antipersonnel landmines and cluster munitions. Following is the text of the letter sent to the president.*

In early December, as half of the world’s governments signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Oslo, [your] spokeswoman ... said that you would “carefully review the new treaty and work closely [with] our friends and allies to ensure that the United States is doing everything feasible to promote protection of civilians.”

We welcomed this statement. We write now to urge you to launch a thorough review within the next six months of past U.S. policy decisions to stand outside the treaty banning cluster munitions, as well as the treaty banning anti-personnel landmines. We expect that such a review will give appropriate weight to humanitarian and diplomatic concerns, as well as to U.S. military interests.

The closest allies of the United States negotiated the Convention on Cluster Munitions based on their conclusion that these indiscriminate and unreliable weapons pose an unacceptable threat to civilian populations during and long after combat operations have ceased—in much the same way as do landmines.

British Foreign Minister David Miliband, representing the world’s third largest user of cluster munitions in the past decade, asked states at the signing conference to “tell those not here in Oslo that the world has changed ... that a new norm has been cre-

ated.” He went on to say: “Our global community must continually keep challenging itself about the way it behaves. Political leaders must show they are prepared to listen and respond to the voices of victims, of civil society, and of ordinary people.”

We recognize the U.S. government’s significant contributions to demining operations around the world, but note that these contributions are undermined by U.S. nonparticipation in the decade-old Mine Ban Treaty and the new Convention on Cluster Munitions.

As you stated during the campaign, U.S. forces have been moving away from using cluster munitions and anti-personnel landmines. The United States has not deployed anti-personnel landmines since 1992, and it has not used cluster munitions in Iraq since 2003 or in Afghanistan since 2002.

Indeed, [Defense] Secretary Gates has recognized that cluster munitions are weapons of grave humanitarian concern and recently issued a policy to begin destroying them in 2018.

U.S. policy on landmines, as articulated in 2004, also encompasses phased elimination of most mines from operational planning.

These steps, while positive, are not nearly enough. The use of weapons that disproportionately take the lives and limbs of civilians is wholly counterproductive in today’s conflicts, where winning over the local population is essential to mission success. ...

Reconsidering these two treaties—and eliminating the threat that U.S. forces might use weapons that most of the world has condemned—would greatly aid efforts to reassert our nation’s moral leadership. ...

## Afghanistan: Urgent policy change needed

*While Maryknoll does not have missionaries serving in Afghanistan, we have watched the growing military presence there with much trepidation. We found the following letter, sent in February from our colleagues at the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) to President Obama, thought-provoking and consistent with our perspective.*

... Rather than continuing to lead with the military in Afghanistan, the U.S. should invest in regional diplomacy and improved assistance to strengthen civilian rule of law and stimulate development and peacebuilding. Toward that end, we offer the following recommendations for shaping a new approach to the region.

**1. Immediately end aerial bombing, house raids, and other offensive tactics which harm civilians and increase anti-U.S. sentiment.** The UN estimates civilian casualties in Afghanistan rose by 40 percent in 2008, reaching nearly 2,000, with approximately half caused by international military operations. Estimates of Afghan organizations put the number of civilian casualties even higher. As Thomas Johnson of the Naval Postgraduate School has noted, "When we kill innocents, especially women and children, you lose that village forever."

**2. Clarify U.S. goals.** The U.S. continues to pursue mixed goals with mixed strategies in Afghanistan. A clarification of your administration's goals in the region is critical to developing an appropriate strategy. The U.S. should limit its goals in Afghanistan to those consistent with an early withdrawal.

**3. Lead with diplomacy.** Although many military, foreign policy, and Afghanistan experts are calling for increased diplomacy in the region, the U.S. continues to lead with the military. As the Obama administration's special representative, Ambassador [Richard] Holbrooke should be empowered to engage with regional neighbors on the broadest range of issues that could lead to greater cooperation on addressing ongoing conflicts, strengthening civilian rule of law, and promoting economic development. This would include:

- Sustained diplomatic talks with Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, China, and Russia, to discuss shared interests and possible cooperation toward promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region. Direct U.S. engage-

ment with Iran will be critical to the success of such an initiative and could pave the way for broader cooperation. Ideally a series of bilateral and multilateral talks would lead to the creation of a platform for a regional peace process backed by the UN. Such a platform should serve as a mechanism for strengthening and promoting greater accountability of the Afghanistan government as well.

- A determined diplomatic effort to reduce India-Pakistan tensions. Fear of India is the main factor shaping the outlook of Pakistani security forces; that fear makes reform of the security forces and the extension of civilian control unlikely, necessary conditions to reduce support for extremist groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan.
  - Talking to the Taliban. While striking viable and effective political agreements with ideologically-driven extremists is unlikely, ensuring that the Pashtun population feels included in any decisions on the future of Afghanistan is critical to creating a viable and legitimate government, reducing support for extremist groups, and providing any base for reconciliation. Finding a way to include elements of the Taliban at the negotiating table will ultimately be necessary.
- 4. Promote accountability and participatory government.** A legitimate national government in Afghanistan that is seen as representative of all its people, can provide basic services and promote economic development, establish and maintain rule of law, and address grievances and conflicts through nonviolent channels will ultimately be needed to reduce support and safe haven for extremist groups and ensure a stable and peaceful future for the Afghan people. Building such a government is the work of the Afghan people but requires the support of the international community. Thus far, foreign interventions in the form of military occupation and massive infusions of reconstruction and development assistance have undermined good governance and accountability. The U.S. should chart a new course by:
- Supporting a national *loya jirga* in Afghanistan to re-establish a peace and reconciliation process, build consensus around a revised plan for national elections, and review and strengthen a national development and peacebuilding plan. Such an initiative should be owned and led by

Afghans and backed by financial and logistical support of the U.S. and international community.

**5. Invest in Afghan-led development and peacebuilding.** Thus far, billions of dollars poured into reconstruction and development in Afghanistan have shown few results and often contributed to corruption and



Girl in Afghan refugee camp 2002;  
photo by Marie Dennis

conflict. Lack of donor coordination, large infrastructure projects, foreign contracting and labor, militarized assistance, “tied aid,” and development projects driven by a counterinsurgency effort rather than true development needs are all factors fueling the problem. The use of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) is undermining national and local development and governance. The U.S. should lead an effort with other international partners to better coordinate aid, with a focus on strengthening Afghan civil society and reducing the foreign footprint on development and reconstruction. The UN mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) should be empowered to lead the coordination of reconstruction and recovery aid in Afghanistan. The focus of assistance should be on supporting Afghanistan’s National Development Plan through Afghan-led design, development, and implementation of projects as much as possible. Local or regional materials and labor should be employed. The military should not engage in reconstruction and development activities.

**6. Promote security through civilian rule of law.** Security should ultimately come through civilian rule of law and community peacebuilding. Unfortunately, as Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies has observed in a briefing to Congress, “The development of Afghan security forces has been a badly managed, grossly understaffed and poorly funded mess.” The United States didn’t even seriously fund the development of Afghanistan’s own forces until 2007. A new approach to establishing security based on civilian rule of law rather than military force is urgently needed.

- Draw down - do not expand - military operations. Shift from war fighting to international justice. Set a timetable for full withdrawal. Waging war against al-Qaeda and the Taliban has only fueled anti-U.S. sentiment in the region and

increased the recruiting base for extremist groups. The U.S. should work instead through increased regional and international cooperation in intelligence, policing and extradition to arrest and bring to justice those involved in terrorist attacks and crimes against humanity. The U.S. and NATO should establish a timetable for withdrawal, as requested by the Karzai government. Un-

til all military forces are removed, the role of any international troops in Afghanistan should be the protection of civilians, support for rebuilding civilian rule of law, and helping secure the borders.

- Strengthen national and local police, judicial systems, and traditional justice mechanisms to establish rule of law and civilian-led security. The U.S. should make a priority of working with the Afghan government - at national and local levels - and with international partners to help strengthen civilian rule of law in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This should include financial assistance and civilian technical expertise for building the local and national police, judicial systems, and traditional justice mechanisms to establish rule of law and civilian-led security. Such an effort will take time and serious effort, but will inevitably be less costly - in both lives and money - and more effective than escalating the war. The military is ill-equipped to train civilian police.

**7. Increase nonmilitary aid to Pakistan to strengthen civilian rule of law.** The U.S. should transform the U.S.-Pakistan relationship from short-term crisis management relying heavily on military aid to long-term strategic engagement emphasizing economic development and enhancing the rule of law. Increased nonmilitary assistance to strengthen civilian rule of law and support economic development, particularly in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, could go far in reshaping relations in the region and reducing support for extremist activity.

We urge you to support these policies to transform the U.S. approach to Afghanistan and the surrounding region. Without such a transformation the U.S. will be creating a deadly, costly, and endless war in Afghanistan.

## World Social Forum 2009

*This year's World Social Forum (WSF) was held from January 27-February 1 in Brazil. Following are excerpts from the declaration crafted by this year's attendees. We include this declaration in NewsNotes because the WSF is a process that gives a unique voice to a wide variety of popular movements, with strong representation from the global South.*

We, the social movements from all over the world, ... are here in Latin America, where over the last decade social and indigenous movements have joined forces and radically questioned the capitalist system from their cosmovision. Over the last few years in Latin America, highly radical social struggles have resulted in the overthrow of neoliberal governments and the empowerment of governments that have carried out many positive reforms such as the nationalization of core sectors of the economy and democratic constitutional reforms.

In this context the social movements in Latin America have responded appropriately, deciding to support the positive measures adopted by these governments while keeping a critical distance. These experiences will ... help ... strengthen the peoples' staunch resistance against the policies of governments, corporations and banks who shift the burden of the crisis onto the oppressed. We the social movements of the globe are currently facing a historic challenge. The international capitalist crisis manifests itself as detrimental to humankind in various ways: it affects food, finance, the economy, climate, energy, population migration ... and civilization itself, as there is also a crisis in international order and political structures.

We are facing a global crisis which is a direct consequence of the capitalist system and therefore cannot find a solution within the system. All the measures that have been taken so far to overcome the crisis merely aim at socializing losses so as to ensure the survival of a system based on privatizing strategic economic sectors, public services, natural and energy resources and on the commoditization of life and the exploitation of labor and nature as well as on the transfer of resources from the periphery to the center and from workers to the capitalist class.

The present system is based on exploitation, competition, promotion of individual private interests to the detriment of the collective interest, and the frenzied accumulation of wealth by a handful of rich people. It results in bloody wars, fuels xenophobia, racism and religious fundamentalisms; it intensifies the exploitation of women and the criminalization of social movements. In the context of the present crisis the rights of peoples are systematically denied. ...

In order to overcome the crisis we have to grapple with the root of the problem and progress as fast as possible towards the construction of a radical alternative that would do away with the capitalist system and patriarchal domination. We must work towards a society

that meets social needs and respects nature's rights as well as supporting democratic participation in a context of full political freedom. We must see to it that all international treaties on our indivisible civic, political, economic, social and cultural rights, both individual and collective, are implemented.

In this perspective we must contribute to the largest possible popular mobilization to enforce a number of urgent measures such as:

- Nationalizing the banking sector without compensations and with full social monitoring,
- Reducing working time without any wage cut,
- Taking measures to ensure food and energy sovereignty
- Stopping wars, withdraw occupation troops and dismantle military foreign bases
- Acknowledging peoples' sovereignty and autonomy ensuring their right to self-determination
- Guaranteeing rights to land, territory, work, education and health for all.
- Democratize access to means of communication and knowledge.
- The social emancipation ... support[s] forms of ownership that favor the social interest: small family freehold, public, cooperative, communal and collective property.

Such an alternative will necessarily be feminist since it is impossible to build a society based on social justice and equality of rights when half of humankind is oppressed and exploited.

Lastly, we commit ourselves to enriching the construction of a society based on a life lived in har-



mony with oneself, others and the world around (“el buen vivir”) by acknowledging the active participation and contribution of the native peoples.

We, the social movements, are faced with a historic opportunity to develop emancipatory initiatives on a global scale. Only through the social struggle of

the masses can populations overcome the crisis. In order to promote this struggle, it is essential to work on consciousness-raising and mobilization from the grassroots. The challenge for the social movements is to achieve a convergence of global mobilization...

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## Sustainable peace through reconciliation

*Recognizing that reconciliation processes “are particularly necessary and urgent in countries and regions of the world which have suffered, or are suffering, situations of conflict that have affected and divided societies in their various internal, national and international facets,” the United Nations General Assembly has named 2009 the International Year of Reconciliation.*

According to the UN’s Department of Public Information (DPI), “Reconciliation is a complex process that begins with the individual and extends itself into all levels of society and community, reaching out even to the international level. The process of reconciliation improves our understanding of our differences and allows us to move past them to a more harmonious world. The resolution establishing the Year of Reconciliation invites international and non-government organizations as well as governments to support reconciliation processes among divided societies. It also asks them to plan and implement adequate cultural, educational and social programs to promote the concept of reconciliation including holding seminars and conferences in order to disseminate information on this issue.”

On February 5, the UN DPI held a briefing focused on the prospect of sustainable peace through reconciliation. The session opened and closed with a moving drum and flute musical performance by Jackie Tice and Dar Khabbaz, both Native Americans, which demonstrated the power of the arts to bridge painful life experiences.

Of the four speakers, the most tragic and yet, in some ways, most encouraging presentation was given by Jacqueline Murekatete, a survivor of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Murekatete, who was very young in 1994, lost her entire family as they tried to flee from the machetes of their neighbors, friends and classmates. Not only the one million people slaughtered but also their killers, some of

whom were young children, were victims of an indoctrination of hate perpetrated by the government over a long period of time.

In Rwanda, the challenge of reconstituting a post-conflict society is very great. Both victims and perpetrators must find a way to live together. The nation is undergoing a major drive to forge a new identity; reconciliation is part of all government measures. No longer is the emphasis on ethnic rivalry, but rather it is on national identity as Rwandans. The most important tools being used to create a new society are education and the switch to English from French as the national language, which provides a common project in which everyone can engage.

Speaking of the atrocities of the Rwandan genocide has to be guided in a very delicate way because most of the young adult population participated in the destruction of the country. After education and language, the government program uses music, sports and work to bring people together. During the DPI briefing, an excellent and very hopeful documentary about Rwanda, “Once Enemies Now Friends,” was shown. The country has a long way to go but some significant signs show that it may well succeed in its journey toward sustainable peace.

Another speaker at the briefing, Judge Felicitas Hoffman from Germany, gave a thoughtful summary of her research regarding language and rituals of reconciliation. Among other words of deep meaning, she referred to the powerful Hawaiian word *Ho’opono pono*, a term for setting things right. Possibly it is related to the Tagalog word in the Philippines, *O’po*, which means to express respect for another. This word is rooted in an ancient term of deep Tagalog, *Opo Poon*, which means that one looks beyond the obvious in the other to acknowledge the presence of the Holy One. These words and phrases from our indigenous sisters and brothers remind us that moving beyond the realm of judgment is essential to the reconciliation process.

## Climate change: The road to Copenhagen 2009

*Negotiations around the International Climate Change Treaty, which is scheduled to be completed and publicly presented in Copenhagen, Denmark in December, are carefully observed by the United Nations NGO Working Group on Climate Change. To be exact, the working group is watching to ensure that the new treaty will include measures to assist groups of people who are most exposed to climate change conditions and who need international help in order to adapt to the new realities being imposed upon them. Vulnerable societies have not benefited from the development era but currently suffer loss of land, loss of water and loss of livelihood due to climatic changes caused by excessive amounts of carbon in the earth's atmosphere, which is due to decades of fossil fuels burned in industrialized countries.*

The guest speaker at the climate change working group's February 19 meeting was Mohammad Reza Salamat, a member of Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's Climate Change Support Team, who updated the group on the secretary general's strategy for the new treaty.

The negotiation of the Copenhagen Treaty is not precisely the work of the Security Council. Rather, it is the task of the United Nations Framework on the Climate Change Crisis (UNFCCC), which was established as a result of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. However, the secretary general has dedicated 2009 to supporting the work of creating this treaty because he is convinced that climate change is the greatest humanitarian and development dilemma facing the world, and, as such, is also a threat to global peace and security.

Therefore, Ban has established a four point strategy for supporting the UNFCCC:

- **Provide political support for the treaty negotiations:** To achieve this, Ban is visiting the heads of state of the world's governments. While calling for bold action he is soliciting the views of leaders, inquiring about their hopes and soliciting statements regarding their visions for the future. In this regard, Ban was deeply satisfied with his interview with President Obama. Their views coincide and the president expressed his intention of engaging the treaty process actively during the

preparatory process. This is very important because any treaty of this magnitude would limp seriously without United States engagement and leadership. In addition, Ban is involving the legislatures that must ratify the treaty and the agencies and bureaus of government responsible for implementation. Salamat mentioned particularly finance, transportation and energy. This is a time for concerted action for global well-being.

- **Make certain that all UN sections are aware of the urgency of the climate change issue:** The UN is often responding to situations of crisis around the world but this must not become an obstacle to keeping climate change at the forefront of concern. Putting forth the best possible treaty at Copenhagen will avert crises in the future.
- **Increase global awareness:** NGOs are crucial in terms of popularizing the urgency of Copenhagen at the grassroots level. All sectors of civil society should look toward Copenhagen with hope, even though this means some changes in comfort patterns. The new treaty most likely will be broader in scope than the Kyoto Protocol, which is scheduled to expire in 2012. It is hoped that the new treaty will include provisions for those who are most vulnerable. This will require financial support from wealthy nations, a challenge during the present time of economic downturn. Yet the climate and economic crises are linked; the economic crisis cannot be used as a reason to ignore the climate crisis. The business community must be brought on board with a swift and expeditious commitment.
- **Lead by example:** Ban is overseeing the renovation of the United Nations buildings. He has insisted upon a green master plan that encompasses the entire complicated renovation. In addition, travel is being diminished throughout the UN system and teleconferences are being increased. For the occasions in which travel is necessary carbon offsetting is being employed. Interestingly, it was noted that when the summer dress code was relaxed in order to diminish the amount of air conditioning used, there was a high energy saving.

## Toward an agricultural model that respects nature

*Recently Bill Gates and others have turned their attention to fighting hunger in Africa through improving technology to boost the productivity of small-scale farmers. Critics from the agro-environmental movement feel that Gates is overly confident in the same technology and market based solutions that deepened the global food crisis, while what is needed is a transformation of the entire system. The following article looks at some of the problems inherent in the global food system as well as the solutions outlined in two important reports, the Food and Agricultural Organization's Livestock's Long Shadow, published in 2006, and the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), published in April 2008.*

Climate conscious consumers are confronted with several questions when shopping for groceries in the U.S. How can I be sure that people in other countries are paid a fair wage for the bananas I eat, or the coffee I drink? How humanely was the chicken or cow or pig treated before it became packaged meat? When strawberries and blueberries abound in the dead of winter – how do I calculate the food miles from farm to table for my own carbon footprint? In the meantime, U.S. trade practices and development efforts work to export some of the same practices these consumers are questioning. “Development” is often measured by growth in GDP but an often touted sign of “progress” is a rise in meat consumption and the presence of imported packaged foods.

While we logically think that shipping food over huge distances contributes substantially to climate change, a recent study by the Food and Agricultural Organization entitled “Livestock's Long Shadow” finds that the world's livestock production contributes a much higher share than transport. The livestock sector is responsible for 18 percent of greenhouse gas emissions measured in CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent.

The U.S. way of producing livestock, mimicked throughout the world, is highly dependent on grain production. Mono-cropping (planting one variety of grain) is accompanied by the heavy use of fossil fuel based chemical fertilizers, pesticides and irrigation; it accounts for eight percent of global human water use. These practices contribute to air and water pollution themselves, but once this grain is fed to live-

stock, methane and ammonia are released in animal waste leading to local air and water contamination.

Some concrete blueprints for how to transform the system are provided by the findings of the IAASTD. This unique effort brought together over 400 experts including stakeholders from governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, producers, consumers and the scientific community to share views, gain common understanding and shape a vision for the future.

The main goals of the three-year study were focused on the use of agricultural knowledge, science and technology to reduce hunger and poverty; improve nutrition, health and rural livelihoods; and to facilitate social and environmental sustainability. The study looked at the productivity and multifunctionality of agriculture. In trying to meet these goals, the IAASTD clearly identified the need for drastic changes.

Both the IAASTD report and the FAO report point to the need to internalize as many externalities as possible. This would help assign real costs to the earth's contribution, including soil degradation, species reduction, pollution, as well as properly accounting for the fossil fuels used in industrialized agriculture. Currently key inputs are under-priced or considered “free” leading to overexploitation and pollution. New incentives must be created. One rule that ecological economists promote is to tax what is bad – resource depletion, land degradation, pollution, etc. – and relax the tax on “goods” (products where value has been added by human labor).

The IAASTD identified the inequitable distribution of food and resources as the basic problem when looking at how to achieve the goal of poverty alleviation. It concluded that small-scale farmers would benefit from greater access to knowledge, technology, and credit, and from more political power and better infrastructure. They should be able to participate in decisions around credit and markets, intellectual property rights, trade priorities, and protection of the rural environment.

The IAASTD recommends improving low impact practices such as organic agriculture and providing incentives for the sustainable management of water, livestock, forests, and fisheries. This represents a true green revolution, away from industrial unsustainable models and toward a model of a realistic relationship with the earth.

## HIV/AIDS: Hidden costs of care giving

*The HIV and AIDS pandemic has resulted in myriad responses, from prevention programs to extensive research for vaccines and treatment, from income generation to care of orphans and more. Private, corporate and government efforts have resulted in the outlay of billions of dollars, yet despite positive advances in terms of treatment and access, for every two people on treatment, five become infected. The challenge of prevention on a massive scale (a public health priority) parallels the frustration of watching the breakdown of families, communities and society. In addition to specific AIDS related programs, new efforts are underway to understand and improve health care systems and the serious needs for professional health care workers in those countries most impacted by the pandemic. In that context, the role of caregivers, most often women and invisible, requires analysis and policy responses.*

This year, the priority theme of the 53rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), “The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS,” highlights areas of policy for the international community as well as for U.S. legislative efforts. While it may seem difficult to imagine legislating “equal sharing of responsibilities” (gender parity), an analysis of care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS will highlight the hidden dimensions of non-paid care giving and its policy implications.

Care giving, of children or of the ill, traditionally has been seen as a woman’s role; in developing countries, where paid care giving is almost nonexistent, this extends to the girl-child and grandmothers. (This is not to discount men who do take on family care; it is the exception, rather than the rule). However, traditions no longer guarantee that women and girl children themselves will be taken care of financially or socially, and care giving can become one more obstacle to a woman’s ability to earn an income, participate in the broader community or, in the case of the girl, attend school. On an economic level, the monetary value of non-paid care is not seen, acknowledged, calculated or factored into the costs of local, national or global AIDS programs.

In many countries, cultural practices and expectations that a woman’s sphere is the household further limits her access to primary and secondary education, meaningful and paying employment, as

well as participation in public forums and political life. Lack of voice as well as limited economic and legal power further limits women’s participation in spheres of formal power (national governments or international levels). If women have no political voice at the local or national level, there will be little interest at a legislative level in responding to the economic, educational, labor or health needs of the girl child or women in national policy.

Since 1994, numerous conventions, declarations and agreements have been signed by the member countries of the United Nations, including the 1995 Beijing Declaration, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Labor Organization Convention #156, and the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV and AIDS, documents which highlight equal participation and responsibility of women and in the social, parenting, labor, political and economic spheres. This year’s CSW priority theme will attempt to bring member states to an analysis of the gender aspects of responsibility sharing at all levels, and will provide an opportunity to highlight the role of caregivers in an economic and social context as well as propose policy programmatic responses.

What does this mean for U.S. policy? Will a national AIDS strategy include a gender perspective at programmatic levels? Is all domestic labor policy and legislation around care giving (paid and unpaid) gender sensitive? Do all foreign assistance programs and grants reflect gender equity, from the administrative to the on-the-ground programs?

In our concern over the lack of health care workers in countries highly impacted by HIV and AIDS, are we analyzing the role and needs of unpaid caregivers, particularly women and girls, and programming training and community and financial support where possible? What are efforts for including the training and support of men in care giving roles in our foreign aid programs?

Are all monitoring and evaluation instruments for HIV/AIDS programs and grants, domestic and foreign, gender sensitive and do they include measures of impact at all levels?

The U.S. participation in the UN affords us the opportunity and responsibility to evaluate our own programs and policies, in the light of the excellent materials prepared for this coming UN session.

## Resources

- 1) **“Together with Africa: Celebrating hope”:** The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns will give special focus to Africa in the months prior to the Catholic Church’s Extraordinary Synod on Africa to take place in Rome from October 4-25. Check our website for a link to the “Together with Africa: Celebrating hope” project, and/or sign up for a weekly email from our office that will include a monthly prayer; a weekly Africa update to make Africa more visible, with a focus on the countries where Maryknoll has experience, as well as important trans-regional issues such as ecology, poverty, violent conflict, HIV and AIDS, the impact of U.S. policy on justice, peace and reconciliation; a weekly story of hope from Africa; important documents relating to the themes of solidarity, social justice, peace and reconciliation; and a weekly Africa-focused action alert that will encourage prayer, study and action over the course of a month to increase attention to Africa on a regular basis. To sign up for this email, go to our website at [www.maryknollogc.org](http://www.maryknollogc.org) and click the “Together with Africa” icon on the left menu, or send an email to [ogc@maryknoll.org](mailto:ogc@maryknoll.org), subject line “Together with Africa,” with your name, city and state listed in the body of the message.
- 2) **Enough for All: Seventh Annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days, March 13-16, 2009:** The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns co-hosts this annual gathering of the ecumenical Christian community. This year’s theme, “Enough for All,” connects workshops on climate change, migration and poverty in the U.S. and around the world. Held in Washington, D.C., March 13-16. Conference fee: \$160. Registration after February 13 will be \$175. Scholarships are available. Visit [www.advocacydays.org](http://www.advocacydays.org), write Advocacy Days or call 202-386-6397 for more information. If you plan to attend, please let us know: call 202-832-1780, or send an email: [ogc@maryknoll.org](mailto:ogc@maryknoll.org)
- 3) **Sacred Peace Walk, April 6-13, 2009:** Sponsored by the Nevada Desert Experience (NDE). This annual event draws on the long legacy of peace walkers and spiritual leaders to draw attention to the nuclear dangers that continue to threaten our sacred planet and the community of life. NDE’s 62-mile, annual pilgrimage to the Nevada Test Site will begin on April 6 with an orientation in Las Vegas and preparation for the six-day walk starting on April 7. The main Walk ends on Sunday, with an extra special action on Monday for those who are able/interested. NDE has a vehicle available for those who need extra support, and for emergencies as well. Some Walkers on the Sacred Peace Walk only come for a few days--all are welcome to do as much or as little of the Walk as the Spirit calls. Check the NDE website for more information: [www.nevadadesertexperience.org](http://www.nevadadesertexperience.org)
- 4) **Christian Peace Witness for Iraq, April 29-30, 2009:** The third annual gathering of the ecumenical Christian community calling for a swift and just end to the war in Iraq will be held in Washington, D.C. at the end of President Obama’s first 100 days in office. On Wednesday, April 29, an opening convocation will be held from 12:30-1:30 pm; an evening prayer service will be held at 7 pm. On Thursday, April 30, a public witness will be held at the U.S. Capitol. For more information, check the CPWI website at [www.christianpeacewitness.org](http://www.christianpeacewitness.org). If you plan to attend, please let us know: call 202-832-1780, or send an email: [ogc@maryknoll.org](mailto:ogc@maryknoll.org)
- 5) ***Praying for peace around the globe: A resource for prayer and action:*** Jim McGinnis, founder and program director of the Institute for Peace and Justice, presents this new resource. In 128 pages, this book invites us to pray and act for peace in 40 different countries and around 13 different issues of peace and justice on a daily and weekly basis. Each prayer page includes a short description of the situation on the country or issue; a longer prayer for peace from that country or issue; suggestions for action (with the action websites in the website supplement); and a shorter prayer of petition that can be used in worship services. For supplements to the book and for ordering information, go to: [www.ipj-ppj.org/prayingforpeace.htm](http://www.ipj-ppj.org/prayingforpeace.htm). If you are unable to access the internet, contact IPJ at 800-833-0245.