

A PUBLICATION OF THE



MISSION STATEMENT

The Africa Faith and Justice Network, inspired by the Gospel and informed by Catholic Social Teaching, educates and advocates for just relations with Africa.

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Empowerment and Advocacy Workshop for Just Governance

Presbyterian Women Center, Accra (Ghana),

October 8-10, 2014

Background

In early 2012, as the Africa Faith & Justice Network (AFJN) prepared for its 30th anniversary celebration in 2013, it took a close look at its past activities to better understand its accomplishments and areas of improvement. In the course of this analysis, it came to light that most of the issues AFJN deals with in Washington have their roots in Africa. More specifically, it became clear that the economic and development problem that plagues Africa has to do with governance issues.

From these findings, it became clear that ***if AFJN is to continue to be relevant in its advocacy for justice for Africa***, and make significant impact on African affairs, *there was need to partner with local church communities in Africa and empower them* to engage the issues that affect their respective countries so they can advocate for just and better governance within their countries, bring change to unjust systems of governance and bring lasting solution to these issues.



A photo of some of the participants with Archbishop Charles Palmer-Buckle of the Archdiocese of Accra

AFJN Presents Findings at SECAM Forum

In November 2012, following initial contact with the Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), AFJN was invited to the SECAM Forum in Dar-es-Salaam to make a presentation to the Bishops and their consultants gathered for the Forum. In his presentation, AFJN Executive Director Aniedi Okure explained the need to empower Catholics and willing partners throughout Africa, by conducting leadership training/capacity building so that they in turn can work with local communities for the transformation of the society. He noted that the Church already has a network of structures in place to make this work. The overall aim is to tackle the perennial challenges of Africa at their roots. The bishops and participants at the Forum expressed interest in the project and several bishops, including Accra Metropolitan Archbishop Charles Palmer-Buckle, indicated the desire to have the training workshops in their dioceses.



The team of facilitators: from left Fr. Eric Wiafe, Fr. Aniedi Okure, OP, Julia Tuvi, Fr. Barthelemy Bazemo, MAfr and Fr. Patrick Amos

Major Affirmation of AFJN's Analysis on Governance

Several months after our presentation, the Bishops of Africa affirmed the insights from our analysis regarding the roots of Africa's recurring challenges. In February 2013, SECAM published a Pastoral Letter titled: "*Governance, Common Good and Democratic Transitions in Africa*" in which they strongly affirmed that the roots of Africa's problems are grounded in governance issues. The Bishops called on the church and partners interested in the welfare of Africans to mobilize the faithful, train leaders to engage society and bridge the great gap that exists be-

tween the governments and their people so as to enshrine a culture of just governance that promotes the common good. In May the same year, former United Nations (UN) Secretary General Kofi Annan also declared that the roots of Africa's problem had to do with governance issues and that if one truly wanted to help Africa for the long run, it was crucial to tackle governance issues as a matter of urgency. These two affirmations provided the much needed incentives for AFJN to pursue ways to tackle governance issues throughout the continent of Africa. It became clear that we were on the right track.

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Preparations for the Pilot Workshop

After consultations within AFJN and with SECAM staff in Accra regarding the actual implementation of the project, and with grant support from the Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities, the Archdiocese of Accra was chosen as the first pilot site for the Just Governance and Empowerment Project. Preparations for a three day residential workshop were coordinated between AFJN and staff at the Center for Justice, Peace and Development at the Catholic Institute for Business and Technology (CIBT), Accra.

Three-Day Residential Workshop

From October 8 – 10, 2014, 64 participants representing various parishes and groups within the archdiocese of Accra, consisting of men and women, youth and young adults, representatives of catechists and Ghana association of social scientists gathered at the Presbyterian Women Center in Abokobi-Accra Ghana for Empowerment and Advocacy Workshop, the first conducted by the Africa Faith & Justice Network (AFJN) in conjunction with the Catholic Institute for Business and Technology, the Symposium of the Episcopal Conference of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), the Archdiocesan office of Justice, Peace and Development Commission, and the National Secretariat of Catholic Bishops of Ghana in Accra. The three-day workshop was coordinated by Fr. Eric Wiafe and Julia Tuvi both of the Business and Faith Center of the Catholic Institute of Business and Technology (CIBT). In his welcome address Fr. Eric Wiafe noted that Ghana was the first in a series of workshops across the continent to bring Catholic Social Teachings (CST) to the grassroots for practical applications in our daily lives and to empower citizens to be advocates for the common good and called on participants to be ready to shine the light.

The workshop was launched by the Metropolitan Archbishop of Accra, the Most Reverend Charles Palmer-Buckle. In his opening remarks he emphasized the Biblical roots of social justice and advocacy. He referred to the inaugural sermon of Jesus in Luke 4: 18-21 , who quoting from the book of the Prophet Isaiah “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because God has anointed me... to set free those who are in bondage” concluded that the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled in him. The Archbishop reminded participants that they are called to work to free people from bondage, to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world and the yeast that makes the dough rise, adding that Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as the advocate. Just as the advocate is there to defend our God given rights, we as followers of Christ and recipients of the Holy Spirit are called to advocate and defend the rights and dignity of others and of ourselves.

In his opening remarks, AFJN Executive Director Dominican Father Aniedi Okure observed that it was through divine providence that the pilot project was held in Ghana,

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noting that Ghana is of historical significance to Africa: that Ghana is home of Kwame Nkrumah, a leader and advocate in the struggle for Africa’s liberation from colonial rule, Ghana is host to SECAM Secretariat, and Accra is the seat of Ghana’s national government. As such AFJN expects participants and citizens of Ghana to take leadership and set a good example for other African countries to follow. He pointed out that the issues that confront Africa are not bigger than us, quoting an Ethiopian proverb: “*When spider web unite, they can tie up a lion*” to emphasize the need for coalition building as an essential part of advocacy. He also emphasized that the goal of the workshop is to enable participants and communities to tackle problems that confront them at the root rather than simply treating the symptoms or always looking outside for foreign assistance which can often be detrimental to the actual needs of the local community.

Topics and Training Sessions on Advocacy

Topics covered at the Advocacy Workshop include: *Biblical Roots of Advocacy* (Archbishop Charles Palmer-Buckle), *Elements of Catholic Social Teaching* (Fr. John Lewis - CIBT), *Africa in Global Perspective* (Fr. Aniedi Okure, OP - AFJN), *Africa and Multinational Corporations* (Fr. Barthelemy Bazemo, MAfr. - AFJN), *Foreign Aid and Impact on Africa* (Aniedi Okure, OP - AFJN), *Land Tenure in Ghana and Practical Application of Catholic Social Teaching* (Dr. Lawrence Honny), *Key Elements of Catholic Bishops of Africa: SECAM’s Pastoral Letter on Governance*, *Common Good and Democratic Transitions in Africa* (Ms. Mavis Anima Bonsu – SCAM), *Foundations for Advocacy* (Aniedi Okure, OP and Barthelemy Bazemo, MAfr).

The workshop was achieved in six sessions, each followed by a discussion on specific questions. The participants came from religious communities, youth and faith groups, and all parishes of the archdiocese of Accra. Most of them in their mid-twenties are university graduates with a particular interest for social justice. They were divided into four discussion groups. Each group discussed and analyzed the questions that arose from the presentations and brought suggestions to the whole assembly on how to address the issues. The last two sessions focused on *Foundations for Advocacy* and *Making Things Happen* presented by Fr. Aniedi Okure and Fr. Barthelemy Bazemo both from Africa Faith & Justice Network Office in Washington. They led participants through the process of identifying:

- issues and the methodology of fact-finding,
- techniques for analyzing the scope of the issues (whether local, regional or national,)
- resources available to tackle the issues,
- the appropriate persons responsible,
- building coalition and making things happen
- Follow strategy

Following Foundations for Advocacy, Fr. Patrick Amos, National Coordinator of Justice, Peace and Development Commission (JPDC) at the Catholic Secretariat of Ghana led participants on identifying issues and prioritizing them, on follow-up steps, on how to carry out advocacy within the context of Ghana, and on drafting a communiqué. Participants identified actionable items, prioritized them and designed action plan to address these issues. They hope that by the end of December 2014, they would have completed the first phase of the action plan consisting of identification and analysis of issues and building coalition. After the New Year, they plan to begin the implementation of the next phase; that is, “making things happen”. Fr. Eric Wiafe of CIBT, Fr. Patrick Amos (Ghana Bishops Conference) and Julia Tuvi (Justice, Peace and Development Center at CIBT) will coordinate these follow up activities locally and in conjunction with AFJN. Participants also drafted a memorandum, committing themselves to a deepening of faith in the Gospel, to upholding and applying the principles of Catholic Social Teaching for the Common Good, to developing a Ghana Chapter of Africa Faith & Justice Network (AFJN), and in the light of the Gospel, to be advocates for the transformation of society. The participants overwhelmingly underscored the significance and relevance of the workshop in the context of Ghana and Africa at large. They are particularly grateful for the choice of Ghana in AFJN’s campaign for just governance.

Conclusion of Workshop

At the closing session, AFJN Executive Director, Fr Aniedi Okure engaged participants in a dialogue on what they took away from the workshop, how they felt equipped to carry out advocacy and what else they thought they needed to “make things happen”. Participants indicated they felt overwhelmed initially, given the amount of information at the initial sessions. They indicated that these were new to them and wondered why these were not made known earlier. By the middle of the second day, the overwhelming feeling turned into: “this is not right”, “we have to do something” feeling. By the third day, they felt compelled to be advocates. Participants indicated that the design of the program leading to “Foundations for Advocacy and Making Things Happen” was like actually leading them through practical experience.

In his concluding remarks, Fr. Aniedi Okure thanked participants for their very active and lively participation in the workshop, their commitment to carry forward what they have learned during the three days, and reminded

them not to forget that the Archbishop is solidly behind them as they embark on the actual implementation of advocacy for the common good and for good governance. Above all, they should not forget that God is with them.

He encouraged them to urgently follow up on the issues they have identified, starting with what they see as the most achievable, and not to think they are too small a group to make a difference or change their situation. He quoted an African proverb: *“If you think one is too small to make a difference, try sleeping in a room with one mosquito in it”* illustrate that they are too small or too few to make things happen for the common good. He noted that throughout history great things have been achieved by a handful of people who were determined and committed to make a difference. Christianity, for example, now a world religion with over two billion members, was spread by a handful of disciples. They were equipped with the truth, the truth that set them free from fear and emboldened them to face stiff opposition and threats to their lives. They spread the good news of our salvation and challenged the unjust systems of their time. We too can do the same for our generation, for the generations to come and for the common good.

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Basic Facts about Ghana

(source: Fact Monster)

Government: Constitutional democracy.

President: John Dramani Mahama (2012)

Land area: 88,811 sq mi (230,020 sq km); total area: 92,456 sq mi (239,460 sq km)

Population (2014 est.): 25,758,108

Capital (2011 est.): Accra, 2.573 million

Monetary unit: Cedi

Languages: Asante 14.8%, Ewe 12.7%, Fante 9.9%, Boron (Brong) 4.6%, Dagomba 4.3%, Dangme 4.3%, Dagarte (Dagaba) 3.7%, Akyem 3.4%, Ga 3.4%, Akuapem 2.9%, other (includes English (official) 36.1% (2000 census)



Religions: Christian 71.2% (Pentecostal/Charismatic 28.3%, Protestant 18.4%, Catholic 13.1%, other 11.4%), Muslim 17.6%, traditional 5.2%, other 0.8%, none 5.2% (2010 census)

Literacy rate: 71.5% (2010 est.)

Economic summary: GDP/PPP (2013 est.): \$90.41 billion; per capita \$3,500. Real growth rate: 7.9%. Inflation: 11%. Unemployment: 11% (2000 est.). Arable land: 20.12%. Agriculture: cocoa, rice, coffee, cassava (tapioca), peanuts, corn, shea nuts, bananas; timber. Labor force: 12.07 million (2013 est.); agriculture 56%, industry 15%, services 29% (2005 est.). Industries: mining, lumbering, light manufacturing, aluminum smelting, food processing, cement, small commercial ship building. Natural resources: gold, timber, industrial diamonds, bauxite, manganese, fish, rubber, hydropower, petroleum, silver, salt, limestone. Exports: \$13.37 billion (2013 est.): oil, gold, cocoa, timber, tuna, bauxite, aluminum, manganese ore, diamonds. Imports: \$14.03 billion (2011 est.).

Resolution by participants at the end of the three-day workshop on Catholic Social Teaching, Advocacy and Community Empowerment at the Presbyterian Women's Centre, Abokobi from 8th to 10th October, 2014.

We, the participants at the end of the three-day at workshop on the Catholic Social Teaching, advocacy and community empowerment at the Presbyterian Women's Centre, Abokobi, from 8th to 10th October, 2014, organized by the Business and Faith Development Centre of the Catholic Institute of Business and Technology, Accra and the Africa Faith and Justice Network, Washington, USA hereby resolve:

That, enlightened by the principles and social values of the Catholic Social Teaching, we will build the capacity of Catholics in our churches, communities and in the larger society.

That indeed we are the salt, light and yeast of the world and conscious of these, we will go out with the mentality of making the world a better place by respecting the dignity of the human person, caring for the poor and needy as well as protecting our environment.

That we are to be the voice of the voiceless and also act as stewards of advocacy for change in our communities and parishes.

That, we will preserve and protect the natural environment, speak against exploitation of our natural resources and ensure the fair distribution of these resources.

That, inspired by the principle of the Common Good, we would engage the appropriate state and non-state actors particularly Multi-National Corporations to ensure that their activities do not negatively affect the communities in which they operate.

That, we will campaign for and champion the course of good governance, justice, the common good and peaceful democratic transitions.

We will also encourage and ensure grassroots participation in advocacy, as well as challenge ourselves to form advocacy teams in our various parishes to enlighten the Catholic faithful and the larger Ghanaian society.

We propose the revival of Catholic Professional Guilds such as the Lawyers, Health Professionals, Teachers, Engineers, Media and Artisans on the basis of the Catholic Social Teaching. We the participants will sustain the spirit and momentum as the first African Chapter of the Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN) in Ghana.

In conclusion, we will anchor and sustain our advocacy in faith and prayer (Hebrews 11:6 & 1 Thess. 5: 17).

A snapshot of the participants



Clockwise from top right: Mavis Amina Bonsu, Fr. Patrick Amos, Aniedi Okure, OP, Barthelemy Bazemo, MAfr, leading workshop sessions.

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Report by Aniedi Okure OP and Barthelemy Bazemo, MAfr

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**AFJN team expresses its gratitude to all those who actively participated in the
organization of the workshop in the Presbyterian Women's Center.**

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