

Message from AFJN's Executive Director Dr. Steven Nabieu Rogers

As summer winds down, the Africa Faith and Justice Network's (AFJN) commitment to promoting opportunities and addressing poverty in Africa through education and advocacy remains strong. Our staff and consultants have had a productive summer traveling to Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Nigeria, Ghana, and other countries to collaborate with local communities on empowering women and promoting just governance. We are thrilled to announce the expansion of our work to include Eastern Congo and Sierra Leone, as well as our recent presentation at the United Nations (UN), which has amplified our advocacy platform. Looking ahead, AFJN fellow Fr. Barwende Sane, SJ will travel to the Sahel Region of Africa to explore how youth may transform conflict into opportunities for growth and development. We invite you to read our latest *eBulletin*, which highlights our recent accomplishments, made possible by your support and prayers. As we welcome new members, volunteers and sponsors, we are grateful for the generosity of our community and hope you enjoy reading about our activities as much as we enjoyed undertaking them. God Bless.



Donations



Membership



US Advocacy

Catholic Task Force on Africa (CTFA) Engagement with Catholic Bishops' Representative

On August 27, the CTFA met with Mr. Richard Coll, Interim Director of the Office of International Justice and Peace at the [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops \(USCCB\)](#). This meeting allowed for members of the CTFA to share ideas on possible areas of collaboration in light of the USCCB's recent restructuring. To join the CTFA please email lydia@afjn.org.

Welcome Corps - Advocating for Refugees

On August 12 Mr. Jacques Bahati, AFJN Policy Analyst, attended the White House National Security Council and the Domestic Policy Council's in-person roundtable on the [Welcome Corps](#) program. This United States (US) Department of State initiative makes it possible for citizens and residents to sponsor refugees through the US Refugee Admissions Program "including almost 45,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo and other African nations" who have already



been approved and vetted. For more information on how you can become a Welcome Corps member, email Mr. Bahati at bahati@afjn.org.

Jubilee USA Network - "Heralding a Debt Jubilee in 2025"

As a network council member of the Jubilee USA Network, AFJN continues to advocate for debt relief for African nations. On July 19, Jubilee USA participated in an interfaith convening in Kigali, Rwanda where they issued an interfaith statement "[Heralding a Debt Jubilee in 2025](#)" learn more at [Jubilee USA Network](#).



Heralding a Debt Jubilee in 2025

An Agenda for Africa's Economic Transformation, Restoration, Renewal and Resilience
In the lead up to the 2025 Jubilee year, we gathered in Kigali, Rwanda, as representatives from different faith denominations to take the opportunity of a Jubilee year's promise of renewal and hope (Rom 5:5, Isaiah 61:1 - 3, Qu. 228), 1287, 3139).

As faith leaders, we come into contact day to day, up close, with the suffering of men, women, young people and children in our continent struggling to recover from multiple shocks. The pandemic and its aftermath, on top of pre-existing vulnerabilities, reversed decades of development progress and poverty reduction. Multiple shocks continue due to wars and conflicts, fragile health systems, climate change, food security and skyrocketing cost of living.

In the years preceding the last Jubilee, our call for debt forgiveness joined by leaders all over the world and international financial institutions mobilized \$170 billion in debt relief, which helped advance spending for poverty reduction in several countries. Unfortunately, inequities in the international tax, financial and trading systems, together with gaps in domestic governance, continued to foster unsustainable debt.

Oral Statement on Land Grabbing During High-Level UN-ECOSOC Segment



On July 17, Dr. Rogers addressed the ministerial plenary at the 2024 UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) High-Level Segment in New York, NY. The theme of the general debate was "Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: delivering sustainable, resilient, and innovative solutions." [Learn more here](#).

Meeting with US Ambassador to Sierra Leone

On July 12, Dr. Rogers met with Ambassador Bryan David Hunt, Ambassador to Sierra Leone, where Dr. Rogers highlighted AFJN's work on just governance including the recent land-grabbing-awareness work in Sierra Leone. They also discussed post-election activities. Ambassador Hunt mentioned AFJN's work to end the Renamo/Frelimo conflict in Mozambique and his interest in future coordination and collaboration with AFJN during our next visit to the country. He also expressed wanting to meet with the diaspora to share the work of the US on the political parties' tripartite agreements in Sierra Leone.

Civil Society Meeting with State Department on Sudan

On July 11, Dr. Rogers attended a Civil Society Organization (CSO) meeting with the with US Department of State. The meeting was a direct result from [a letter sent to President Joe Biden](#) from faith leaders on behalf of Sudan. The letter, meant to shed light on the forgotten humanitarian crisis unfolding in Sudan, urged the Biden Administration to "take decisive action" (including humanitarian assistance).

Hybrid Discussion on Peace in the DRC

On July 10 AFJN hosted a hybrid discussion with the US Department of State staff, Monica Shie, Public Affairs Counselor, US Embassy in Kinshasa, and Pius Ambe, Foreign Affairs Officer, Office of Central African Affairs on the DRC and the DRC-Rwanda conflict. Attendees provided updates and insights and stakeholders expressed their eagerness for continued engagement on this timely topic.

US - Kenya Strategic Trade and Investment Partnership (STIP) Listening Session with the USTR

During May and June, Dr. Rogers participated in exclusive 'Virtual Stakeholder Listening' sessions alongside a select group of CSOs held with the US Trade Representative (USTR), the White House National Security Council's Office of African Affairs, and the President's Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement, focusing on the US-Kenya STIP aimed to increase investment, promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth, and support African regional economic integration. AFJN raised concerns about the lack of transparency and potential harm to regional economic integration and advocated for the inclusion of the voices of civil society.

Peace in the DRC and US Legal Sourcing of Minerals

On June 7, AFJN and Friends of the Congo visited key Congressional Offices to discuss DRC peace, informing Members about the truth in the war in the DRC and calling on Congress to ensure the US does not source strategic minerals from Rwanda (known to violently steal DRC minerals). The US House of Representatives is considering "[H.R. 8310: Bipartisan Building Relationships and Increasing Democratic Governance through Engagement to DRC Act of 2024](#)," introduced on May 8 that includes provisions in which stipulate that it is the policy of the US to "identify opportunities to increase the amount of United States investment in the DRC's critical minerals sector."



Women Empowerment Project (WEP) Poster Displayed at Hilton Gathering

AFJN's WEP poster was displayed from May 29-June 1 during the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation "[Catholic Sisters Initiative 2024 Africa Convening](#)" in Zambia. The poster highlighted the work of AFJN's WEP on the continent that was funded by the Foundation.



Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Direct Filing Here to Stay

AFJN was one of 256 organizations that signed the [Coalition for Free and Fair Filing's letter](#) calling to expand and make permanent the IRS Direct File on May 14th. The letter argued that the current "tax filing system does not work for low and middle-income families" (and immigrants) costing the taxpayers fees. Direct File "save[s] taxpayers \$11 billion in filing fees and time" and separate reports showed overwhelming polling support for the program. Read AFJN's Press Statement on the May 30 approval and expansion of [our request here](#).

"The Centrality of Congo to Black Liberation" A Live Radio Panel Event with AFJN's Jacques Bahati

On May 29, Friends of the Congo, in partnership with WPFW (wpfwfm.org or 89.3FM), Washington, DC invited Mr. Bahati to a panel discussion for "The Centrality of



Congo to Black Liberation" live radio event, where he described the ongoing economic war of aggression on the DRC by Rwanda and Uganda. He highlighted the economic cost, cultural loss, and the millions of people killed, displaced, and suffering by Paul Kagame's, President of Rwanda, regional powergrab project. The 12-hour event also featured discussions, speeches, interviews, poetry, and music.

Africa Day Reflections

On May 24, Dr. Rogers published "[Africa Day 2024 Reflections on Unity and Economic Independence.](#)"

Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD) 2024 Spring Summit



From May 17-19, AFJN lead the International Workshops on "[Reforming the U.N. Security Council: Bridging Gaps for Global Inclusion](#)" during the EAD 2024 Spring Summit *Faith in Action: Advancing Human Rights and Peace for All*. This year's in-person event was modified and shorted to two-days.

Just Governance

Cameroon



AFJN is currently exploring potential collaboration with the Ecclesial Province of Garoua to address the critical issue of birth certificates for children. This collaboration aims to ensure that, in the future, children can attend school without interruption, apply for a passport and ID, register property in their names, and legally marry. The lack of awareness about the importance of birth certificates is widespread, primarily due to ignorance of the law and the strong influence of Islamic traditions regarding family and children.

Similarly, we are working with the Mayor of Foubot on a campaign to secure birth certificates for minors aged 14. Once they turn 15, they are considered legally mature and subject to a more rigorous process, which exposes them to the risk of extortion.

AFJN is also enhancing the strategic monitoring committees to ensure sustainability of our birth certificate awareness campaign.

Read Mr. Bahati's articles:

- ["Vital record System: The Imperative of Birth Certificates and the Battle Against Corruption"](#)
- ["AFJN's Mobile Court Initiative Prevents Corruption and Ensures Access to Transformative Justice"](#)
- ["Strategic Monitoring Committees: A Lasting Solution to the Birth Certificate Crisis in Cameroon"](#)

Democratic Republic of the Congo



Unity Through Diversity - Promoting Peaceful Ethnic Coexistence

AFJN's "[Unity Through Diversity](#)" program (UTD), with support from the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Peace, focuses on encouraging youth to choose unity, love, and peace over division, hatred, and conflict by promoting inclusive actions, celebrating collaboration and reconciliation, and cultivating interculturality for opportunities for peace. By leveraging artistic expression, the program addresses intolerance and mistrust between ethnic groups.

On June 19 AFJN and Amahoro Youth (Peace Youth) collaborated on a concert for peaceful coexistence among diverse ethnic groups in the eastern DRC. During the concert, Justin Bizimana, Program Coordinator with Conseil pour la Protection et la Promotion de la Femme et de l'Enfant, read AFJN's message that "Anyone who raises a hand against another person because of their ethnicity should know that they do not do so on behalf of their ethnic group, as they have not been consulted and do not have the mandate to kill in their name."





On July 30, AFJN officially launched the UTD in Goma City. The project began with a seminar attended by 30 musicians from nine ethnic groups and highlighted their crucial role in spreading messages of peace. A key event outcome was the composition of a multilingual song urging listeners to reject tribalism and embrace unity.

Read Mr. Bahati's articles:

- "[AFJN Launches 'Unity Through Diversity' Peace Project in Eastern Congo](#)"
- "[Building Lasting Peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo: The Role of Music in Promoting Ethnic Diversity and Unity](#)"
- "[Peace First Concert in Goma/DR Congo](#)"

Ghana



AFJN has been campaigning against land grabbing in Ghana since 2014, by focusing on raising awareness among traditional chiefs, landowners, and other key stakeholders.



Between July 16-25, AFJN visited seven villages in Ghana's Volta Region: Weta, Torda, Blidekope, Sofa, Ziokpe, Kpatove, and Agodormi. Attendance was high, with nearly 200 people in Torda and 140 in Agodormi, where nine communities gathered. We engaged both victims and potential victims of land grabbing, who appreciated our message. In Agodormi, two brothers shared their recent encounter with an investor promising infrastructure projects. In Ziokpe, the paramount chief, Togbega Lawluvi Bimah IV, announced the formation of a committee to oversee foreign investment and prevent land grabbing.



Many discussions highlighted the peoples concerns about identifying genuine investors, the environmental impact of fertilizers, and cleaning up contaminated lands. AFJN took this opportunity to promote regenerative agriculture as a better alternative, by considering food security, climate change, and small farm holders' economic well-being.

Sierra Leone



Sierra Leone is in need of responsible foreign investment, but unfortunately, current investments have only served to exploit the country, worsening rural poverty. In June, AFJN and its partners visited affected villages in southern Sierra Leone to assess the devastating impact of multinational land acquisition on rural communities. This mission was to evaluate the damage, build a coalition of interfaith advocates, and empower affected communities to self-advocate. Through town hall meetings in Sahn Malen and Baomahun/Mongeri, AFJN listened to the concerns of local communities about the operations of Socfin Agricultural Company Ltd. (SAC) and FG Gold mining. The major issues raised included, loss of smallholder farms and livelihoods, environmental degradation, including water contamination, deforestation, and toxic dumping. The communities expressed a strong desire for advocacy training and collaboration opportunities. Plans are currently underway to organize training for advocacy for these communities. AFJN's experience in other countries has shown that advocacy and empowerment are the most effective tools in combating land grabbing and promoting just governance.



Watch AFJN's "[Sierra Leone Land Grabbing Awareness Campaign documentary](#)"



These projects are made possible by funding from the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Peace and the Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities and AFJN organizational and individual members.

Women Empowerment Project (WEP)

Democratic Republic of the Congo - WEP



From July 6-10, the AFJN WEP held workshops for over 50 religious women and men in Lubumbashi. These advocacy training workshops focused on the impact of mining on women and children. A Dominican priest spoke on his research during the practical advocacy training. Strong emphasis was made on creating and sustaining networks to counter the exploiters' networks.

Ghana - WEP

AFJN is planning advocacy training workshop on early marriage and domestic servitude in Sunyani, Ghana from September 2-11. More information to follow.

Nigeria - WEP



Akwa-Ibom State

On August 9, AFJN-Nigeria (AFJN-N) activities in Uyo, Akwa-Ibom began with Fr. Aniedi Okure, OP briefing the Man of Order group at Itak, Akwa Ibom. The group pledged to be advocates to end early and child marriage and domestic servitude in the state.

On August 15 AFJN-N with the Dominicans for Justice and Peace and several other organizations held "[Empower Children to their full Potential: Policy Briefing on Domestic Servitude, Child Marriage and Child Labour](#)" event at the Catholic Pastoral Centre in Uyo. The event featured multiple religious, community, and government leaders and panel



discussions. [Watch the video](#) from the choir singing during the program.



Abuja

On May 26, AFJN-N held a “[Digital Advocacy Training for Young People](#)” at St. Gabriel Chaplaincy of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria in Durumi, Abuja. Ten youth participated in the training where they learned how to use various digital and social media platforms to amplify their voices. They also learned about the mission and vision of AFJN-N and issue areas like early and child marriage and domestic servitude.



Ebonyi State



In May, AFJN-N with the Ikwo Youth Consultative Forum (IYCF) did sensitization events around ending child early and forced marriage and domestic servitude with a total of 231 participants. They visited HRH Ezeogo Albert Ofoke, the traditional ruler, who pledged to support the efforts to end early and forced marriage and requesting cases be brought to him.



On June 14, AFJN-N continued the campaign in Orona Amagu, Ndiagu Amagu Community, Ikwo local government area (LGA), conducting an advocacy and community sensitization event with 331 participants (245 females and 86 males), including the Hon. Chinedu Ogah, the House of Representatives Member for Ebonyi

Central Constituency, traditional rulers, youth leaders, and 12 village heads. Support from these key stakeholders further reinforced the importance and urgency of the campaign's goals.



On July 30 AFJN-N for “Leave No Child Behind in the Fight Against Human Trafficking” joined with the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Women Affairs, the Child Protection Network, and over 56 CSOs and nongovernmental organizations in Ebonyi State to commemorate World Anti-Human Trafficking Day. The event raised awareness of

ending human trafficking, with a special focus on ending early and child marriage and domestic servitude. The event included a march starting from the Old Government House major streets in town. AFJN-N led the team, anchoring the rally and sensitizing the public about these issues. Participants carried banners, placards, and distributed flyers to passers-by, highlighting the theme and key messages of the day.



In August several youth-centered events were held. The August 13 event was held at St. Theresa Parish Echealiki Ikwo LGA. There was also a town hall meeting with the Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria (CYON) and community youth leaders on August 17 in Aliki, Ikwo LGA. This event was aimed at empowering young adolescents (8 to 20 years) to make informed decisions about early and child marriage and domestic servitude. Over 27 villages from three communities sent a total of 571 individuals that included youths, community leaders, and stakeholders to participate, creating a dynamic platform for dialogue and learning. The youth learned about the available services and support mechanisms protecting their rights and that mothers (more than fathers) contributed to the perpetuation of these injustices. AFJN-N and its partners continue to engage these youth, women organizations and community leaders, by addressing the root causes of early and child marriage and domestic servitude, with particular attention on the role of mothers.



Enugu State

In May, AJFN-N held workshops as part of the “Say No To: Domestic Servitude Early and Child Marriage” events at a youth club in Enugu and the Uhugo Technical College Ndeaboh, Aniri LGA for 129 students. Barrister Amaka gave a presentation on the dangers (mental and physical) on domestic servants. The youth shared horror stories from their friends who had suffered domestic servitude. Sr. Teresa Anyabuikwe, SNDdeN spoke on early and child marriage and shared Nigerian statistics including: that about 30.3% of girls are married before 18 and 12.3% are married before 15 while only 1.6% of boys in Nigeria are married before the age of 18. Sr. Teresa also described vesicovaginal fistula and the associated psychological, emotional, and mental health issues. The youth were encouraged to educate their peers, families, and communities with their new knowledge including discussing some of the causes like: traditional practices, family poverty and debt payment.



On July 12-16, Sr. Teresa, Bar. Amaka and the NAPTIP Field officer conducted an advocacy training program for students at Community Secondary School and Uhugo Technical School in Ndeaboh, Aninri LGA. After training, the youth advocates, the core leaders, made an advocacy visit to the traditional chief of the town.

The group visited Ezeagbo VI, Igwe Benedict Nnajofofor Eze, JP where the youth practiced their essential advocacy skills, enabling them to address critical social issues affecting their communities.



Plateau State

AFJN-N and the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena, launched a workshop on June 15 that brought together 170 students from 5 schools in Shendam and Jos. The workshop, "Say yes to what empowers you, say no to what endangers you," inspired youth to visit the four Chiefs of the Gomai nation in Shendam LGA. Seven youth leaders, accompanied by a Dominican Sister, conducted advocacy visits on July 17-18, addressing early and child marriage, human trafficking, and domestic servitude. The Chiefs acknowledged the severity of these issues and pledged to organize a town hall meeting, inviting AFJN-N to raise awareness. The youth also shared their message through a radio



program on Agro FM 91.5 in Shendam.

This project is made possible by a large grant from the Conrad Hilton Foundation, Dominican Sisters of Peace Shalom Fund, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Base Communities, Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus, Missionaries of Africa, and AFJN organizational and individual members.

News and Events

Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR)



From August 13-15, Dr. Rogers, along with AFJN Board Chair, Sr. Nkechi Iwuoha, PHJC, and Members Ms. Arlene Peterson and Sr. Cherotich Chuma, CSJP exhibited at the [Leadership Conference of Women Religious](#) in Orlando Florida.

In-Person Board Meeting Honoring Sr. Florence Deacon, OSF



On June 28 Sr. Florence Deacon, OSF, the former AFJN Board Chair, was honored for her years of service during AFJN's Board of Directors meeting at the Stuart Center in Washington, DC.

African Conference of Catholic Clergy and Religious in the US (ACCCRUS)



On June 28, Mr. Bahati presented at the [ACCCRUS](#) “Twenty-Third Annual Convention: Celebrating Our Differences and Building Bridges in Light of the Synod on Synodality” in Houston, TX. He highlighted AFJN's programs and work in the US and Africa and emphasized the importance of members and active participants. The chairman extended the session to allowing for additional questions and comments from the engaged attendees.

Juneteenth Mass of Thanksgiving and Remembrance



On June 19, AFJN Board Member Fr. Barthélemy Bazemo, MAfr and Fr. Antonio K. Koffi, MAfr, Celebrated the Juneteenth Mass “[Together Let Us Celebrate Our True Freedom in Christ](#)” at the Missionaries of Africa in Washington, DC. The hybrid event included participation from those in Africa and around the world. People were encouraged to send in Prayers of the Faithful ahead of the recorded and livestreamed event.

Celebration of African Saints



On June 8, Mr. Bahati was a panelist for St. Mary Catholic Church's (Landover Hills, MD) "[The Suffering Church in Africa: How Africans in the Diaspora Can Respond](#)" event where they discussed the Boko Haram persecution of Christians in Nigeria and beheadings by the Allied Democratic Forces for those who refuse to join Islam and establish a Caliphate.



Board Member Named Missionaries of Africa (MAfr) Provincial of the Americas

On July 1, AFJN Board Member Fr. Barthelemy Bazemo, MAfr, was appointed [Provincial of the Americas](#) for the White Fathers covering US, Canada, and Mexico. He succeeded Fr. Réal Doucet, MAfr, of Montreal, who completed his six year term. He remains President of the MAfr.



AFJN Board Treasurer Nuptuals

Warmest congratulations to AFJN's Board Treasurer, Ms. Jemima Rukaya Andan and her husband, Mr. Henry Nana Kwabena Nketia, on their joyous celebration of Holy Matrimony! May the blessings of Christ's peace, love, and joy forever enrich your union and guide you on your journey together.

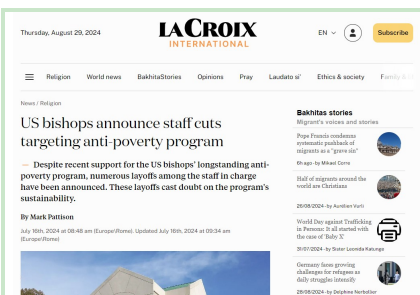


2024 Summer Intern

As summer draws to a close, AFJN is grateful for our 2024 Summer Intern: [Ms. Oluwakemi Adedoyin](#). Ms. Adedoyin started her first year as a Graduate Student at George Washington University.

Learn more about [AFJN's Internship Program and apply online here.](#)

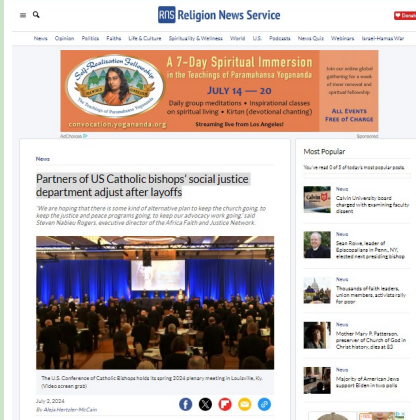
AFJN News



Dr. Rogers quoted in *La Croix International*

On July 16 Dr. Rogers was quoted in Mark Pattison's article "[US bishops announce staff cuts targeting anti-poverty program](#)" in *La Croix International*.

Dr. Rogers quoted in *Religion News Service*

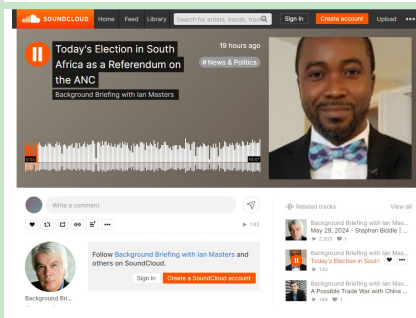


On July 2 Dr. Rogers was quoted in Aleja Hertzler-McCain's article "[Partners of US Catholic bishops' social justice department adjust after layoffs](#)" in *Religion News Service* and *National Catholic Reporter*.



Dr. Rogers Appearance on *Wake Up Sierra Leone*

In June, Dr. Rogers was interviewed on [Wake Up Sierra Leone](#) on **AYV Sierra Leone** about the just governance work of AFJN.



Dr. Rogers on *Background Briefing with Ian Masters*

On May 29 Dr. Rogers was interviewed on *Background Briefing with Ian Masters*' "[Today's Election in South Africa as a Referendum on the ANC](#)".

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