

Walking with the Peoples of Africa

*A resource guide to accompany the
U.S. Catholic Bishops' Statement
"A Call to Solidarity with Africa"*

Introduction to the Guide

"As Catholics, we embrace the universal character of our Christian identity, an identity that transcends national boundaries and calls us to live in solidarity and justice with the peoples of the world."

—*A Call to Solidarity With Africa*, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2001

These words from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' landmark statement *A Call to Solidarity with Africa* articulate the principle of Christian identity, affirming that the future of each single member of the human family is intimately linked to the destiny of all human persons. This invitation to live in solidarity with brothers and sisters everywhere brings with it a particularly acute sense of obligation and urgency in light of the pressing challenges to human dignity, justice, peace and full economic and political participation in a number of states on the continent of Africa.



One of the greatest challenges to Christian identity is the failure to read the 'signs of the times' and to act in a manner that expresses fully the dignity and freedom that is promised to all of God's children. Catholic social teaching provides us with fundamental principles to help guide our actions, actions that are oriented towards the full liberation of the children of God from oppression, poverty, discrimination based on race or gender, and cycles of hatred and violence, realities which produce only death and destruction. As Catholics, we are called to witness to God's liberating presence through concrete acts of love and self-giving, to invest ourselves in the lives of people living in those areas of the world that are painfully marginalized and excluded.

If we are to live authentic lives of faith, we must reach out with the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ and to "discover [in Christ] the bonds of mutual solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Africa." If we are to live human lives, we must respond to the call and invitation of our brothers and sisters in Africa, a call for protection and an end to conflict in Darfur; a call for the safety of children forcibly displaced from their homes in northern Uganda; and a call to advocate for greater political will and commitment of financial resources with which to fight the AIDS pandemic. These are the challenges and opportunities that our faith provides for us, but we are called to act immediately with wisdom and perseverance.

This resource guide is meant to engage readers with introductory options for such actions. It is far from comprehensive, illuminating only some of the most pressing challenges facing our brothers and sisters in Africa today. The continent of Africa is incredibly diverse; it is more than 2.5 times the size of the U.S., home to 840 million people and more than a thousand distinct languages. There is much that can be done to collaboratively overcome these problems, and yet even more that can be learned from a place of such depth and diversity.

Prepared by the Catholic Task Force on Africa

Reference Map of Africa



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Prayers for Solidarity With Africa

Concerned people can use these prayers, that we may all be agents of true solidarity with all peoples, especially those most vulnerable in Africa.

Peace for the Children of God

O God, all holy one,
you are our Mother and our Father,
and we are your children.
Open our eyes and our hearts
so that we may be able to discern
your work in the universe.
And be able to see Your features
in every one of Your children.
May we learn that there are many paths
but all lead to You.
Help us to know that you have created us
for family, for togetherness,
for peace, for gentleness,
for compassion, for caring, for sharing.

May we know that You want us
to care for one another
as those who know
that they are sisters and brothers,
members of the same family,
Your family,
the human family.

Help us to beat our swords into plowshares
and our spears into pruning hooks,
so that we may be able to live
in peace and harmony,
wiping away the tears
from the eyes of those
who are less fortunate than ourselves.
And may we know war no more,
as we strive to be
what You want us to be:
Your children.
Amen.

*-Desmond Tutu, Former Archbishop of
Cape Town, South Africa*

A Prayer of Empowerment

Empower me
to be a bold participant,
rather than a timid saint in waiting,
in the difficult ordinariness of now;
to exercise the authority of honesty,
rather than to defer to power,
or deceive to get it;
to influence someone for justice,
rather than impress anyone for gain;
and, by grace, to find treasures
of joy, of friendship, of peace
hidden in the fields of the daily
that you give me to plow.

-Ted Loder, from Wrestling the Light

Debt Burden Cripples African Development

“Now that you have helped rid the world of the scourge of apartheid, the next moral campaign should be this foreign debt. Give the people the chance to begin again ... We ask our friends to stand by us in the new moral crusade to have the debt canceled following the biblical principal of Jubilee.” -Bishop Desmond Tutu, Former Archbishop of Cape Town, S. Africa

Debt cancellation works!

In a world where AIDS claims 8,000 lives a day and many lack adequate access to water, food, shelter, and education, debt cancellation combats poverty by giving impoverished countries greater access to their own resources. In countries that have received debt cancellation, people are fighting back against poverty by directing money and resources to send more children to school, provide desperately needed drugs to fight AIDS, and increase the availability of safe drinking water.

In July 2005, in response to a global movement inspired by the Biblical call for a year of Jubilee in which poverty and injustice are addressed through the cancellation of debt, the G-8 (group of eight wealthiest countries) promised 100% debt cancellation to 18 impoverished countries, 14 of them in Africa. This was a significant step, but it is not enough. A recent study estimates that over 60 impoverished countries including most African countries must receive debt cancellation before we can begin to adequately address the crisis of global poverty.

Where did the debt come from?

Much of the debt is a result of “bad faith” lending including the practice of lending to corrupt governments for political purposes, lending to developing countries to spend bank surpluses and gain interest, and lending to dictators who did not use loans for their intended purposes. Many countries have paid their loan amounts many times over, but remain indebted due to exorbitant interest rates.

Debt costs lives

As they wait for needed debt cancellation, the world’s poorest countries siphon desperately needed resources from infrastructure, health care and education to make interest payments to the world’s wealthiest nations and institutions. As a result of the debt crisis, **the most impoverished countries of Africa currently pay more in debt service to creditors than they receive in new loans, aid or investment.**

What you can do and additional resources:

- Your congregation can help—become a Jubilee Congregation! Jubilee Congregations are provided with faith reflection and worship resources on Jubilee and debt, monthly action suggestions, quarterly newsletters, and a Jubilee banner to hang in your congregation’s worship space. Please join us in bearing witness to the Jubilee call to restore right relationships with global neighbors through debt cancellation (Leviticus 25). Visit Jubilee’s website for more info; www.jubileeusa.org



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Restore Right Relations in Trade With Africa

Why should people of faith be talking about trade?

As consumers, we rarely consider the effect of our purchasing decisions on the livelihood of small farmers, the rights of women, wages and working conditions, or the sustainability of the environment in Africa. People of faith are increasingly raising questions about how the daily decisions they make in the marketplace affect others around the world. The scriptures and traditions of the Catholic Church call for justice in all human relationships - especially justice for the vulnerable and impoverished. Poverty and injustice are understood as problems of the whole human community, not only of those individuals who are poor and vulnerable. The linkages of poverty and trade begin here.

How does trade affect impoverished people in Africa?

Because we know that our faith tradition calls for restoring people and communities to right relationships, we must ask both what is effective and what is unjust about our global system of trade, and ensure that it is transformed to meet the needs of Africa's poorest people, who face significant handicaps in trade relationships. Richer and more powerful nations are currently much better placed to deal with the negative effects that come from rapid change in the trade system. African countries are also generally more dependent on trade income than rich countries, which means that these countries are more vulnerable to change in demand for traded goods. Moreover, most African countries export raw materials, rather than the more lucrative finished goods, in part due to import duties in rich countries.

The opening up of international trade, while benefiting some, has had harmful consequences for millions of people in poverty. It is to these people we must first look in assessing the costs and benefits of trade. The following table describes a few of the most challenging consequences:

Working conditions	Millions of people in African countries are employed in factories making goods such as athletic shoes, computer chips or t-shirts for export. With low wages and dangerous conditions, many employees are exploited.
Unemployment caused by chasing cheap labor	Local production can be undermined when governments open up markets to foreign companies. This may benefit consumers but destroy local jobs.
Competition from subsidized commodities	In many African countries the prices of many primary products (cotton, rice, corn, beef) have fallen because rich countries are subsidizing farmers in their countries. This prevents Africans from being globally competitive in agriculture, the sector they are best equipped to utilize.
Pressure on natural resources	Production for export can result in resources being taken away from domestic producers. In Kenya, for example, the flower farming industry provides employment for around 50,000 people, but other farmers around the shores of Lake Naivasha now struggle to obtain water for their food crops.

What you can do and additional resources:

- Visit the action webpage of the Interfaith Trade Justice Campaign www.tradejusticeusa.org/action to sign a petition, write your government representatives and learn more.



Prepared by The U.S. Interfaith Trade Justice Campaign, which proclaims a positive vision of a just global economy where justice can roll down like waters (Amos 5:24) in the world's market places; tel: (202) 635-2757 x.134; email: info@tradejusticeusa.org; web: www.tradejusticeusa.org

Promoting Trade Justice: Buy Fair Trade Goods

From sweatshop actions on college campuses to a demand for fair trade coffee in neighborhood cafes, increasingly North Americans are voicing their concern about the working conditions under which products are made in countries around the world. While the fair trade movement promotes “sweat free” products, it can potentially shape a new kind of trading system where workers are protected from danger and paid a just wage for their labor.

Trade and justice

Trade is an age-old form of human interaction. Indeed trade has played a major role in every aspect of human development. As global interdependence increases, we cannot escape the impact of international trade on our lives. Each and every day the world is brought closer to us as we slip in and out of our clothes, drink tea or coffee, enjoy a banana for breakfast or a chocolate bar for dessert.

The transatlantic slave trade is but one historic example of how profit-driven trade has caused immense suffering. As Americans, we are proud that this practice has been abolished in our country, but in certain areas of the world slavery is still a reality. For example, 40 percent of the world’s cocoa comes from the West African country of Cote d’Ivoire where, in 1998, an investigation by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) revealed a reemergence of child slavery in cocoa fields.



Goods that are fairly traded reach us through a fair partnership between marketers in North America and producers in Africa. Buying Fair Trade Certified products ensures that our money is supporting fair wages for laborers, equal employment opportunities, and healthy and safe working conditions. Generally, fairly traded crafts do not cost any more than other goods; however, the distribution of the profit is different. Fair trade coffee farmers, for example, make a significantly higher profit per pound, while the resale price in the U.S. remains comparable to gourmet coffees.

Since many products are made so far away from us, and we don’t know the circumstances of the workers, at times we feel that there is nothing we can do to ensure that this suffering ends. But buying fair trade goods offers consumers the opportunity to purchase gifts items, housewares, jewelry, clothing, coffee, tea and cocoa from producers that contribute to social justice. Many companies have begun selling limited fair trade selections, but more action is needed to make such progress widespread.

What you can do and additional resources:

- Challenge yourself and encourage your faith community or workplace to purchase Fair Trade products. Serve Fair Trade coffee and chocolate at coffee hour or other events. For more ideas go to: www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/fairtrade/FairTradeActionPack.pdf
- Ask for fairly traded crafts and coffee where you shop, and support retailers that carry fairly traded products. See www.fairtradefederation.com/addlres.html for more information.
- Contact the Fair Trade Resource Network: www.fairtraderesource.org/ for educational materials and information on how your community can support Fair Trade.

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United States Foreign Aid for Africa

Four decades of U.S. foreign development assistance have contributed to some significant successes. Smallpox has been eradicated worldwide as a result of U.S. funded immunizations programs. Literacy rates have risen 50 per cent since the 1960s. And thanks in part to programs funded by U.S. development assistance, the appallingly high number of people living on less than a dollar a day has actually begun to drop in the last 20 years – even as the world's population has grown.

Yet many of these gains have not reached the most vulnerable populations in Africa. More than half of the nearly one billion people in Africa live on less than \$2 per day. Health crises such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria threaten the existence of whole generations in certain African countries. If



overall improvement in the lives of the world's poor is the measure, there is much more to be done to help countries to develop. While the United States provides more development assistance in dollars than any other country, it is one of the least generous based proportionally on its overall income, spending less than one percent of its federal budget on development assistance.

What is foreign assistance?

Foreign assistance or foreign aid is usually a grant or loan that a government or international organization provides to benefit a poor, developing country. Foreign assistance includes both development assistance, which aims to alleviate poverty in the long term, and humanitarian aid, which is offered in cases of emergency to address short term needs. It can take the form of military aid, debt forgiveness, export promotion, or technical assistance, which promotes

economic development and public welfare. The United States gives development assistance through many avenues, including contributions to organizations such as Catholic Relief Services (CRS) working in poor countries around the world.

The Catholic perspective

The Catholic Church has called for development assistance to serve as a channel to reduce poverty. In his 2000 World Day of Peace Message, Pope John Paul II said that the poverty of billions of men and women is “*the one issue that most challenges our human and Christian consciences.*” The Church's social teaching also emphasizes that development and the economy should be at the service of humanity, rather than humanity being servants of economic gain. Consequently, the purpose of development assistance to Africa should be to promote human development and to allow the most vulnerable in Africa to achieve a secure and dignified life.

What you can do and additional resources:

Every year the U.S. Congress must decide how much money will be spent on foreign assistance, and how it will be spent. As a U.S. citizen you have a say in how much funding our government will allocate. Contribute your ideas;

- Sign up for CRS' legislative network at www.crs.org/legislativenetwork.cfm to join CRS in lobbying for effective foreign assistance.
- Join the U.S. Catholic Bishops and CRS in the *Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty* to advocate for U.S. policies related to trade, aid and debt. Visit www.crs.org/globalpoverty for info.



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Active Ownership of Stocks as Instruments of Mission

Called to be at the same time the sign and safeguard of the transcendence of the human person by promoting human dignity and protecting human freedom, the Church and religious congregations as institutions, as employers, and as owners of assets are provided today with new opportunities and challenges wherein the boundaries and the depth of their missionary activity can be extended. One arena where this opportunity and challenge concretely exists is in the active exercise of one's ownership of equities and bonds.

The power of corporations

Both domestically and internationally, the reach and the influence of corporations continues to grow. This is true not only in the manufacture and delivery of goods and services but also in the provision of employment and investment in local communities. It is also true when we consider the footprint that a corporation leaves on the environment and the natural resources that sustain local communities. Corporations also exercise significant influence on the values that sustain their employees, families, customers and the regions where they operate.



The opportunity for the exercise of the Church's active ownership to support the mission of the Church has never been more available and more pressing. Think for a minute of the impact that the producers and the merchants of small arms have had on the people of the continent of Africa. Whether through positive or negative screening of stock purchases, proxy voting, filing shareholder resolutions or engaging the managers and directors in dialogues, parishes, dioceses, and religious congregations have the opportunity to advance their missionary vocation.

The power you have

For those who seek to expand their expression of solidarity with the people of Africa, for example, numerous possibilities exist. The most obvious and pressing is the devastation caused by the AIDS pandemic and the efforts to respond to it. Pharmaceutical companies and corporations with a presence in Africa need to be called to respond. Other arenas wherein the activity of corporations in collaboration with other powerful forces and leaders, whether political, military or guerilla, has a profound impact on the people and the continent of Africa are the extractive industries of petroleum, natural gas minerals, and diamonds.

When we consider the ongoing pressure to privatize not only the provision of certain services like garbage collection, street maintenance and transportation but also the delivery of basic life necessities like water, education, healthcare and emergency services, we begin to understand why the exercise of active ownership is imperative and an underutilized gift in our missionary work. We can exercise this often ignored power to ensure that today's corporations are respecting human rights, contributing to holistic human development, and employing sustainable environmental policies.

What you can do and additional resources:

- Visit the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility: www.iccr.org

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Combating Food Insecurity in Africa

Farmers globally produce 2,800 calories of food per person per day, more than enough to adequately nourish every person on the planet. Yet 852 million people worldwide are malnourished. About 799 million of these people live in developing countries, most of them in Africa.

The reasons for hunger in Africa are varied and complex – natural disasters, war, drought, agricultural infrastructure and environmental degradation; but the most common cause of hunger today is poverty. Poor countries in Africa cannot produce enough food to feed their populations adequately, and they do not have resources to import what they need. Food assistance from wealthy countries such as the United States can help fill the gap, especially when it enables poor countries to develop the means to feed their own people.

The Catholic perspective

As the U.S. Catholic Bishops have stated in the document “For I was Hungry and You Gave Me Food,” the right to food is a basic right because it is required to sustain life. The Bishops have called upon the Catholic community in the United States to bring their faith and moral convictions to bear on the U.S. response to the food needs of poor countries. A key area where U.S. citizens can make a positive impact is in advocating for adequate levels of food assistance that the U.S. government provides to poor countries.



U.S. food aid: A response to world hunger

Over fifty years ago President Dwight Eisenhower signed the Food for Peace Act, a U.S. government program that provides U.S. agricultural goods to address world hunger. The Office of Food for Peace in the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) runs this program, one of the largest in the world. U.S. food assistance is intended for emergencies like war or natural disasters and for “non-emergency” activities that foster long-term development and self-sufficiency. For example, Catholic Relief Services uses food from this program as an incentive for children to stay in school, supplement treatment for HIV/AIDS, and improve maternal and child health and nutrition. The overarching goal is to ensure a sustainable food supply for the poor in Africa by changing the conditions under which long-term hunger and poverty develop and persist.

What you can do and additional resources:

- Build a network of supporters in your parish. Invite members of your diocesan or parish social justice committees to take on this issue as a yearlong project. Visit www.crs.org/grassroots.cfm for resources, or call CRS’ Community Engagement Department at 1-800-235-2772 x 7264 to help you encourage people to put their citizenship to work.
- Help your parish reflect on world hunger during Lent through Operation Rice Bowl, CRS’ annual program of fasting, learning, praying and giving. Visit www.crs.org/orb.
- Bread for the World (www.bread.org), USAID Famine Early Warning System (www.fews.net)

HIV/AIDS: Paralyzing a Generation

An overview

Today, all churches are living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. As God's grace holds inclusive love for all humanity, we are compelled to work together to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) that causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) was discovered in 1981. Since 1981, approximately 60 million people have been infected with HIV/AIDS, and over 20 million have died of AIDS.



As a result of poverty, conflict, violence against women and girls, a lack of appropriate education, high-risk behavior, gender inequality and a number of other socioeconomic factors, people living in the least developed regions, such as many countries in Africa, are most adversely affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Despite the many challenges that the HIV/AIDS pandemic presents, individuals, families and communities continue to face these with courage, hope and compassion.

HIV/AIDS and Africa today

Two thirds of all people living with the virus are in sub-Saharan Africa, where 77 per cent of all new infections are among women and young girls. In addition, HIV/AIDS has

orphaned more than 12 million children in Africa, a number likely to more than double by 2020 if current trends continue. The disease wipes out the most productive sector of society, undermining economic development efforts, and threatening entire generations of people.

What you can do and additional resources:

- Urge the U.S. Congress to hold the Bush Administration responsible for promises made through the President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) legislation and to provide a significant increase in funding to the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria.
- Remember in your prayers those living with HIV/AIDS, those orphaned by the disease, those who continue to deny its existence, those working with the sick and governments, donors, international institutions and civil society organizations fighting the pandemic.
- Foster a welcoming atmosphere of respect for those living with and/or affected by HIV/AIDS
- National Catholic AIDS Network: www.ncan.org
- UNAIDS: Joint United Nations program on HIV/AIDS. A global source of information on the AIDS epidemic, www.unaids.org.
- Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance: www.e-alliance.ch/
- Kaiser Family Foundation: www.kff.org/hivaids

People living with HIV (2005)

Total: 40.3 Million
Adults: 38.0 Million
Women: 17.5 Million
Children: 2.3 Million

People newly infected with HIV (2005)

Total: 4.9 Million
Adults: 4.2 Million
Children: 700,000

AIDS deaths in 2005

Total: 3.1 Million
Adults: 2.6 Million
Children: 570,000



The Forgotten Health Crises in Africa

‘...One place for diseases to hide is among the poor, especially when the poor are socially and medically segregated from those whose deaths might be considered more important.’

Paul Farmer

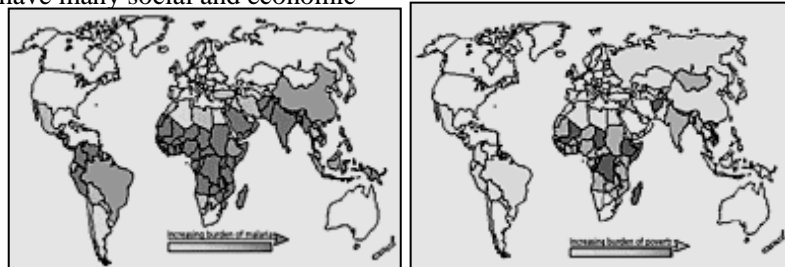
HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB) and malaria combined kill an estimated 6 million people a year. While HIV/AIDS is extremely important to focus on, it is the combination of other preventable sicknesses that kill millions worldwide – especially in the most impoverished countries. The most vulnerable to these health crises tend to be the millions of poor and marginalized who already suffer from numerous inequities and lack of opportunities.

TUBERCULOSIS: Nearly 2 million people die from tuberculosis (TB) every year, more than 90 percent of whom live in developing countries. The World Health Organization estimates that nearly 2 billion people are infected with the bacteria that cause TB; it often remains dormant throughout the lives of healthy people. However, for people who have compromised immune systems such as HIV-positive individuals, the risk of falling sick is much greater. Nearly 20% of AIDS patients die of TB.

TB transmission is exacerbated by crowded, unventilated environments, so those who live in crowded and poor conditions are often at a much greater risk of infection. Tuberculosis can be treated effectively through widely available drugs, but adherence to the treatment must be observed. Fifty percent of those left untreated will die of the disease.

MALARIA: Malaria causes nearly 3 million deaths each year and more than 300 million cases are reported each year. It is a leading killer of children under five and a major contributor to adult morbidity in sub-Saharan Africa. Caused by a parasite that is transmitted through the bite of the Anopheles mosquito, the disease is easily spread. Many deaths occur in children and pregnant women due to anemia caused by malaria. Individuals infected with the parasite that causes malaria may experience several weeks or months of poor health, which can have many social and economic consequences.

Malaria disproportionately affects people living in poverty (see Maps 2 and 3). Those infected with malaria can be treated with relatively inexpensive anti-malarial drugs where available and affordable. However, drug resistance to the anti-malarial drugs is increasing, and access to new and effective treatment is decreasing.



On the left is the estimated world malaria burden, on the right is estimated world poverty.

Malaria, TB, HIV/AIDS and many other diseases such as diarrhea are clearly emerging as diseases of the poor, the uneducated and the disenfranchised – overwhelmingly women and children. The risk of these health crises is exacerbated by lack of access to basic health care, lack of public health education and infrastructure, and lack of political will to address issues that affect the less powerful.

What you can do and additional resources:

- The Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis www.theglobalfund.org
- Visit the Global Health Council, www.globalhealth.org to learn more about these diseases and how they especially affect those in the developing world.

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Conflict Transformation in Africa: An Introduction

Role of Colonialism

Since the era of European colonial domination in Africa ended in the 1950's and 1960's, African peoples have struggled tremendously to achieve peaceful democratic development. Colonial administrators had imposed national identities and structures on Africans in a very short time, relative to the gradual development experienced through the history of the Western world. Moreover, African countries have not been equipped with the resources needed to develop effective executive, legislative, and judicial systems.



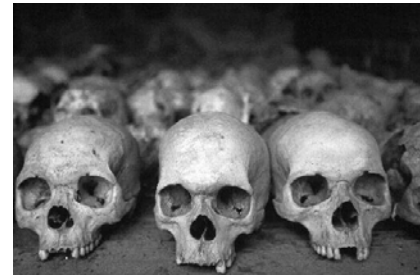
Some African countries have experienced peaceful development and good governance since independence. But unfortunately, for many others, the consequences of rapid state-building have been pockets of tumult and violence. Death, violence, child soldiers, rape, exacerbated poverty, and serious trauma from conflict have resulted. Such realities threaten not only the security and well-being of millions of people in

Africa, but also our very notions of humanity and Christian compassion. So urgent are some of these crises that immediate and rapid responses are required.

The United States—and the American people—have both the capacity and responsibility to provide significant assistance to resolve such conflicts and to help populations that are suffering the results of war. Genuine peace building after war requires collaboration from many actors-- to restore economies, stabilize politics, create jobs, reintegrate former fighters, and repair weakened infrastructure.

Today's Emergencies

Today, among other conflicts on the continent, four crises in Africa stand out that need particular attention from the American public and U.S. government officials. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the bloodiest war since WWII has taken the lives of four million people and involved military forces from six neighboring countries. In northern Uganda, a war has been waged by a rebel faction against the government and local people for twenty years, fought primarily by abducted children. In Sudan, a tentative peace has taken hold in the traditionally war-torn southern region, but a genocide has flared in the western region of Darfur, perpetrated by Arab militiamen against Black communities. And in West Africa, several countries are struggling to recover from decades of violence. All four of these situations have taken an unimaginable toll on human life, and require international attention and resources to be effectively resolved.



The Ongoing Genocide In Darfur, Sudan

Government neglect has left people throughout Sudan poor and voiceless and has caused conflict in all regions of Sudan. In February 2003, frustrated by this poverty and neglect, two Darfurian rebel groups launched an uprising against the government. Enlisting the help of a militia of members of Arab nomadic tribes in the region, the government responded with a scorched-earth campaign against the innocent civilians of Darfur.



"The crisis in Darfur must be ended. We cannot stand idly by while human life is threatened. The United States and the international community can and must do more to end this moral and humanitarian crisis."
-Bishop John H. Ricard

Since February 2003, the Sudanese government in Khartoum and the government-sponsored Janjaweed militia have used rape, displacement, organized starvation, threats against aid workers and mass murder to kill more than 400,000 and displace almost 2.5 million. Violence, disease, and displacement continue to kill thousands of innocent Darfurians every month.

Americans have a particularly important role to play in supporting peace in Darfur. The U.S. government has recognized that the crisis is 'genocide', but has not acted strongly to protect the lives being lost.

Long-term peace in Darfur requires that the government of Sudan, the Janjaweed militia forces, and the rebel groups of Darfur reach substantive agreements in the ongoing peace talks. As the peace talks drag on, however, people in Darfur continue to languish. At this time, security is the highest priority for the people of Darfur. The world has left the responsibility of providing security to the African Union Peacekeeping Mission in Darfur. We must now work to ensure that the world fulfills its responsibility to protect the civilians of Darfur.

What you can do and additional resources:

- Raise the issue of Darfur in your community. Educate your family and friends about the violence in Darfur and encourage them to join you in speaking out and taking action.
- Join the Genocide Intervention Network, Students Taking Action Now Darfur, and Save Darfur in their ongoing campaigns to pressure the United States government to allot \$50 million to the African Union and to take an active stance in support of a stronger, larger multinational force in Darfur.
- Campaign for your church, school, or state to divest from companies operating in Sudan, to show the government of Sudan that the world is watching and to ensure that your money is not going to support genocide.
- Catholic Relief Services: sudan.crs.org
- Genocide Intervention Network: www.GenocideIntervention.net
- Save Darfur: www.SaveDarfur.org



The Church and Peace Building in West Africa

Interrelated regional conflicts

Since the 1980s West Africans in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea—collectively known as the Mano River Union—as well as neighboring Côte d'Ivoire have experienced armed insurgency that has threatened regional security. Refugees, weapons, and unrest flow freely across borders. Recent developments bring hope for a peaceful future, but regional peace and democracy building measures remain vital.

In Liberia, seventeen years after the outbreak of civil war, a new president was inaugurated January 16, 2006 - the first woman to be elected president in any African country. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has promised to break with Liberia's violent past that "stunted our progress, undermined national unity and kept old and new cleavages in ferment." Neighboring Sierra Leone, following an 11-year civil war, has established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and elections are scheduled for 2007. Though Guinea has not experienced war within its boundaries since its independence in 1958, it has been affected by conflicts in the region, hosting thousands of refugees and experiencing difficulty in gaining political stability.

Church leaders respond

The obstacles to peace in the region may seem insurmountable, yet the churches across the region have risen to the challenge. West African religious communities are among the strongest and most stable institutions in the region, holding the moral authority necessary to play a leading role in the peace-building process and possessing conflict mediation experience and public leadership needed for social reconstruction. Faith leaders in each of these countries have long spoken out against the conflicts that have beset their countries. Many have been recognized within their countries as leaders in the transition from conflict to peace-building. American church leaders have also been helpful; a recent consultation, organized by U.S. Catholic Mission Association and Church World Service, brought together regional Muslim, Christian, and other faith leaders to more effectively address root sources of conflict. These leaders recognize that they have a significant role to play in peace-building through their churches and mosques. They also recognize that their efforts will be more successful if their work is interfaith and ecumenical.

With the world's support and continued prophetic leadership from such leaders, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire can break the cycle of violence and achieve the promise of a better future.

What you can do and additional resources:

- Learn about the countries in the Mano River Union. Some websites that can be helpful are www.allAfrica.com, www.irinnews.org/, www.cia.gov
- Learn more about the work of churches in Africa in peace-building and conflict resolution, www.aacc-ceta.org
- Learn more about local efforts in West Africa in peace building, www.wanep.org
- Learn more about partnerships of religious people working together to solve shared problems, www.religionsforpeace.org
- Hold in prayer all those working for peace as well as those affected by violence.



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War on Children Rages in Northern Uganda

Overcoming a Troubled History

People of Uganda, a country in eastern Africa, have experienced a troubled political history. Current President Yoweri Museveni came to power in 1986 following a coup that overthrew former president Milton Obote, upsetting supporters of Obote's government. In 1989, 25-year-old Joseph Kony led an armed struggle against President Museveni's government and Uganda's military, forming the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

Initially gaining sympathy from local people, Kony's brutal tactics eventually isolated him from his base of support. To gain recruits to his cause, he resorted to abducting children, taking girls as sexual slaves, forcing boys to commit atrocities against each other and their families, and brainwashing them into believing that he is a messenger of God. To date, the LRA has abducted over 30,000 children who comprise the vast majority of the LRA's fighting forces.



The LRA's nighttime attacks on rural villages have forced children to seek refuge nightly in the security of town centers. These "night commuters" walk up to eight miles every day to sleep on sidewalks, and in hospitals, tents, and parks, waking before dawn to return to their homes and schools.

The government of Uganda has responded to this crisis by forcing the region's population of 1.5 million people into hastily-erected camps, where they are more easily protected from LRA attacks. But the military has been consistently overrun by LRA, and camps remain vulnerable to attack. Moreover, conditions in the camps are appalling; recent mortality reports estimate that 1000 people are dying weekly due to poor health and sanitation provisions. The local population is thus trapped between the diabolic LRA and the criminal neglect of the government of Uganda.

International support is urgently needed to bolster efforts at peace mediation, improve camp protection, and to investigate sources of LRA support.

What you can do and additional resources:

- Visit the website of the Uganda Conflict Action Network (www.ugandacan.org), read the ways to get involved, use the site to send a letter to your members of Congress, and sign up to receive e-mail updates.
- Host a screening of Invisible Children (www.invisiblechildren.com), an engaging and provocative documentary about the conflict.
- Uganda-CAN campaign of Africa Faith and Justice Network: www.ugandacan.org
- GuluWalk, an initiative to cultivate solidarity with night commuters: www.guluwalk.com
- Refugee Law Project, based in Uganda: www.refugeelawproject.org

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D.R. Congo: The Bleeding Heart of Africa

Overview of the crisis

The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) remains the deadliest since World War II, resulting in the loss of nearly 4 million lives since 1998 and the displacement of millions more. As many as 1,000 people a day continue to die from war-related causes -- mainly disease and malnutrition, but also continuing violence, primarily in the eastern region.

The war began when Uganda and Rwanda invaded to overthrow DRC's President Mobutu Sese Seko in 1997, a bid that was successful. But they invaded again in 1998 to overthrow Mobutu's successor, Laurent Kabila. In response, three other countries—Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia—intervened to defend Kabila and fought against Rwanda and Uganda. The withdrawal of these countries in late 2002 left behind a DRC in shambles.



Though a peace agreement has been forged, democratic transition has yet to take place. Moreover, violence continues to wrack the mineral-rich region of eastern Congo, where Uganda and Rwanda are still suspected of supporting local militias. Such violence is fuelled by weapons often made in the United States, and minerals mined in the region end up on jewelry and in computers in the U.S. and in other countries, with proceeds from their sales driving a local war economy. The DRC

is Africa's largest country (approximately the same size as all of western Europe), and the stability of the entire continent is affected by dynamics in the country.

International attention is needed

International investment is needed to facilitate elections and democratic transition, to protect vulnerable people from violence, to disarm insurgent groups, and to collaborate with the government of DRC in providing meaningful employment opportunities to the local population.

What you can do and additional resources:

- Contacting your Senators or Member of Congress, and urging them to support the Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act. Check Catholic Relief Services' website (www.crs.org) for updates on the legislation.
- Being aware of the origins of your jewelry, especially diamonds, to ensure that they come from a company committed to human rights (check www.amnestyusa.org/diamonds for more info).
- International Crisis Group: www.crisisgroup.org
- Amnesty International: www.amnestyusa.org
- Catholic Relief Services: www.crs.org
- International Action Network on Small Arms: www.iansa.org



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Advocating for Africa

Introduction

“How can I make a difference in Africa?” One thing you can do is advocate for the people of Africa by lobbying the leaders of the U.S. whose policies and funding affect African lives. It is important that our elected officials hear our concern for the people of Africa so that they will use their vote to have a positive impact on African families and countries. You can lobby alone or with a group of individuals in your parish, school, workplace, or community. Once you begin, you will see that the small amount of time it takes to lobby has the potential to create a large and lasting positive impact on people’s lives.

You can find out who your elected officials are by checking the Legislative Action Center on NETWORK’s website: <http://capwiz.com/networklobby/home>. Just type in your zip code to find out who are your elected officials and their contact information. You can also find their websites at www.senate.gov and www.house.gov. If you do not get a response from your senator or representative, do not let this dissuade you from further contact. Building a relationship with the office of your member of congress takes time; just remember that the more contact you make, the greater the impact.

“How do I decide what concern to raise with my elected official?”

There are a range of issues that concern African countries and people. The best way to begin is for you or your organization to select one or two topics. Study and discuss the information about the topic, pray for the leaders who make the decisions and for the people affected by them, and advocate for Africa!

Call Your Member of Congress

Prepare for the call

Try to learn about your congressperson’s voting record and her/his opinion on the issue you will be discussing. Read background information on the issue and know the specific legislation relating to it. Organizations and resources in this packet should help!

Ask for the staff member

Call the Congressional switchboard and ask for your representative or senator’s office (Capitol Switchboard: 202-224-3121). When you connect to the office of your representative, ask to speak with the staff member who works on the issue that you are calling about. Tell them your name and 1) that you are a constituent and/or 2) with what organization you are affiliated.

Sample call:

Hello, my name is _____ and I am a constituent of (name of congressperson) in (name of city or state). I am calling today concerning (issue). I know that Congressperson (name) has been supportive of (issue) in the past and I would encourage her/him to support (bill #, or action). Do you know how the Mr./Ms. (name) will be responding yet? Might Congressperson (name) send me a written response? My address is _____. Thank you for your time.

Be sure to mention examples from your personal experience if you have any.

Visit Your Member of Congress

Request an appointment

Contact your Congressperson's office for an appointment. Inform the scheduler about the topic you will discuss and who will be present during the visit, and confirm the visit by phone the day before.

Prepare for the visit

Know your Congressperson's voting record and her or his position on the issue you will be discussing. Prepare background information on the issue and know the specific legislation relating to it. Choose a spokesperson and plan who is going to make which points. Think of questions your Congressperson might ask and know the answers.

The visit

Plan to be on time. Explain your organization and be sure to leave a brochure. Talk to your Congressperson about mutual interests and contacts. Be clear, positive, and constructive. Avoid criticism but be firm and concise in explaining your stand. Don't let the Congressperson do all of the talking. Use examples from your personal experience. Get a definite response regarding her or his position on the issues. Let her or him know if any organization has taken a stand on the issues. Record key points of the conversation. Make note of questions you can't answer and volunteer to find out the information. Leave a short written summary of your position and related materials.

Follow-up

Write a thank you note to your Congressperson with a summary of your discussion. Continue the dialogue via the mail. Send a report to your organization's office.

Write Your Member of Congress

Letters sent by email and fax are also important, but handwritten ones grab more attention.

Address the letter

Although you may occasionally write to your legislator's district offices, it is usually best to write to them in Washington, DC. Write your representative's name as "The Honorable (name)". Check their address on their office's website.

Write the letter

Write or type your letter personally. Legible, handwritten letters are best. Mass-produced postcards are less effective. Include your name, address and phone number in the body of the letter. You want to make sure that your legislator will respond. Envelopes are often thrown away. Be brief, but thoughtful and personal. Share your knowledge and experience. Describe how the issue/legislation affects you or people you know, especially if they live in the same district or state. Be specific and confine the letter to one topic. Cite the bill number or title and your position. Ask for a specific action by the legislator (e.g. voting or cosponsoring the bill.) Mention any groups or communities of which you are a part. There is power in numbers. Be courteous and express appreciation for something positive that the legislator has done in the past. Lastly, be sure to request a response!



Suggested Action Steps

On an individual level, you can;

- Pray with and for the people of Africa.
- Educate yourself. Gather information about a country, area or topic of interest. One possible site – www.cia.gov.
- Be a responsible investor.
- Connect with volunteers and missionaries from a country of interest to learn more.
- Read the Bishops' statement "A Call to Solidarity with Africa."
- Learn more about the work of churches in Africa in peace-building and conflict resolution, www.aacc-ceta.org
- Learn more about partnerships of religious people working together to solve shared problems, www.religionsforpeace.org
- Become a member of an organization that promotes justice for Africa.

In your community you can;

- Connect with diocesan Mission Office staff or other Office in the diocese.
- Does any parish in your diocese partner with a parish in Africa? Find out details and see how you can get involved with that mission.
- Connect with other churches, mosques or synagogues in your area involved with this topic.
- Educate yourself or your parish or school organization on the history, culture and current challenges to the Church in Africa.
- Suggest your book club/Social Concerns Committee/discussion group read and discuss books concerned with any of these issues in Africa.
- Invite speakers from the country or returned missionaries or volunteers who worked in the country to speak in your parish or school.
- Organize fundraising events to support organizations focused on peace and justice in Africa.
- Volunteer to work with refugee families in your community.

Advocate for policy change;

- Write to the Ambassador of the particular country to express your views.
- Write to Congress, Secretary of State, the White House, UN—check on suggested websites for updated letter-writing and call-in campaigns.
- Organize and sign petitions to bring the voices of the community to our leaders.



*In His hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.
~Romans 1:19-20*