

April 2005

Dear Members and Friends of AFJN,

To its credit, the U.S. government is paying more attention to Africa. President Bush and Congress seem to recognize that there are many needs in Africa that the United States and other highly developed countries can and should address.

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The question is, is the United States government paying enough attention to Africa's most pressing needs, such as health, human development and accountable and responsive government? At this point the answer is, "no." As a result of embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, and in the wake of the tragedy of 9/11, the U.S. government has greatly increased its spending on assisting African militaries and security forces during the last few years, while spending on health and human development has remained virtually constant in real terms.

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While recognizing that the professionalization of militaries and the reform of police forces are needed in Africa, we are convinced that it is more important that the U.S. focus more of its resources on addressing the scourge of HIV/AIDS and promoting human development on the continent.

In this issue of *Around Africa*, Sr. Elizabeth Kolmer, ASC describes the work of her religious community, the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, with AIDS orphans in Tanzania. Sr. Elizabeth's article reminds us of the horrible effects of HIV/AIDS on children, future generations. In this issue, we also announce that Bishop Kevin Dowling, CSsR, of South Africa, will be the keynote speaker at our upcoming annual meeting. Bishop Dowling has been tireless in his efforts to address the needs of those who suffer with or because of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, where it is estimated that 1 million people will die of AIDS-related illnesses each year through 2010.

As members of AFJN, let us call upon our representative in Congress to spend more of our resources on African people and Africa's most pressing needs. This is a moral obligation and, we might add, ultimately in the national interest of the United States.

Peace,
Fr. Robert A. Dowd, C.S.C.
President, AFJN

Africa Faith and Justice Network is a Catholic network of individual and group members focused on Africa and the experience of its people. AFJN is committed in faith to collaborate in the task of transforming United States mentality and policy on Africa. It seeks to be an instrument of education and advocacy on behalf of justice for Africa.

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AFJN-ND Plans Africa Week at Notre Dame

By
Meghan Hanzlik, Katie Connell,
Emily Chin and Laura Feeney*

As students of the University of Notre Dame, Saint Mary's College and Holy Cross College, and members of the Africa Faith and Justice Network at Notre Dame [AFJN-ND], we have recognized that we are being called to make a difference not only in this community, but also in the world. After reading the USCCB document, the "Call to Solidarity with Africa," (<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/africa.htm>) we are attempting to make the most of the resources we have been given to raise awareness, expand people's horizons, challenge ourselves to take responsibility, and respond to the call.

AFJN-ND has teamed up with the African Student Association at Notre Dame to enlist the cooperation of student clubs and academic departments on our campuses, such as Amnesty International, Class Councils, Student Body Government, Kellogg Institute for International Studies, the Department of Theology, and the Department of Business, to create Africa Week; a week dedicated to increasing appreciation of African cultures and to raising awareness of the challenges that face this continent. Africa Week will take place on our campuses April 10-17.

The purpose of Africa Week is to promote a real sense of solidarity between people on our campuses and the people of Africa, particularly those who are suffering the most. We would like students to understand the problems in Africa and the way that people can seek action, while at the same time learn from the hope and faith that is so vivid within these African cultures. The week will drive home the idea of "One Family" by luminaries on campus to announce the week, a mass dedicated to Africa, T-shirt drive sending t-shirts to Kenya, speakers from Bread For the World and Catholic Relief Services, the adoption of a Ugandan child by each of the dorms on campus, a benefit dinner for Sudan, Africa Night (dances and narratives from Africa), showings of informative videos, and letter-writing campaigns to government representatives.

It is the hope that this first annual Africa Week at Notre Dame will increase consciousness and awaken consciences on our campuses. We want to make it nearly impossible for people to be on our campuses during the week of April 10-17 without learning something about Africa and being challenged to make a difference. We invite members and friends of AFJN in parishes and schools to hold their own Africa Week. If we can be of any assistance in this regard, please let us know by sending us an e-mail message through our faculty advisor, Fr. Bob Dowd, C.S.C, at dowd.9@nd.edu.

*Meghan Hanzlik, Katie Connell, Emily Chin and Laura Feeney are students at the University of Notre Dame and members of AFJN-ND.

AFJN Announces 2005 Conference Speakers

AFJN is pleased to announce that **Bishop Kevin Dowling CSsR**, an internationally known advocate for justice and peace, will give the keynote address at the AFJN 2005 conference. He will speak on "HIV/AIDS: A Faith and Justice Response to the Pandemic."

Dowling, a native of Pretoria, was named Bishop of Rustenburg, South Africa, in 1991. When he arrived in Rustenburg he immediately became involved in the human rights struggle in the Bophuthatswana Homeland, in which the Rustenburg diocese was situated. He remained actively involved until the first democratic elections were held in April 1994.

In Rustenburg's sprawling squatter shack settlements, the HIV/AIDS infection rate is 47.2 per cent. To respond to this crisis, Dowling founded the Tapologo HIV/AIDS Project and Hospice. He also organized the Bishops' Conference National AIDS Office, which runs programs in the five sub-Saharan countries most affected by AIDS, and serves as a member of the Management Committee.

In addition to his work on AIDS, Bishop Dowling serves on the South African Bishops' Conference Justice and Peace Department and as Bishop to the Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Office. He chairs the International Sudan Ecumenical Forum, which is actively involved in the Sudan Peace Process on behalf of civil society, the Churches, and international NGO groups. He is a Trustee of the Ecumenical Solidarity Peace Trust, which researches and analyzes human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. He is also on the Board of Directors of Pax Christi International.



Marie Clarke Brill, former National Coordinator of Jubilee USA Network, will also be a featured speaker at the conference. Marie is deeply involved with economic justice work and has developed relationships with scores of debt and development organizations throughout Africa.



Bishop Kevin Dowling, CSsR, at the Freedom Park shack settlement with two home-care workers with whom he ministers.

As an international leader in the debt cancellation movement, she has been quoted with regularity on issues of international economic justice in the *Financial Times*, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *LA Times* and other publications and has appeared on CNN and CNN International, BBC, VOA and other news networks. She will show participants how the demand for debt repayment in sub-Saharan countries severely curtails their ability to provide health services for those suffering with AIDS, and offer concrete action strategies for U.S. citizens to take on debt and AIDS.

The theme of the 2005 conference is "**Weaving a Response to AIDS in Africa.**" It will be held at the Radisson City Centre in Tucson, Arizona and will follow the U.S. Catholic Mission Association's Mission Congress (Oct. 13-16). The AFJN conference will begin at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 16, and conclude with the annual members' meeting on Monday, October 17.

A brochure containing a registration form, and information about fees and housing will be sent to all AFJN members in May. Registration information will also be available on the AFJN web site soon. (<http://afjn.cua.edu>).

AIDS ORPHANS IN AFRICA: ONE VILLAGE OF HOPE

by Elizabeth Kolmer, ASC

The epidemic of AIDS in the world, particularly in Africa, is a well-known fact, yet one that often sits more or less silently in our midst. Too often it seems like such an overwhelming task to face the situation and take measures to bring about change. It seems beyond any human endeavor to control it. What can stop it, we ask.

There is no doubt that the developing continent of Africa has many challenges, so much so that we sometimes fail to look at the upside of developments. Government groups of some countries have taken action to control or prevent the spread of the disease. Many groups, religious and non-religious alike, also provide phenomenal care in one way or another. These efforts need to be noted from time to time to encourage us to continue the struggle and to do our part in bringing about change. This article, then, will highlight The Village of Hope in Dodoma, Tanzania, begun in August of 2002.

Four Adorers of the Blood of Christ went to Tanzania in 1969 as a mission endeavor of the provinces of Acuto and Rome, settling first in Manyoni where over the next ten years they worked in the parish kindergarten and built a hospital and professional school for vocational education. Their work in Chibumagwa where they care for runaway girls and in Dar Es Salaam where they do parish work primarily, are other works of the Tanzanian foundation. In time, young women asked to become part of their work and their life necessitating the establishment in 1990 of a formation house at Dodoma. The com-

munity grew from the four original Italian sisters to the present 45 Tanzanian professed sisters who carry on the apostolates noted above.

The Village of Hope, established in Dodoma in August of 2002, is devoted to caring for AIDS orphans, of whom there are about one and a half million in the country by recent estimates. The sisters began

the mission by helping to place AIDS orphans in the homes of families who cared for them and provided family life for them. Finally in 2002 they realized their dream of The Village of Hope. The children live in family homes [12 are finished with two more to be built] with “adopted” Tanzanian parent-educators. In each “family” there are 9 children of different ages. When all the cottages have been built, the Village will be able to care for 120-130 AIDS orphans at any one time. The arrangement gives the children a sense of home and the love of par-

ents and family. In the center of the circle of cottages stands a gathering place with a large meeting room and a dining area for special occasions when they come together. To date, 2005, there are 104 children in the sisters’ care. Children a few months old up to age six are accepted and can remain in the village until age 18. Every effort is made to provide them with the best nutritional, medical, psychological and educational care. Because the Village hopes to become a center for research on AIDS in children, they have also erected (1) a laboratory for analysis of the basic tests and for monitoring the clinical condition of the children; (2) a small dispensary for children in critical condition; (3) a day



The Village of Hope in Dodoma, Tanzania provides AIDS orphans a sense of home and the love of parents.



care and an elementary school for the village children and those in the surrounding area; (4) a house for the local people who are employed in the different sectors of the village; (5) an administration area which is a home for the sisters responsible for the entire project, and (6) a small farm to provide for food.

When a new building for this is complete, pregnant women will come to live in the village for two months before delivery and remain for three months after the birth. This enables the baby to be born safely and to receive needed treatment in the first months of life. At the moment, these services are provided to women in their homes. The program provides counseling for the mothers and voluntary testing for HIV/AIDS. Antiretroviral medications before and after birth are available to the mother as needed. In addition there are courses on health and child care, on nutrition and home care, gardening and sewing to help women gain some income for the family.

The clinic is an important part of the care of the children in the village and serves as an outreach program for those who do not reside on site. The analysis

laboratory with new equipment staffed by two young professional technicians does the testing and provides treatment and follow up either in the village or through home care and clinic visits. The clinic has developed differentiated health and social programs for children, pregnant women and adults enabling a refinement of the treatment in each case.

An outreach program is also part of their work, namely serving at present about 150 afflicted with AIDS living in the area near the village or in Dordoma. These children receive antiretroviral therapy and educational help. For this outreach, the structures of the Village are used, especially the laboratory and the dispensary.

The village provides education both academic and spiritual for the children. Education is one of the key elements in improving the living standards and so the service of an education at the village is very important for the young person as well as for the society as a whole. It is also a key element in the efforts to educate the people about the control of the AIDS epidemic.

As one might expect, the village is sustained finan-

cially through donations from many sources. There is no fee expected of the people who come but donations from them are welcome. Volunteers have constructed the buildings. Financial support comes also from groups too numerous to list from all over the globe, among them Pope John Paul II whose contribution was acknowledged by naming one of the cottages in his honor.

As one of the sisters remarked, "If we had waited till we had the money or financial resources to begin, we would not ever have gotten this started. So now those who were without hope are still living and have hope for the future." [Bulletin, March-April 2005; ASC Generalate]

WHAT CAN WE DO?



It is important that the world community respond to the AIDS pandemic quickly. Our own immediate response to the situation might be to contact our congressional representatives relative to the US expenditure for this cause. The Durbin-Santorum amendment to the Federal Budget proposed a \$500 million Global Fund to Fight AIDS which is included in the budget committee's draft for approval by the Congress.

The U. S. Catholic Conference asks us to contact our congress representatives and ask for an increase in that amount by \$300 million in the final version of the budget bringing the total to \$800 million. A letter



ter or e-mail to our representatives is a small effort for the people of Africa and their fight against this pandemic. It will help to increase places like the Village of Hope and provide other measures so that there truly is hope on the continent of Africa and in the world at large.

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