



Africa

Jan-March 2012

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AFJN WELCOMES MIKE and RITA MURPHY

Mike and Rita Murphy are now AFJN volunteer staff. Their long and distinguished international careers will benefit AFJN in development and growth, and we're happy to have them!

Global Peace Initiative for Women Inspires Hope and Courage

By Bahati Jacques, AFJN Policy Analyst

To celebrate its 10th anniversary, the Global Peace Initiative for Women (GPIW) held an international conference in Kenya on the theme of *Healing Communities Through Love and Compassion*. Much was said about the existence of deep-seated anger, frustration, and suffering in our communities. Some of these proceed from political lies, social and economic grievances, ethnic tensions, scramble for resources, terrorism, environmental degradation, religious intolerance, and the legacy of colonialism and neocolonialism. I was invited to attend and speak at the conference in Nairobi.

The conference included the blessing of water and fire at Lakipia Nature Conservancy, the first of its kind on the African continent. The ceremony combined traditional Saisho Homa Ritual performed by the Shinnyo En Buddhist Order and local rituals, songs and dance from the surrounding community elders, youth, men, and women. This ceremony aimed to purify, heal, and awaken people to their innate compassionate nature towards all life, and to ignite the light of hope and courage. Their goal was to burn away delusion and ignorance, smooth suffering and inspire altruistic action.



Blessing of water and fire Photo: Bahati

With determined political will, those who are suffering can forge a new path. This will require the involvement of female religious leaders as well as a change in the hearts and minds of individuals in order to find solutions. Women, the most afflicted by these conflicts, must not be underrepresented at round tables when it comes to finding solutions. For this reason, GPIW has brought together women, men, and youth leaders to strengthen efforts to rebuild broken bridges of peace, reconciliation, and to rededicate themselves to working for harmony and love for one another and the environment we share.

To end the circle of violence we must transform all institutions of violence into institutions of peacebuilding, human rights, freedom, good governance, good stewardship of the environment and advocacy for the poor and oppressed.

U.S. Congo Conflict Mineral: Delay No More

The Rules Must Respect the Intent of Congress

Full report found at www.afjn.org

By Bahati Jacques, Policy Analyst

After a field trip to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from late January to mid February, Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN) is calling on the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to release the rules that will govern section 1502 on conflict minerals originating from the DRC.

AFJN staff members made a field trip to the DRC where they visited the gold mine of Mukera in the Fizi territory of South Kivu Province as well as Goma, the Capital of North Kivu province. AFJN's visit aimed to bring the voices of the artisanal miners and concerned Congolese civil society groups together to demand the release of the rules of section 1502. Each day the much needed mining sector reform is delayed is another day of conflict and insecurity in DRC. We believe a strong conflict mineral policy will help stop the ongoing violence which began in 1996. This conflict has claimed nearly 6 million lives, displaced millions, and continues a climate of crimes including corruption, assassination and mass rape of women and men just to name a few.



Bahati of AFJN (in blue jeans) does some digging of his own at the Mukera mine

In the bush of South Kivu province, as in much of DRC, the roads are barely maintained. Large trucks, land-cruisers and motorcycles are the only vehicles which can withstand them. At the rate trucks break down on the single-track road, the four hour drive to get to Mukera could take a week during the rainy season! Imagine what this isolation does for food prices, distribution of aid . . .

Artisanal miners: the hardest workers and the least paid

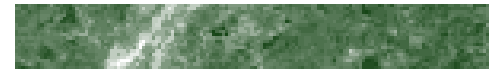
In a very lucrative business such as gold mining, the people doing the digging do not receive even the minimum value of what their minerals are worth. Since the conflict mineral law was enacted, to maintain the status quo, one of the strategies of those benefiting has been to accuse the United States of imposing an embargo on minerals from the DRC. Even if there was a US embargo, which there is not, the current system is not an option. The level of plundering of DRC's resources is not acceptable and must end. Congolese leadership at the national and provincial levels is the most responsible for the lack of accountability in the mining sector. Any reform is an inconvenience to many of them. Their names have consistently appeared in UN experts' reports on DRC.

Upon hearing about the conflict mineral law for the first time, the people of Mukera wanted to know more. They wanted to know when they would benefit from it. AFJN in collaboration with Pax Christi Uvira already delivered copies to local authorities and miners who expressed interest to read the law. However, more awareness and empowerment is needed.

Working and living conditions in Mukera

In the Mukera gold mine it can take up to 8 months of digging to reach the sand where a worker can sift for gold. With modern machinery the same project could take a couple days, but the miners only have simple shovels and picks. During those months, most of the needs of the miners are financed by the owner of the pit where they are digging. Their only hope is to find enough gold to be able to both pay off their debt and have enough for a shared profit according to the agreement with the owner.

The government imposes a heavy tax on the miners in addition to extortion by police, army commanders, and all kinds of government workers from different departments. Water on the mining site which the community uses is polluted and unsafe. On a long list of priorities, they would like to have a health center. A health center would address the specific physical problems created by hard mining labor



“Artisinal miner” conjures up throw-back images of miners from the California gold rush, rugged entrepreneurs who find nuggets of gold every week. However, these men and their families are in debt, and hungry.



View of the gold mine from Mukera. It is only accessible by foot.
Photo: Melaura Homan-Smith

in addition to the general health needs of the area.

In Mukera and other mining communities, the cost of living is high and the income inadequate. The high cost of manufactured goods is due to physical isolation from major centers of trade and bad and dangerous roads because of the ongoing presence of armed groups in these areas. Furthermore, the very fact that they are dealing with expensive commodities is a contributing factor in high prices.

The artisanal miner cooperative in

Mukera, which is meant to improve and defend the rights of artisanal miners and fund member's projects like the purchase of better tools, has no funds. It is their goal to make their own mineral dealership which will allow them to bargain for better prices. Most of all, they ask that their traditional laws regarding land rights be respected as multinational corporations are brought in to develop industrial mining operations.



Can you believe these smiles? Children of Mukera Photo: Melaura Homan-Smith



What is a conflict mineral?

“Conflict mineral” means “columbite-tantalite (coltan), cassiterite, gold, wolframite, or their derivatives; or any other mineral or its derivatives determined by the Secretary of State to be financing conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or an adjoining country.”

Dodd-Frank 1502 must respect the Intention of Congress

The delay in releasing the rules of Dodd-Frank 1502 is due in part to efforts by those who are opposed to the law and want to water it down, make it ineffective and completely take away the intent of Congress when it passed the law.

In February, during a meeting with the Multi-Stake holder Group (of non-governmental organizations and socially responsible and faith-based investors) of which AFJN is a member, SEC chairwoman, Mary L. Schapiro appreciated AFJN's report of some positive impact Dodd-Frank 1502 has had. The United Nations (UN) report of experts says that this legislation has proven to be “an important catalyst for traceability and certification initiatives and due diligence implementation in the minerals sector regionally and internationally.”

Why has the SEC not released the rules?

Chairwoman Schapiro told the Multi-Stake holder Group (MSG) that she wants to ensure there will not be any legal challenge to the rules, and that they are strong enough to withstand potential legal threats.

Making the case for her effort to release good and lasting rules, Chairwoman Shapiro said that she is equally concerned about the cost to comply with the latter. However, David Schatsky disagree saying that: “As companies become familiar with the legislation and its impacts on them, the perceived costs of compliance tend to decline.” The cost issue was relevant to this meeting because the MSG has proposed strong language to be included in the rules to ensure the intent of the legislation is respected. The compliance cost has been one of the main complaints of those opposed to this law, and they are likely to file a law suit.

Why should you care?

While all involved in the conflict mineral trade are making a lot of money, unfortunately, the Congolese people are paying the highest price. They suffer loss of lives, rape, displacement, impoverishment, instability, plundering of their resources, and much more. Likewise, US tax payers are paying the bills for peacekeeping, relief and other kinds of programs, both directly and through the UN. The US Congress understands that cutting mineral revenue for armed groups will lessen the conflict, that's why they passed the law. In addition, the disclosure required by Dodd-Frank 1502 allows you, the consumer, to make an informed decision whether or not you want to buy products directly linked to funding of militia groups that rape women and little girls, and kill people deliberately. For this reason, you should demand that the rules be strongest possible and released without delay. If the rules are weak, the law is useless.

What does “under the control of armed groups” mean?

“Areas within the Democratic Republic of the Congo or adjoining countries in which armed groups—

(A) *physically control mines or force labor of civilians to mine, transport, or sell conflict minerals;*

(B) *tax, extort, or control any part of trade routes for conflict minerals, including the entire trade route from a Conflict Zone Mine to the point of export from the Democratic Republic of the Congo or an adjoining country; or*

(C) *tax, extort, or control trading facilities, in whole or in part, including the point of export from the Democratic Republic of the Congo or an adjoining country.”*



Miners of Mukera consult amongst themselves. Photo: Bahati Jacques

Peaceful Protest March Suppressed in Congo

A protest march in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, on February 16 had been planned to reject results from the November election of last year between Joseph Kabila and Etienne Tshisekedi. Catholic religious leaders, including Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo, called for the march but it was brutally suppressed by the police. The faithful who were gathering in some parishes were attacked, some nuns and priests were arrested, and the police launched tear gas at the protesters. Several radio stations were shut down to suppress media coverage

Congo's electoral commission declared the incumbent President Kabila the winner with 49 percent of the vote to Mr. Tshisekedi's 32 percent. But election observers reported many violations and did not accept this outcome as legitimate. There were accusations of ballot stuffing, polling stations being burned down, as well as security forces tying people up and voting in their place. The Catholic Church had the largest network of independent observers, including some thirty thousand election monitors.

It is clear that the Congolese government feels threatened by the recent anti-Kabila sentiment. Thirty five Congolese bishops released a statement condemning the presidential election and demanding an investigation. Furthermore, the Archbishop of Kinshasa called for a "campaign of disobedience" and for the election results to be annulled.

The U.S. government issued a statement saying it was still monitoring the electoral process and that it was deeply concerned about multiple allegations of human rights abuses by Congolese security forces.

Based on articles in voanews.com, The Vatican Today, and New York Times. By Rita Murphy

TIME MAGAZINE'S "TOP 100" INCLUDES BINETA DIOP

Bineta Diop of Senegal was included in Time Magazine's 2011 list of the 100 Most Influential People in the World. Following is Time's citation:

Women are the economic drivers of Africa, on average working twice as many productive hours as men. They are also the constituency most incentivized to build peace. A gender-based approach to conflict prevention has the potential to transform the continent. And at the forefront of that approach is Bineta Diop, 61. The founder of Femmes Africa Solidarité, Diop focuses on women-led peace building in the most fragile states, including the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi. Her relentless campaign for gender parity is empowering women to play a leading role in African development.



Back: Fr. Julien Cormier, Fr. Richard Baawobr (Superior General Missionary of Africa), Aniedi Okure, OP of AFJN, Melaura Homan-Smith of AFJN, Fr. Odilo Cougil, Front: Fr. Jean-Claude Pageau, Jean Robitaille

March 15, 2012, The Missionaries of Africa Superior General Fr. Richard Baawobr visited the AFJN office in Washington along with Missionaries of Africa Provincials in the Americas. During the visit, the team discussed the various projects of the society in Africa. Fr. Baawobr observed that Justice and Peace should be the responsibility of all and not left for a few "specialists". The Missionaries of Africa are great champions for the work of AFJN.

Award Honoring Kenyan Agricultural Scientist



An award for outstanding achievements by African scientists has been created in memory of Thomas Odhiambo, the Kenyan scientist who helped found the African Academy of Sciences and TWAS (The Academy of Sciences for the Developing World).

Odhiambo, who died in 2003, is regarded as a visionary whose desire for home-grown scientific solutions saw him initiate and nurture many projects at the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) in Kenya.

The award was created this year by ICIPE to honor scientists who excel and make outstanding pan-African contributions in the science of entomology.

The first winner of the prize, Zeyaur Khan, spearheaded the 'push-pull' strategy that tackles the three main impediments to cereal production in Sub-Saharan Africa: poor soil fertility, stem borers and striga weeds. It involves intercropping cereals like maize with a repellent plant such as desmodium, and planting attractive plants such as napier grass as a border crop to keep the pests out.

"It is a great honor for me to receive this award," said Khan. "I feel proud to be associated with ICIPE for the last 25 years working for smallholder poor farmers in Africa."

"Agricultural scientists in Africa should make sure that research provides practical solutions for the real problems of poor farmers by promoting food security and sustainable livelihoods," he said.

AN AFRICAN THEOLOGY THROUGH MUSIC AND PROVERBS

The Sukuma people in Tanzania, Ndoleleii Parish, are working with Maryknoll Father Don Sybertz in gathering and documenting proverbs of the people, their myths and their songs. A research group of local parishioners travels to villages collecting materials, bridging African religiosity with biblical teaching.

Traditional proverbs are so like biblical proverbs, and they are an important part of the Sukuma culture. The parish has put these teachings to music and they sing the lessons to the people. One parishioner says, "It's a good way to teach the gospel with music, stories and traditional proverbs." You can hear them on the YouTube video produced for Maryknoll Magazine by Sean Sprague, by going to this link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=kf6HC67CbD8

Father Don has worked in Tanzania since 1955. His book, *Towards an African Theology and Music*, is published by Orbis Books.

AROUND AFRICA HAS GONE DIGITAL!

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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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Advocacy for justice and peace in Africa doesn't just happen. AFJN needs your help and participation! Thank you for your financial support.