



ANNUAL UPDATE 2012

To Africa and Back



Children of Mukera. Photo: Melaura

Merry Christmas
and a joyous
New Year to
you!

Congo: AFJN staff Bahati Jacques and Melaura Homan-Smith traveled to Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) via Burundi in Jan-Feb 2012. The purpose was to gather information to make the case for the urgent release of the rules for the Dodd-Frank conflict mineral law. The visit was funded by the *Be the*

Change Foundation and the *Missionary Oblates*. AFJN staff met with local NGOs and miners in North Kivu/Goma, spoke with government officials and held a town hall meeting to mobilize artisanal miners from the Mukera gold mine in South Kivu. Upon return in March AFJN submitted a statement for a congressional hearing on Dodd-Frank. AFJN also met with SEC Chairwoman Schapiro and other SEC staff, presenting the message of the miners in Mukera. The SEC released rules in favor of the law on August 22: a major advocacy victory.

In **Burundi** AFJN gathered information on the Burundian traditional justice institution, the Ubushingantahe, for our restorative justice project which aims to promote African traditional mechanisms of justice.

Tanzania: AFJN Director Aniedi Okure was invited by the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) to a conference in Tanzania in November. The conference brought together bishops, justice and peace directors, and other church leaders from around Africa. Aniedi gave a detailed presentation on AFJN's plans for a new program to assist African church groups in fighting government corruption, resisting land grabbing, and promoting democracy at a grassroots level. Bishops from four countries said they would like to host the program. This trip was funded by a grant from the Raskob Foundation.

In the White House

In recognition of our voice on policies that affect Africa in Washington, in July **AFJN was invited to the White House for the launch of the Obama Administration's Sub-Saharan Africa strategy and also to the official launching of the first ever United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally.** AFJN submitted recommendations on specific aspects of the strategy after attending the civil society consultation meeting on this issue organized by the State Department, the office of the vice president and other government agencies at the White House.

Leading the Way

Executive Director Aniedi Okure organized the Africa track of **Ecumenical Advocacy Days** in March 2012, a major ecumenical conference. The Africa track, which was headed by AFJN and was well-attended, featured workshops on militarization of aid, modern slavery and extractives industries, land grabs and food security.

AFJN held its annual meeting and award ceremony at this conference. **Emira Woods** received AFJN's Faith and Justice Award for 2012 for her exemplary work for Africa.

AFJN staff made **presentations and led briefings** for many different organizations in the course of the year: Jewish World Watch, Xavierian Missionaries, Presbyterian DRC mission conference, United to End Genocide, Department of Justice, State Department, and many Washington-based NGOs working on African policy issues.



AFJN staff and board with H. E. Tebelelo Seretse, Ambassador of Botswana to the United States at the AFJN annual Dyer Lecture. Seretse spoke about Empowering Local Communities: Africa and Good Governance to a full house.
Photo: Kyle Gildea

Keeping You Informed

AFJN articles published online and in newsletters highlighted such issues as: land grabbing, the effects of toxic dumping in Africa, mining issues, the need for reforms instead of foreign aid, corruption, and much more.

Action alerts were issued encouraging AFJN members to exercise their citizenship to influence US policies towards Africa.

Training Future Advocates

- ◆ **2012 AFJN Interns:** Marcy Van, American University, Rubea Stoupe, Hastings College, Ashagrie Abdi, graduate of Northwestern, and Stefanie Merki, Trinity University.
- ◆ **Catholic University** – AFJN guided a group of students on the DRC conflict mineral issue. They used our footage from the trip to DRC to make a short film as a school project. Aniedi and Bahati were invited for a teach-in session along with two guests from Rwanda.
- ◆ AFJN staff spoke to student groups at **Catholic University, Goucher College, Howard University, American University and Pennsylvania State University**. AFJN also organized a workshop day on African history for 18 college students interning with various organizations in the Washington area.



Clockwise: Marcy Van, Ashagrie Abdi and Rubea Stoupe, Stefanie Merki, AFJN 2012 Interns.

AFJN in the News

AFJN's outstanding work, staff and interns were profiled in the **National Catholic Reporter** under the headline "**A little office that reaches a continent**" by Michael Sean Winters.

AFJN was profiled on Black National News and on the Institute of Public Accuracy website. AFJN staff were guests on TV and radio shows broadcast from Washington DC, New York, Atlanta, Jamaica, and BBC. AFJN's coalition work was also featured in the Guardian UK.