By Rocco Puopolo s.x., Executive Director

Bishop George Biguzzi of the Diocese of Makeni, Sierra Leone, was recently invited to Washington to make a presentation on migration in West Africa to the United States Catholics Conference of Bishops (USCCB) Migration and Refugees Services Department. As one of the West African bishop delegates to the African Synod in October, one of the issues Bishop George brings to the Synod is that of migration and refugees, a justice issue largely absent from the preparatory documentation for this event. Bishop George has been the bishop of Makeni, one of three dioceses in Sierra Leone, since 1987. Bishop George is also the president of the local Bishops Conference, which includes the Gambia.

He witnessed the 11 years of civil unrest that tore Sierra Leone apart from 1991 to 2002. He played a central role in mediating the end of this conflict, freeing sisters and priests held hostage and reaching out to young former combatants from all sides bringing about reconciliation, reintegration and vocational training. He visited refugees in Guinea and Ghana, encouraging them and monitoring their care. Today he coordinates the post-war reconstruction and development effort that welcomes refugees home and is bringing hope and new life to his diocese and the country as a whole.

The present day migration of peoples is a multi-pronged challenge for Africa. The factors that cause people to move are many: military conflicts create insecurity and drive people from their lands, economic hardship and the lack of employment drive people to other places in search of work, and the changing climate is creating “climate refugees”. Migration leads to a number of challenges. First, there is the brain drain – often persons who have benefited from education and job training migrate to Europe or the US for better jobs. Bishop George views the US immigration green card lottery as weighted against the poor and uneducated. It is selective and encourages those who had been prepared to contribute to the development of Sierra Leone civil society to move to

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greener (or maybe safer) pastures. Those left in Sierra are unable to make up the difference that could bring true progress to this young country. By way of example, he stated that only 80 medical doctors remain in Sierra Leone with a total population of 5.5 million people.

And then there is the challenge facing those migrants who can only make it as far as neighboring African countries. All too often, these poorer men and women find themselves victims of suspicion, even hostility, by those in their new country. If something goes wrong in the host country, the newly arrived migrants are blamed. In Guinea, refugees and migrants from Sierra Leone were held in suspect for years during and following the war. Were they insurgents from Sierra Leone, lying low in refugee camps until the moment to strike? In the meantime, they were offered no jobs, lived in subhuman conditions in camps and had very few rights.

Even the return of refugees can be problematic. The returnees are blamed for not being present immediately after the conflict to help lift society from the ashes. Themes rooted in Catholic Social Teaching were shared with these men and women to guide a renewed look at how government, at local and national levels, needs to among other things support the dignity of all, gain a better knowledge of citizens’ rights and responsibilities, and work towards the common good.

Another creative initiative is the outreach to the police and the bikers association by the Institute and the office of legal affairs. The Bikers Association was formed as a credit union/support group for former young combatants that used monies from their demobilization packets to purchase motorbikes that they use as taxis. The association assists them with micro-credit as well as court cases. On one hand, the bikers often do not know the traffic laws and that leads to conflicts with the police. On the other, many of the police do not know the actual laws, but harass the bikers out of ignorance. The Church’s initiative offers seminars to both the bikers’ association members and the police to help them both not only understand the laws but respect one another. These services, and more, are offered to the people of Sierra Leone not based on creed, but on need.

The Synod is always a Kairos moment in the church, an opportunity to witness the power of that Gospel phrase from Matt 5:13-14, “You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world.” The bishop looks forward to hearing and sharing many stories of hope and service by those committed to reconciliation, justice and peace.

Follow the Synod!
The Africa Synod will be held in Rome October 5th-23th, and Fr. Rocco Puopolo will be attending! Check out his reports about the ongoing discussions as well as his observations and analysis on the web:
Visit http://sites.google.com/site/roccoinrome. Or, for more about the Synod, visit www.yesafricamatters.org

Keynote Speaker: Fr. Peter Henriot, S.J

Justice in Africa: On Whose Terms?
2010 Africa Faith and Justice Network Conference & Lobby day.

This year’s Conference includes a panel discussion on Restorative Justice, featuring the professors contributing to the AFJN book on that theme, as well as a wide variety of workshops - Restorative Justice, US Africa policy (including both the trend of militarization and Obama administration’s Africa policy), Great Lakes Region, Food Security (including GMO’s), College AFJN Chapters and Advocacy on Campus, and Parish twinning.

We will follow our discussions with a Lobby day arranged by AFJN staff, giving you a chance to have your voice heard by those who shape US policy on the issues you care about!

for more information, visit www.afjn.org

Save the Dates! April 17th, 18th and 19th 2010
Foreign aid reform: Overdue and in Need of Direction

By Allison Burket

Late August, President Obama issued a request for an interagency review of all U.S. global development policy, responding to the calls from civil society and members of his own administration. He thus added the “Presidential Study Directive on Global Development Policy” to the growing list of development-related initiatives taking place inside the beltway. In July, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton launched the first-ever “Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review,” to investigate how well the State Department carries out those essential pillars of foreign policy. The Senate was also busy in July, introducing a piece of legislation aiming to improve oversight, transparency, and accountability in the implementation of aid.

During September, AFJN sat at the table with staff from the House Foreign Relations Committee, alongside with more than a dozen Africa-focused progressive organizations, to share our perspective on improved foreign aid policy. Congressman Howard Berman, now the Chair of the House Foreign Relations Committee, has said that foreign assistance reform is one of his top priorities in 2009. A House bill calling for a National Strategy for Global Development currently has over 100 bipartisan cosponsors so far. But the ongoing conversations between the committee and the NGO community is in anticipation of upcoming legislation repealing and replacing the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, the jumbled and outdated piece of legislation that oversees how aid is given. Such a piece of legislation is expected to be introduced by December.

Now these processes do seem like a lot to keep track of, and AFJN is concerned about the apparent lack of coordination between efforts. Yet for the first time, the widespread consensus is there: in order to do foreign policy right, the United States needs to change the way it does aid and development.

Why foreign aid reform?

Written in 1961 as part of a Cold War strategy, the Foreign Assistance Act itself has undergone little revision since then. In the meantime, however, the responsibility for its execution has been divided between 12 different departments, 25 different agencies, and almost 60 government offices (according to an Oxfam report). The authority of the under-staffed and under-funded US Agency for International Development (USAID) and its capacity to carry out effective development programs has eroded, especially as funding and program authority is co-opted away from genuine poverty-reduction for political/strategically-motivated purposes.

Furthermore, the impact of each aid dollar spent is limited by ineffective or absent oversight and accountability and provisions that “tie” the aid to American businesses. The “buy America” provision means that 71 cents of each of those dollars is funneled back to US goods and services instead of going into the hands of local industries, producers, or organizations. And the measurement of success of development programs is rarely based on real improvement in the lives of the people in the countries receiving aid.

While most policymakers and government officials working on the issue share those criticisms of the current system, AFJN believes that it is too early to tell whether or not the consensus is the beginning of a new face of American foreign policy toward Africa. USAID still remains without a director, and in the meantime, the Obama administration continues to employ AFRICOM in the war on terrorism and engage with oftentimes repressive or undemocratic militias. AFJN celebrates the widespread calls for elevating “development” within foreign policy and hopes to see it counteract what has been a trend of an increasingly militarized foreign policy and the politicized use of aid.

Through our AFRICOM focus campaign, AFJN has kept a watchful eye on the way a shortsighted, military approach to security on the African continent has tended to contribute to unrest, violence against African civilians, and non-democratic power structures. Yet the militarization of aid has been a part of the aid bureaucratic jumbling process over the years—the Department of Defense currently controls approximately 18% of all “Official Development As-
Clinton’s Visit to DRC: New U.S-Congo Partnership?

By Bahati Ntama Jacques, Policy Analyst

During her August trip to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Secretary of State Hillary Clinton saw her mission as the beginning of a new chapter in the U.S-DRC relationship. On August 11, 2009, in a private meeting with Congolese President, Joseph Kabila in Goma, Mrs. Clinton raised the following issues: army and police reform, governance and corruption, economy and the mining sector in particular, and finally, DRC’s relationship with its neighboring nations, with particular regard to the situation with the Ugandan rebel group, Lord Resistance Army (LRA) in North-East DRC and Rwanda.

Contrary to U.S rhetoric, Clinton’s mission in Congo marked an official cashing in time. In fact, for more than 13 years, the U.S had been preparing for the era after that of President Mobutu, with an eye to continued access to Congolese resources and keeping political influence in the Congo and the region. The strategy for regime change in Congo started with regime change in Rwanda, with U.S using Ugandan president Yuweri Museveni to help support Paul Kagame. Once Kagame was in power in Rwanda, he and Museveni were supported by the U.S as they actively drove Congo’s to its current, hopeless situation. Yet, Clinton pointed to the consequences instead of the causes of the Congolese problems only to raise Congolese consciousness on their need for help and keep them blind on the source of their problems. These are neo-colonial policies whose end is overdue.

U.S Commitment to Address Rape Pandemic in Congo

The headlines of Clinton’s trip to Congo focused on her effort to work with the Congolese government in addressing the rape pandemic. She went to Goma, capital of the North Kivu province where there is the highest reported number of rape victims. A UN report states that about 200,000 cases of rape have been reported in the DRC since the war began in 1996. This estimate is rather conservative because it does not include many victims who did not survive the attacks, those still held as sex slaves, unreported cases and those forced to hide because of shame, fear of retaliation or rejection by their families or the community.

Clinton promised $17 million for gender violence prevention, medical care, counseling, economic assistance, legal support, recruiting and training women police officers to protect women and girls and to investigate sexual violence. Part of the assistance package includes U.S technological experts to help women report abuses, medical personnel, and military engineers to assess how to further assist survivors of sexual violence.

AFJN has several questions about this money. First, how much is it going toward all these multitudes of experts instead of helping the victim of rape? Second, U.S assistance might help victims of rape get well, but if U.S policies in the Great Lakes region do not change simultaneously, today’s survivors will be tomorrow’s victims of rape as a result of the ongoing crisis. It could lead to the next wave of neighboring nation invasions, proxy wars, foreign and local rebel groups or members of the Congolese army.

Update on U.S Policy in DRC

In Washington, the Congolese story is known by law-makers and the executive branch. Over the years there have been congressional hearings, resolutions and letters to the U.S government leaders on the crisis in the Congo. In 2006 then Senator Obama introduced the bill S. 2125 “Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006” and was signed into law (public law 109-456) by President Georges W. Bush.

This year, Congressman Scoot Garret introduced a bill condemning the ongoing attacks by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), and Senator Samuel Brownback introduced the bill S.891 “Congo Conflict Minerals Act of 2009” as an effort to get a multilateral support to end illegal and abuses related to trade of columbite-tantalite, cassiterite, wolframite, and gold. On July 13, in a letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Senator Russ Feingold asked her to develop a plan for civilian protection, address conflict economy, security reform with mention of $2.45 million available in the President’s FY10 budget request for foreign military financing for Congo. Finally, on September
Solidarity with Sudan: A Collaborative Initiative by Religious Communities

By Craig Franz, FSC

After 21 years of war, a fragile Comprehensive Peace Agreement exists with sufficient strength to permit the re-establishment of fundamental human services in Southern Sudan. In 2006, the Bishops of Southern Sudan petitioned the Union of Superiors General (USG) and the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) for assistance in rebuilding their devastated country. In 2006, a delegation visited Southern Sudan and returned with the recommendation that Catholic religious congregations come together in solidarity with the people of Southern Sudan to address the educational, health, and pastoral needs of the country.

The rationale for such a recommendation was compelling. Over 85% of the population was displaced, leaving social structures for health and education completely disrupted and chronic needs on many levels. In Southern Sudan – the size of Alaska and Texas combined – nine out of 10 people are illiterate, ranking this country as the most illiterate country in the world. Educationally, there is a current unmet need for 26,000 primary and secondary school teachers. Only one child in 50 completes primary school. The need for trained health personnel is equally severe: there is only one physician per 100,000 people, and one out of four children will die before the age of 5 due to health-related illness. In the entire country, there are only three certified surgeons.

In response, religious from around the world are combining their talents, energy and resources through a consortium known as Solidarity with Southern Sudan. This group, whose membership presently consists of 82 different Roman Catholic religious congregations, is providing qualified teachers and health care workers to assist a fractured country move toward recovery and stability.

Inspired by the 2004 Congress on Religious Life, the work of Solidarity with Southern Sudan uses a “bottom up” approach, which seeks to meet local needs with a broader comprehensive plan for the country. The talents, abilities, energies and charisms of a variety of religious congregations – which are usually accustomed to working independently – have been recruited to work collaboratively on this innovative project. Indeed, while the scope of this project is too large for any single congregation to adequately address, this unique coalescing of different congregations provides a synergy and capability to best meet the needs of the Sudanese people.

To date, the project has made impressive advancements. A central coordinating office has already been established in Juba along with three functional communities in Malakal, Rimenze, and Wau. By August, nineteen staff religious were present and active in Southern Sudan. Programs for teaching English to teachers commenced in March 2008 and continue today. The lead congregations for education and health are developing curricula in coordination with the Government of Southern Sudan, and have recruited local experts in the areas of education and health as well. The population served will be welcomed without regard to race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, religion or orientation. The teacher training program started in February 2008 with the arrival of the first staff members in Malakal, which will serve as the education program center. The educational strategic plan calls for the creation of up to eight satellite centers in different dioceses for the distribution of educational services.

In the western portion of the country, a health training institute in Wau is staffed by five religious sisters who have extensive medical training in a variety of fields. The Comboni Sisters have accepted the leadership role in this health initiative, and they will be establishing the first certified Registered Nurse program in the country. The educational site in Rimenze has been opened with six religious sisters who will not only oversee the educational program but also extend their activities to health and pastoral concerns. The leadership of the educational component has been assumed by the De La Salle Brothers.

Solidarity with Southern Sudan health and education centers also will be sources of pastoral activity in a post-war Sudan. The pastoral dimension of our work extends into our communities, our apostolic works, and the local community.

("SUDAN" continued on page 7)
15, 2009 at the Center for American progress, Assistant Secretary of State, Ambassador Johnnie Carson, said that the fact the Secretary of State went to Goma, following then Secretary of State Madeline Albright 12 years ago, is a sign of the administration’s interest in addressing the crisis on Congo.

What the Unaddressed Issues?

U.S Lawmakers and the government continue to neglect the core, external causes of Congolese tragedy. Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN) has informed you over the recent months Rwanda’s connection to the Congo conflict. Nothing seems to have changed. In fact, in January, the U.S was part of a systematic infiltration of the Congolese army by Rwandan forces as a result of a rushed and poorly planned peace deal between the Congo and the pro-Rwanda rebel group, the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP). A U.N report confirms this infiltration. The U.S is aware of Rwandan plan of massive illegal migration in North Kivu in view of Rwanda’s take over of land which it has failed to acquire through boarder review request. Rwanda is pushing either for a split of the North-Kivu province in two or to impose a new governor to represent Rwanda interests there. This is confirmed in U.N. report as well. Assassinations of traditional leaders continue to be part of the plan.

AFJN urges the U.S to engage Rwanda and Congo on this issue to prevent imminent violence in eastern Congo, particularly ethnic violence between Tutsi and other tribes in eastern Congo. We ask that the U.S encourage Restorative Justice processes as part of bring peace in Congo and Rwanda. On international level, through the United Nations’ Security Council, the U.S should help refer to the International criminal Court (ICC) all qualifying cases in the Congolese tragedy for prosecution that are impossible for local justice systems to handle.

AFJN announces its first annual Fr. Bill Dyer Lecture:

“Justice, Reconciliation and Peace Building: Seen Through African Eyes”

Bus Boys and Poets, 5th and K Street, Washington, DC

Friday, November 13th 5:30– 7:30 pm

Come listen to Clement Aapengnuo from Northern Ghana, founder of the Damongo Peace Center and presently at George Mason University as he introduces us into the reality of Justice, Reconciliation and Peace Building seen through African eyes. RSVP to events@afjn.org.

Fr. Bill Dyer, a member of the Missionaries of Africa, was a champion for African peoples served in five African countries over many years. He was a board member and later director of the Africa Faith and Justice Network while stationed in Washington. He spoke truth to power, no matter who, no matter where. Bill died in August 2008 here in Washington. This lecture series attempts to continue his prophetic witness.
**From AFJN’s Newest Staff Member:**

Greetings! My name is Allison Burket and I’d like to take this newsletter opportunity introduce myself, thank everyone for the hearty welcome to Africa Faith and Justice Network, and share a few of my reactions from these first few weeks with you.

Since late August, I have had the honor and privilege of trying to fill former Associate Director Beth Tuckey’s shoes. Like Beth, I graduated from Kenyon College with a BA in International Studies, with a regional focus on Africa. My interest in environmental, food, and economic development issues brought me to Senegal for a semester of study with the University of Minnesota’s School of International Development. Then, my internship with AFJN last summer truly sparked an interest in justice and conflict-resolution as well and inspired me to return to Washington to continue working for change.

Thus, being with AFJN has already granted me the incredible opportunity to spend my days working for a U.S. policy informed by respect, a sense of solidarity, and a commitment to genuine peace and justice. I would like to share with you three things – things I have heard from AFJN in the past and that drew me to AFJN in the first place, but that have been confirmed in my mind after spending my first month here.

1. **U.S. Africa policy matters:** The U.S. remains an economic and military superpower, and the impact of decisions made in Washington is felt around the world. On one hand, the appropriate application of American aid money has the potential to help millions, and on the other, irresponsible use of weaponry tends to equip and embolden violence militias that easily wipe out decades of humanitarian development projects with one armed conflict. Even with Obama in office, a U.S. policy toward Africa guided by short term and short-sighted political, military, and economic interests continues to be the norm. Such policy fails to respect the rights and dignity of the African people and is far from responsible, especially in light of the expanding globalized challenges of the 21st century.

2. **Our voice matters:** I know you share this belief of AFJN’s – things must change. But something exciting to see while in Washington is that things can change. We do live in a robust democracy and our policy-makers rely on the voice of the citizens to direct their focus, inform their perspective, and remind them of what they need to consider important. AFJN, with connections on “the Hill” and partnerships with other progressive organizations, has been and continues to be in a unique position to work with those policy-makers toward more responsible U.S. policy, and each day is a genuine opportunity for meaningful change.

3. **We need your help:** Our membership is broad and experienced, and the voice of our members on issues strengthens ours. Sharing your experiences on the African continent improves our expertise and adds a unique depth to what we bring to the Washingtonians. Your efforts on spreading the word on AFJN keeps our membership alive. And of course, your generous contributions are what allow us to operate.

I look forward to continuing to work on AFRICOM, updating you all on the latest in foreign assistance reform, and keeping an eye on how Clinton’s policy continues to take form. Thank you so much for your ongoing support, and I look forward to getting to know you as well!

("SUDAN" continued from page 5)
Advocacy for justice and peace in Africa doesn’t just happen. AFJN needs your help and participation! Thank you for your financial support.