

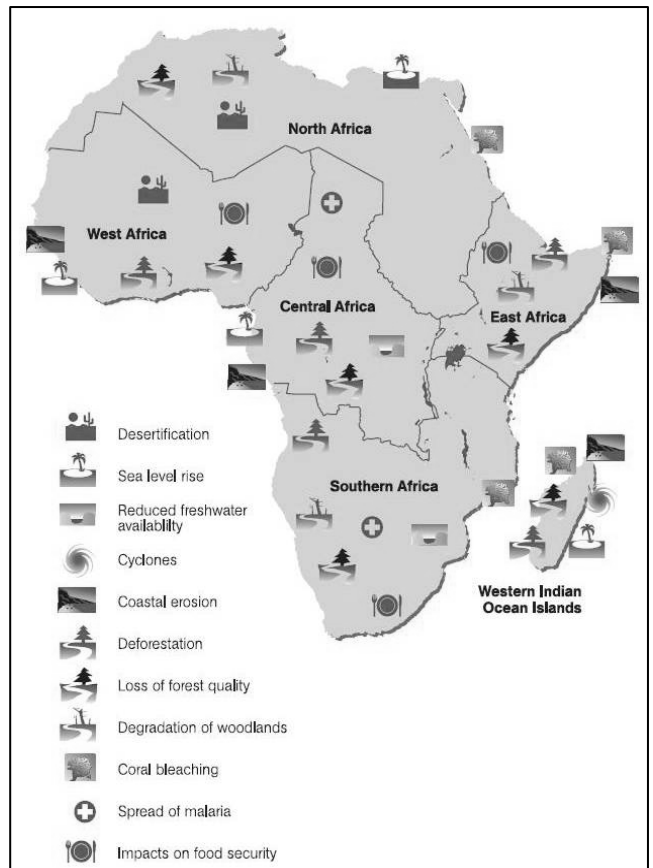
Africa's Climate Imperative

By Allison Burket

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In recent years, important strides have been made in awareness and action on the issue of climate change, as the undeniable risks are coming more and more into focus. Yet, while communities around the world are already bearing the burden of a warmer world, international support for adaptation and disaster preparedness as well as efforts for reducing carbon emissions have been insufficient. It is important to recognize that climate change will not impact all nations and individuals in the same way, but will instead be felt disproportionately by the poor, ill, and vulnerable, and by developing countries – those in Africa in particular.

Global climate change means not only average global temperature increases, but global sea level rise, unpredictable weather patterns, and increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as droughts, floods, or hurricanes. These changes have important implications for the world's poor, especially those in Africa: extreme and unpredictable weather put the most vulnerable at risk – those without the resources to invest in disaster preparedness – and can destroy crucial infrastructure and disrupt fragile food systems, harming productivity of both rural agriculture and coastal fisheries.



Climate change vulnerability in Africa.
 (Andrew Simms, "Africa—Up In Smoke" published by the New Economics Foundation, June 2005.)



("CLIMATE" continued on page 2)

CLIMATE *(continued from page 1)*

Small-scale farming is particularly susceptible to fluctuations in weather and temperature, which translates into vulnerability for the continent’s people: small-scale farming provides most of the food produced in Africa, employs 70 percent of the continent’s working people, and is heavily dependent on rainfall. Already, the Sahel region has experienced a 25 percent decline in rainfall and a greater degree of unpredictability since the 1960s, with more frequent droughts alternating with excessive inundations. Yields from rain-fed agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa could be reduced by as much as 50 percent by 2020.

The human toll from drought and food shortage, in terms of malnutrition, disease susceptibility, loss of life due to hunger, and economic decline, is well-understood and has been felt across the continent too many times already. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that up to 250 million individuals across Africa will face increasingly severe water shortages by 2050 from climate change alone. Coupled with the expected shortfalls in food production, spread of disease, and malnutrition, many more African communities may be unable bring themselves out of poverty.

This poverty then inhibits a nation or community’s capacity to protect itself or recover from natural disasters, creating a cycle of challenges for the African people. Already, the UN estimates that the annual number of recorded disasters has doubled over the last two decades, with nine out of every 10 disasters now climate-related.

Women – who make up 70 percent of the world’s poor and whose work is more directly linked to natural resources with less access to credit, education, and other resources than their male counterparts – are expected to bear a disproportionate amount of the burden.

Overall, scientists, non-profits, government agencies, and individuals recognize the human risk climate change poses to African nations. Action Aid calls global warming “one of the greatest obstacles to overcoming poverty and one of the greatest equity challenges of our time.” Jan Egeland, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Conflict, who recently traveled through the semi-arid Sahel region of Sub-Saharan Africa to call attention to the communities at risk, called the region “ground-zero” for climate change impact.

Such realities deliver a clear message to the international community that an increase in attention for climate impact prevention and preparedness is a must, beginning with those funds to which first-world nations committed under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Yet, not only do these nations need to increase their level of engagement with the issue but to rethink the way they interact with the continent overall, giving priority to global preparedness and reinforcing local coping strategies.

Communities across Africa have developed unique and dynamic means of adapting to or coping with the realities of their environment. In the Gaza province of southern Mozambique, for example, evolving social networks within and between villages has been the key to buffering against the risks from increased weather disasters. As found in a study from Oxford and Sheffield Universities, the area’s highland and lowland farms each thrive at producing a different crop blend and have been facing very different climate-related risks over the past 20 years. Through a developing system of labor-exchange, a widening number of information- and cost-sharing community groups, and a grassroots advocacy effort for improved land-allocation laws, communities and individuals have worked to reduce individual vulnerability to weather-related crop damage.

By pooling labor resources, spreading investments, and working together, communities are making the most of their strengths to take advantage of the opportunities for adaptation in their region.

AFJN encourages development agencies to continue telling and listening to these stories, emphasizing reinforcement of community systems and local markets, and prioritizing support for adaptation and preparedness strategies. Furthermore, as this example shows, it is important “not to favor one type of farming over another,” as said in the *Up in Smoke* report, “as it is the combination that provides resilience to climactic disruptions.”

AFJN remains deeply concerned about the impacts of climate change on the people of Africa. This June, Congress failed to follow through with S. 3036, the Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act, the first to seriously confront U.S. carbon emission, which would put a mandatory cap on U.S. greenhouse gas pollution and implement an emissions trading system. We encourage you to write to your member of Congress to tell them that the state of Africa’s ecosystems *requires* a strong commitment from the United States.

Save the Date:
 March 13-16, 2009
 Alexandria, VA
**Ecumenical
 Advocacy Days
 and AFJN
 Member Meeting!**
 Theme: Climate
 Change

Liberia Will Rise Again!

Observations From a Recent Visit

By Sr. Elizabeth Kolmer, an AFJN Board Member and Sister of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ

What's happening in Liberia? Is the war over? Is it safe to travel there? These are the most common questions I've been asked regarding the situation in the West African country of Liberia. My three weeks on the ground in post-conflict Liberia in June gave me a glimpse of the present position of the country as it tries to restore and rebuild itself after a 14-year civil war. Certainly it would take much longer than 3 weeks to comprehend all that is going on in this restoration process.

The City

What strikes one most in the capital city of Monrovia is the sheer number of people everywhere. The recently completed census indicates that there are 3.48 million people in the country, with 1.14 million of them living in the confines of Monrovia. It is estimated that the infrastructure of the city is capable of sustaining a population of at most 350,000, so the strain on any kind of services is very obvious. There are people everywhere, many of them children. Due to conflict, disease, and poor nutrition, the median age of the population hovers around 15 or 16.

Unemployment is high. Some say 80 percent of the population does not work in the formal sector. The small market-stands provide a meager and uncertain source of income for many. The World Bank estimates that over three-quarters of Liberia's population live below the poverty line of 1 USD per day. Many others, among them young men returning from the war, have no employment and often resort to thievery, especially in the crowded market areas and on state and private properties.

In 2007, a short term poverty reduction plan was put in place with a primary aim of creating jobs. This year, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf presented a more extensive proposal to the IMF and World Bank. Also in place is a newly unveiled plan to relocate willing and qualified Liberians into rural areas by offering them jobs, benefits and good salaries. The Rural Incentives Pilot Program will focus initially on health, educational, and agricultural areas. Although we do not yet know the potential impact of these programs, it is clear that President Sirleaf is making an effort to address the extreme poverty in her country.

Still, there are many challenges for President Sirleaf. The

electrical and sewer infrastructure of the country must be rebuilt completely. Many people use generators for power at least for several hours after dark, and use wells which fill the private water towers they have erected.

The woeful condition of the roads makes travel difficult both in the city and in areas leading to neighboring villages. Traffic congestion has become horrendous. Many more private automobiles, taxis, motorcycles, and motor bikes crowd the roads and slow the pace of traffic. Vehicles share the road with pedestrians who weave in and out of the moving traffic, some of them with carts full of building materials and other supplies. Just in the past



Billboard in downtown Monrovia.

twelve months, motorcycles have come into the city and serve as taxis along with the ever-present yellow cabs.

These are only a few of the major projects to be developed in the coming years. In spite of such daunting needs one can see the signs of development in the city. Larger businesses are operating. The cell phone industry, served by three companies, is booming, giving a large part of the population the ability to communicate more broadly. As I drove through the city, I remarked at the number of buildings that have been repaired and are open for business. Mostly these are government buildings, businesses of various kinds, churches, schools, and a sprinkling of private residences.

Billboards, both in words and in pictures, provide information regarding health care, especially HIV/AIDS, malaria, and TB. Other messages on the billboards encourage young people to go to school, remind people to talk in-

(*"LIBERIA"* Continued on page 5)

Making the Case for Aid Reform

By Beth Tuckey

When we're told that U.S. attempts at development in the global south do not work, we respond, 'it's because true development has never been tried.' For decades the U.S. has shipped money and supplies overseas only to see the levels of poverty and devastation remain largely the same. Between 1965 and 2006, USAID spent \$516 billion in Africa, with few measurable returns. What will it take to procure smarter investment and attention to the needs of the world's poorest, particularly those in Africa? What must happen in the next Administration to ensure that we are a responsible global leader – one that cares as much about the needs of the developing world as it does about maintaining a prosperous American economy?

It is time that the Executive Branch and the U.S. Congress do a major overhaul of the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA). The FAA, initiated in 1961 by President Kennedy, was created in reaction to the inefficient and piecemeal fashion under which international aid and development initiatives were being conducted. Unfortunately, the Act has not had a serious revision since its creation over 40 years ago. Congressman Howard Berman, now the Chair of the House Foreign Relations Committee, has said that foreign assistance reform will be one of his top priorities in 2009.

In conducting such reform, Congressman Berman should ensure that Congress has adequate oversight of all Executive agencies engaged in development work and should consider strictly moderating the capability of the Pentagon to acquire funds for certain international programs. Many of the governance requirements that exist under the FAA in terms of which developing countries receive U.S. development or military dollars have not been transferred to the Department of Defense (DOD) as they engage in training foreign militaries and providing humanitarian assistance.

Shockingly, under the current system, the DOD controls approximately 18 percent of all development assistance, among dozens of other branches and agencies who are also charged with distributing U.S. foreign aid. Perhaps even more remarkable is the fact that USAID controls only 45 percent of U.S. aid abroad. This means that the long term foreign assistance goals necessary for true development are easily compromised by the short term national and security interests of the Executive. As such, in recent years, the President has sought to include development in military activities in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, and dozens of

countries in Africa. Though this is meant as a way of winning 'hearts and minds' and boosting America's image around the world, it allows U.S. soldiers to act in a capacity that is above and beyond their call of duty. As many legislators have noted at hearings on AFRICOM, the Pentagon should stick to what it knows best.

U.S. priorities since 9/11 have centered on the 'defense' pillar of the "3D strategy" (diplomacy, development, defense). As we have seen, our military's free reign over the U.S. budget has resulted in a very negative image of America abroad. Thus, not only does the U.S. need a stronger, more equitable, and more responsible State Department, it also needs a Department of Foreign Development Assistance that can focus on the needs of the African people over the interests of the United States.

A new administration will provide an opportunity to reshuffle the deck chairs and as a result, advance an aid strategy that works for the developing world. It should serve as a complement to a stronger emphasis on diplomacy above defense, ending the scattered approach to development that exists today.

This idea is not new in Washington – several progressive think-tanks and large NGO's have signed on to a statement entitled "New Day, New Way: Foreign Assistance for the 21st Century." In it, the authors suggest that "U.S. global leadership is based not only on our military clout or economic power, but on our moral stature, which derives from helping others improve their lives and those of their communities and societies." (p. 2 of the Coalition Report) They go on to prescribe a new Cabinet-level department as one of the priorities for modernizing foreign assistance.

AFJN would like to reinforce the notion that as a whole, the U.S. must be willing to spend more time and resources

("AID REFORM" continued on page 5)

The leadership council of the **Advocacy Network for Africa (ADNA)**, co-chaired by Fr. Rocco, brought development reform to the attention of key foreign policy advisors of the Obama and McCain campaigns in July and August. Check africapatform.blogspot.com for AFJN's policy recommendations and add your voice to this important conversation!

LIBERIA *(continued from page 3)*

stead of solving conflicts by fighting, promote elections as the means to democracy, and eliminate mob violence. There is a noticeable effort to promote the status of women, stating that rape is a punishable crime, that woman is a friend not an enemy. The Agency for Development and Gender promotes women and children’s needs.

The U.S. continues to provide significant aid to Liberia and has found a strong ally in President Sirleaf. In an outstanding show of solidarity with the Liberian people, the U.S. signed an act on June 12th to relieve Liberia’s debt; an important step that will allow the government to focus on rebuilding the country.

The Church

The Church in Liberia is alive and well. Several of the churches in the capital are enlarging their worship space to accommodate the larger numbers of parishioners. The need for this comes in part from the influx of people into the city, but also, as Apostolic Administrator Monsignor Karnley indicated, because of the witness of the Church itself. The Catholic Church was faithful to its people during the war. Church personnel stayed with the people in

contrast to some other denominations. Noticeable too is the presence of more native clergy in the Monrovia Archdiocese. Almost all the churches in the Archdiocese of Monrovia are staffed by Liberian priests, or in some cases priests from other African countries. The diocese of Gbarnga still relies heavily on non-Liberian clergy since it currently has only four Liberian clergy.

The Archdiocese of Monrovia has been administered by Monsignor Andrew Karnley since 2004 when Archbishop Michael Francis was incapacitated by a stroke. Michael Francis—called by President Ellen Sirleaf the “conscience of the nation”—continues to suffer the effects of the stroke. Fortunately, his inability to speak has not affected his ability to recognize people and to be aware of Liberian and church developments.

The schools and clinics under the auspices of the archdiocese are flourishing. Older schools have been repaired and some new ones have been established. Morning and afternoon school sessions are necessary to accommodate the numbers who wish to attend. All in all, the church is flourishing and is a vital part of Monrovia’s and Liberia’s present and future.

Update: Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act

About a month ago, you were asked to fax your Senators and Members of Congress to ask for \$500 million to implement the Water for the Poor Act, the framework for drinking water and sanitation related foreign aid.

A total of 536 faxes were sent and we want you to know that your letters have made a difference!

The result of this year's appropriations bill includes \$300 million to implement this act, with 40 percent of that amount allocated toward countries in Sub Saharan Africa. Some of that will be available through small grants from the President's Office of Faith Based Initiatives for water projects like wells and latrines. It may not be all we asked for, but with so much attention on the Middle East, it is fantastic that 40 percent will go toward Africa. THANK YOU.

AID REFORM *(continued from page 4)*

on responsible development. Too often, the U.S. government is focused on what the American economy can gain from giving foreign aid, not how to advance the common good. We must untie our own economy from the resources we invest in the developing world and insist that aid be spent more efficiently and effectively. In the long run, true development – development that focuses on people, not governments, communities not corporations, and the common good not the U.S. economy – will provide a more secure, more prosperous world for all.

The bottom line is that a new administration must invest

more staff, time, and resources in creating an effective civilian development corps that has the capacity and understanding to address the problems and the priorities of the global south. Currently, the U.S. invests approximately .18 percent of its gross national income (GNI) in foreign aid, one of the lowest rates in the developed world. By comparison, Great Britain contributes over .5 percent and Sweden over 1 percent. Not only do these countries contribute more in raw money, their funds are also viewed as more benevolent and untied by those in the developing world. No matter who wins the election in November, it is in the global best interest to enhance, reform, and restructure U.S. foreign assistance.

Advocacy Update: Rwanda-Congo Conflict

By Bahati Ntama Jacques

Between March and early May, you may remember signing a petition to the U.S. State Department generated by Africa Faith and Justice Network regarding the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)-Rwanda conflict. On May 23, we submitted the overwhelmingly well-supported petition (more than 1300 signatures) to Ms. Madeline Seidenstricker, DRC desk officer at the State Department, who promised to forward the petition to the Secretary of State Dr. Condoleezza Rice through Ms. Jendayi Frazer, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. AFJN staff returned to the State Department in July to follow up and met with the new desk officer, Mr. Christopher J. Lamora as well as the Rwanda desk officer, Ms. Marlaina R. Casey. We have also visited numerous Congressional offices, asking your representatives to call or write to Assistant Secretary Frazer in support of the recommendations outlined in the petition.



L to R: Marlaina Casey, Christopher Lamora, and Madeline Seidenstricker, with AFJN staff members Beth Tuckey and Bahati Ntama Jacques at the State Department's "Great Lakes Region" office.

What was the petition about?

The petition outlined concerns and recommendations calling on the U.S. government to urge the Rwandan government to do more in implementing the ongoing peace talks between the Congolese and Rwandan governments. What has the Rwandan government done to help pacify the Congo in relation to its demand to repatriate its enemies, the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR) who are operating in eastern Congo? Why is the Rwandan government supporting the Congolese rebel group led by Laurent Nkunda which is responsible for crimes such as looting, killing, rapes, mass murder, displacement and destabilization of the North Kivu province? Why is the U.S. standing by, watching millions of Congolese die by the hands of a rebel group supported by its ally Rwanda? Why is the Rwandan government allowing Congolese minerals to be illegally sold in Rwanda to foreign companies by Congolese rebel groups, knowing that these transactions only enable the war to continue? Why is the U.S. training

and equipping the Rwandan army while at the same time mediating peace talks between the two nations knowing that Rwanda provides military equipment to Nkunda?

Analysis of our meeting at the State Department

It is clear that the alliance between the U.S. and Rwanda allows Rwanda to hold a place of privilege when it comes to U.S. decisions and policies concerning the Rwanda-Congo conflict. AFJN expressed the skepticism outlined

by the Congolese people on whose interests the U.S. is supporting at the negotiation table. Rwanda is supportive of the U.S. position on Israel, maintains a troop presence in Baghdad, and holds the door to Congo's rich mineral wealth. The fact that the FDLR is considered a terrorist group by Rwanda, and therefore deserves no place at the negotiating table with the Rwandan government, compli-

cates our request to President Kagame to open a political space where the FDLR can participate in government, an incentive to get the FDLR out of the Congo.

How far can the U.S. push the Rwandan government to do more for peace in the the two countries knowing that it is still dealing with the 1994 genocide and the killers are ready to strike again from next door in the DRC, we were asked. We demanded that the US government push Rwanda as far as possible. We pointed out that current U.S. policy in Rwanda is not the best for peace in Rwanda because it favors one tribe (Tutsi) over the other (Hutu), resulting in continuing tribal tensions. Rwanda and Congo have to be brought together fairly to end their differences and to promote peace and prosperity in the two nations. This is in fact the first, last, and only effective path to peace, prosperity, freedom, and independence from foreign influence in the Congo and the Great Lakes Region. We promote unity and patriotism of citizens of each nation in central Africa.

AFJN Touring Capitol Hill Offices on Peace in Congo

("RWANDA-CONGO" continued on page 7)

RWANDA-CONGO *(continued from page 6)*

So far, we have met with staffers in the Senate offices of: James M. Inhofe (OK), Hillary Clinton (NY), John McCain (AZ), Barack Obama (IL), Richard Durbin (IL), Sam Brownback (KS), Joseph Lieberman (CT), Norm Coleman (MN), Tim Johnson (SD) and Russ Feingold (WI). We are happy to report that the conflict in the Congo is beginning to get a little bit of attention on Capitol Hill. Some offices are more involved and informed than others, with Senators Brownback and Feingold leading the way.

In most offices, our message was received with interest. The challenge of being the legislative branch limits the impact they can have on decisions that are made at the State Department. However, there are bills already introduced to respond to the Congolese crisis. We are requesting a hearing and regular reports on U.S.-Rwanda and U.S.-Congo relationships to find out how these relationships shape the US response to the conflict that opposes these two countries. Among the resource to them was the powerful and revealing hearing on the DRC held on May 17, 2001 by the House Committee on International Relations, particularly the opening remarks from former Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney and the testimony of Wayne Madsen. We explained what is happening now to the Congolese people and the need for the United States government to urge and encourage its ally the Rwandan govern-

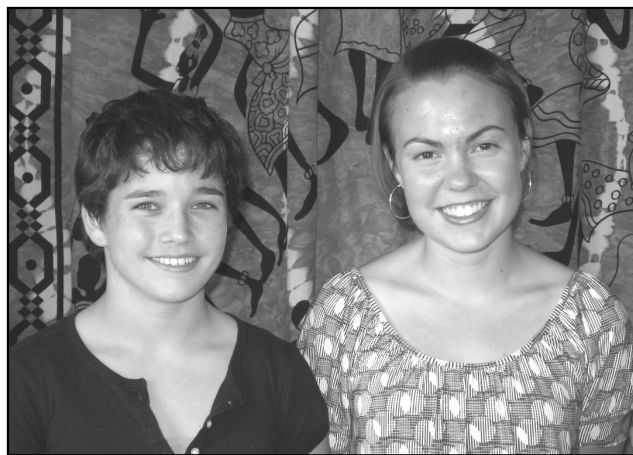
ment to do its part in providing what is needed for the Rwandan Hutu rebel groups to return to Rwanda and bring an immediate end to the Rwandan government support to Nkunda's rebel group.

Remember, Your Representatives Will Act When They Hear From You!

Your representative needs to hear from you to supplement your signature on the petition and AFJN's staff visits. Only you, their constituents, can make this issue more visible. It only takes a telephone call, a letter or an email to show them that this is indeed your concern and to request that they pay attention to it. Ask your senator to cosponsor *S.3058, The Conflict Coltan and Cassiterite Act of 2008* introduced by Senator Brownback. Ask your representative to cosponsor *H. Res. 795, Condemning the ongoing violence in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo ("DRC") and recognizing the threat such violence poses to the overall peace of the Great Lakes region* introduced by Representative Jim Cooper (D-TN); and *H. Res. 1227: Condemning sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and calling on the international community to take immediate actions to respond to the violence* introduced by Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY). **AFJN's strength lays in our joint effort of taking the issues we care about to our decision makers.**

AFJN's Summer Interns

Sara Shanley will be a senior at Virginia Commonwealth University this fall. She is studying International Relations and Political Science. Sara became interested in development during her visit to Haiti after her junior year in high school. Through her course work at VCU she decided to focus her studies on Africa. Last summer she spent time in Uganda where she lived near a rural primary and secondary school and became close to the children there. This experience has led her to research the United States' role as well as the role of the international community in furthering education in Africa while interning at AFJN.



Summer Interns Sara Shanley and Allison Burket.

Allison Burket is a rising senior International Studies Major at Kenyon College, focusing on Africa, economics, and environmental studies within her major. Her interest in Africa – especially in agricultural, environmental, and economic development issues – was reinforced when she spent a semester in Senegal studying development from a local and environmental perspective. She is excited to engage African issues through a policy and advocacy lens and expects to learn a lot from the internship experience, in which she will focus her work on food security and climate change.

We welcome Jimmy McTiernan, M.Afr., who will be volunteering two days each week at AFJN. He can be contacted at jimmctiernan@afjn.org. Welcome Jimmy!

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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Rocco Puopolo, s.x.
 Bahati Ntama Jacques
 Beth Tuckey
 Jimmy McTiernan, M.Afr. (Volunteer)

Interns:

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