



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

# NewsNotes

*A bi-monthly newsletter of information on international justice and peace issues*

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200 New York Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001  
Phone: (202)832-1780 Fax: (202)832-5195  
ogc@maryknoll.org www.maryknollogc.org

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*Peace, Social Justice and the Integrity of Creation*  
<http://www.maryknollogc.org>

Maryknoll Sisters  
 Maryknoll Lay Missioners  
 Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers

Gerry Lee, director..... [glee@maryknoll.org](mailto:glee@maryknoll.org)  
 Judy Coode..... [jcoode@maryknoll.org](mailto:jcoode@maryknoll.org)  
 Susan Gunn..... [sgunn@maryknoll.org](mailto:sgunn@maryknoll.org)  
 Dave Kane..... [dglobalcitizenkane@gmail.com](mailto:dglobalcitizenkane@gmail.com)  
 Kathy McNeely..... [kmcneely@maryknoll.org](mailto:kmcneely@maryknoll.org)  
 Sr. Veronica Schweyen, MM..... [vschweyen@maryknoll.org](mailto:vschweyen@maryknoll.org)  
 Fr. Dave Schwinghamer, MM..... [dschwinghamer@gmail.com](mailto:dschwinghamer@gmail.com)  
 Sr. Elizabeth Zwareva, MM..... [ezwareva@mksisters.org](mailto:ezwareva@mksisters.org)

MOGC Washington  
 200 New York Avenue, N.W.  
 Washington, D.C. 20001  
 (202)832-1780  
[ogc@maryknoll.org](mailto:ogc@maryknoll.org)

MOGC Maryknoll NY  
 P.O. Box 311  
 Maryknoll, N.Y. 10545-0311  
 (914)941-7575  
[ogc@maryknoll.org](mailto:ogc@maryknoll.org)

MOGC UN Office  
 777 First Ave., 10th Fl.  
 New York, N.Y. 10115  
 (212)973-9551

***Take action - Email, call, fax or write U.S. decision makers***

President Barack Obama  
 The White House  
 Washington, D.C. 20500  
[www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)

Chuck Hagel  
 Secretary of Defense  
 The Pentagon  
 Washington, D.C. 20301  
 (703) 695-5261 phone  
[www.defenselink.mil](http://www.defenselink.mil)

Jim Yong Kim  
 President  
 World Bank Group  
 1818 H Street, N.W.  
 Washington, D.C. 20433  
[www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

Vice President Joe Biden  
 The White House  
 Washington, D.C. 20500  
[vice\\_president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:vice_president@whitehouse.gov)

Eric Holder  
 Attorney General  
 U.S. Department of Justice  
 Washington, D.C. 20530  
 (202)353-1555 phone  
[AskDOJ@usdoj.gov](mailto:AskDOJ@usdoj.gov)  
[www.justice.gov](http://www.justice.gov)

Christine Lagarde  
 Managing Director  
 International Monetary Fund  
 700 19th Street, N.W.  
 Washington, D.C. 20431  
[www.imf.org](http://www.imf.org)

White House Comment Desk  
 (202) 456-1111 phone  
 (202) 456-2461 fax

John Kerry  
 Secretary of State  
 2201 C Street, N.W.  
 Washington, D.C. 20520  
 (202) 647-6575 phone  
 (202) 647-2283 fax  
[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)

Samantha Power  
 U.S. Representative to UN  
 799 United Nations Plaza  
 New York, NY 10017  
 (212) 415-4000 phone  
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## Bolivia: Groups address violence against women

*The following article was prepared by Dan Moriarty, Jason Obergfell and Sr. Leila Mattingly, MM, all of whom live and work in Cochabamba, Bolivia.*

Anita seemed to have it all. A successful middle-class professional, she had achieved things few Bolivian women ever do. But in one way Anita's life was all too typical: Anita was a victim of domestic violence. The World Health Organization (WHO) recently named Bolivia as the Latin American country with the highest incidence of violence against women, and the second highest rate of sexual violence (after Haiti). Bolivia recently passed a law aimed at reducing violence against women, but to little effect. Such laws are difficult to enforce and fail to address root causes of violence, so religious groups in Bolivia are working with women to strengthen the government's response, and seek solutions beyond those of the state.

Recently, Maryknoll missionaries and other religious communities with observer status at the United Nations met in Cochabamba to promote inclusion of violence against women and children in a report from civil society groups in Bolivia, to be presented in Geneva in 2014 as a part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), a regular UN process for evaluation of the human rights progress of member nations. The WHO study and other statistics resonate deeply with the missionaries' own pastoral experiences with women and children.

Members of the Religious at the UN-Bolivia (RUN-Bolivia) group have been meeting with women's groups around Cochabamba to hear about their experiences with and recommendations for addressing violence. In addition, RUN-Bolivia organized a forum on September 17, "Bolivia Women Today: Voices of Women." Representatives of mothers' organizations, small producers' cooperatives, human rights advocates, health workers, government officials, church groups, research institutions, and others gathered to discuss the greatest challenges to women's human rights, and suggest ways to address them.

As one of several presenters at the forum, Anita spoke about ways women can extricate themselves from abusive situations. She drew from her own story. After years of blaming herself or refusing to leave her abuser for fear of the stigma associated with divorce, family finally helped Anita leave her husband after he attempted to strangle her, resulting in hospitalization. A number of participants nodded their heads in sad recognition of how common such abuse is in their own experience.

The women at the forum met in small groups to discuss ways their lives are affected by violence and, more importantly, ideas for positive change. Participants stressed the importance of education at all levels: teaching children about gender issues to combat machismo; educating public officials and civic and religious leaders about gender equality and laws that protect women and resources available to them; and teaching women about their rights and offering courses to help with issues such as self-esteem.

Job training was also mentioned, as were other ways of creating financial independence for women, who often remain in abusive relationships because of economic dependence. Loans, tax breaks, and other job-creating programs, as well as childcare were proposed. Access to justice was emphasized, and various ideas were offered for decentralizing and improving government legal services for abused women. Access to health-care and family planning methods were also stressed as necessary, and also a justice issue, as Bolivian law states that women should have a say in how many children they have. Participants also argued that, to bolster the new law, increased government budgets were needed for programs addressing violence against women. Finally, the importance of women's groups was stressed. The women were not content to wait for the state to end violence against women, but saw a need to organize and tackle the problem themselves.

This last idea echoed the theme of Anita's presentation. After the attempt on her life, she left her husband, became an advocate for the rights of women, and now speaks to groups throughout Bolivia about domestic violence. She no longer calls herself a victim: she refuses to let violence define her. Anita's story and the energy of so many women gathered at the forum are already inspiring real change.

Participants from the Cochabamba community of Aguada, who have been accompanied by Maryknoll missionaries since coming together in their newly settled barrio several years ago, returned from the forum to share the experience with the rest of their women's group. A conversation began about what kind of life they can expect for their daughters, and how to ensure it is free from violence.

Women are leading the way to ending domestic violence and achieving gender equality in Bolivia. Through the UPR, RUN-Bolivia, which is also organizing events to explore the rights of children, aims to pressure government officials to complement their efforts.

## Honduras: Intimidation in upcoming election?

*The following was written by Eben Levey, whose internship with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns focuses on Central America issues. Eben will participate in an election-monitoring delegation in November.*

On November 24, Honduran citizens will go to the polls to elect a new president. As the date rapidly approaches, there is much doubt that the current situation in Honduras will permit free and fair elections. From violence and intimidation to institutional impediments to justice, the closely contested presidential race will occur in a context far from conducive to democracy.

Since the military coup in 2009 that overthrew President Manuel Zelaya, Honduras has become one of the most violent countries in the world. As reported by CNN and NPR, San Pedro Sula, the second largest city in the country, has claimed the title of murder capital of the world for two years running. Yet much of the violence is far from random. The government that illegitimately replaced President Zelaya has embarked upon a course of militarization of police forces and criminalization of social protest, a course that has seen political opponents and social activists systematically targeted for prosecution, armed attacks, and assassinations.

In October, current President Porfirio Lobo deployed over 1,000 military members into the streets to act as law enforcement. These are forces that are trained to fight and kill, not to provide law enforcement. Furthermore, supervising the military police operations are individuals such as Juan Carlos “El Tigre” Bonilla, widely known for human rights violations such as extrajudicial assassinations. Many in opposition to the current government have decried the militarization of the country as a tactic to intimidate social movements and civil society opposition to the current government.

In fact, the number of social movement leaders that have been arrested and assassinated since 2009 continues to rise. A report recently released by Rights Action documents that the largest opposition party (Libertad y Refundación, LIBRE), which is fielding Xiomara Castro de Zelaya (President Zelaya’s wife) as a presidential candidate, has already suffered 15 armed attacks and 18 assassinations of their candidates and activists. In the first half of October, LIBRE lost one congressional candidate, the son of a congressional candidate, and a municipal campaign coordinator in three separate attacks. The Lobo government and the police forces have done little to investigate the attacks against LIBRE, instead claiming that the attacks have been random acts of gang

violence rather than systematic targeting of political opponents and social activists.

At the moment, the most recent polls show that two candidates have separated themselves from the rest of the field: LIBRE’s Xiomara Castro and Juan Orlando Hernandez, the current president of the National Congress and handpicked successor to President Lobo. While Castro and LIBRE are hoping for a transformation of Honduran society through democratic elections, Hernandez is running a campaign around the theme of law and order, promising to continue the work of his predecessor President Lobo in militarizing the police, cracking down on social dissent, and proclaiming Honduras open for business to multinational companies.

Hernandez is the only candidate who has not signed a pact put forward by the congressionally created Commission for Reform of Public Security. The Commission was created to analyze the grave public security in the country and has proposed a number of reforms that revolve around a “reaffirmation of the civil role of the national police and the revamping of police on a community policing model.” Hernandez has called the pact unacceptable because “it isn’t clear that the Armed Forces should play a role as protagonist in recovering the peace and tranquility of the country.” In other words, he advocates further militarization of Honduras as a solution to violence and crime.

Beyond militarization and crime, a recent letter from U.S. Representatives Raul Grijalva (D-AZ), Hank Johnson (D-GA), and Mike Honda (D-CA) to Secretary of State John Kerry has outlined the concerns over institutional impediments to functioning democracy. The letter states that “the State Department has largely countenanced the concentration of institutional power in Honduran government in the past year, in the hands of the ruling party candidate, through illegal means.” President Lobo has unconstitutionally removed opposition members of the Honduran Supreme Court and replaced the Attorney General with a party loyalist, all but promising victory to Hernandez should LIBRE protest election results through the judicial institutions.

We hope that the presence of international election observers will mitigate the worst cases of electoral intimidation and violence. Fundamentally, this election will decide the future of Honduras, whether it can begin to rebuild democracy after a military coup or if those in power will continue the path of militarization and silencing social protest.

## Guatemala: Communities release statement

In late September, less than a month after President Otto Perez Molina visited the town of Barillas in the department of Huehuetenango and announced the formation of a formal space for dialogue between communities, the government, and the hydroelectric companies Ecoener Hidralia Energía/Hidro Santa Cruz S.A., police and military actions markedly increased. Before the announced dialogue could occur, the government approved the hydroelectric projects, sparking peaceful protests by the Q'anjob'al, Akateko, Chuj, and mestizo peoples in San Mateo Ixtatán, Barillas, and other local communities.

Rather than engage in the promised dialogue, the Guatemalan government opted to send the military into the area on September 28. The military immediately began to act by detaining community leader Maynor López in Barillas and flying him away by helicopter. Over the following three days, the military continued to run operations of in-

timidation and terror using low-flying helicopters and roving ground patrols through the region.

In quickly convened meetings, community leaders, the governor of Huehuetenango, and the Guatemalan Interior Minister came to a tentative agreement to immediately reduce the military presence by 50 percent and to initiate the previously announced negotiations on October 8. Although the communities received apologies from the government and the companies, there has been little action to remedy the root cause of the problem: mega-projects that disrupt community and environmental wellbeing. Additionally, the military remains in the area and is an ever-present reminder to the communities of the worst abuses of the Guatemalan civil war that left hundreds of thousands of predominantly indigenous citizens dead at the hands of the armed forces.

The communities of Huehuetenango have released the following statement in light of recent events:

### To the National and International Community

WE MANIFEST: To the Assembly of the Peoples of Huehuetenango, ADH, this dialogue is another insult which does not intend to resolve the crisis on behalf of the government, its ministers and the National Dialogue Commission. This situation is one that they themselves have generated, which is deteriorating the social cohesion with the implementation of the state of siege on May 1, 2012 and the counterinsurgent military aggression perpetrated on September 28th, 29th, and 30th of this year.

“The dialogue table” of October 8, 2013 is another tactic to delay and distract by Otto Perez Molina’s administration and the owner of the company, Hidro Santa Cruz. What is it that they want - to gain time? Although the government and the company apologized to the Q'anjob'al people they did not explain how and when they will return harmony and peace to the territory of Santa Cruz Barillas and to the Peoples of Northern Huehuetenango with humility, prompt solutions and immediate measures to heal the wounds.

The struggle of our peoples is to defend life and the goods of our earth, maintain harmony with Mother Nature and to stand against the historical and recent offenses by the state of Guatemala, successive governments and national and transnational companies that threaten our individual and collective rights.

For us and for the people of Santa Cruz Barillas an immediate solution to the conflict is the withdrawal of the Hydro Santa Cruz and for the mining, hydroelectric, and oil licenses in northern Huehuetenango to be revoked.

Therefore, as an Assembly of the Peoples of Huehuetenango

WE DEMAND:

- a) That the state of Guatemala and the government of Otto Perez Molina expel the Spanish Company, Hidro Santa Cruz, from our territory.
- b) The Hidro Santa Cruz company pay all damages caused to the people of Santa Cruz Barillas.
- c) That the State of Guatemala immediately release the political prisoners and revoke the arrest warrants issued by the courts.
- d) Stop the persecution against the leadership of the peoples of Northern Huehuetenango.
- e) The installation of a special commission of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights for a verification mission of the repression by the State and the administration of Otto Perez Molina.

If the above is not met, then we are witnessing another lie, another farce and a deception against the Q'anjob'al, Chuj, Akateko and Mestizo people of Northern Huehuetenango.

In the month of the redefinition and rearticulation of the People of Guatemala  
The Assembly of the Peoples of Huehuetenango, member of the Council of Peoples from the  
Western Highlands, CPO, Huehuetenango, October 10, 2013

## Brazil: Massive debt struggles

*Over the past few months, huge protests in Brazil have become international news. The principal demands of the protestors have been for improvement in social services, especially transportation, health and education. Though completely overlooked by the media, one of the main reasons for the poor quality services in Brazil is the overwhelming amount of public money that continues to go toward paying the debt. The government currently pays more than one billion dollars every day toward the debt – money that could be used to respond to the demands of the people. In 2012, the federal government dedicated 44 percent of its budget to debt payments while only 4.1 percent went to health care and 3.3 percent to education. In response, Brazilian civil society has a surprisingly simple demand: Carry out an official audit of the debt.*

Many felt that Brazil overcame its debt problems in 2005 when it paid off the last US\$15.5 billion that it owed to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The payment was much celebrated in the press and by the government that had long complained about the IMF's meddling in its internal decisions. But in order to make the payment the government simply issued bonds (thus increasing Brazil's internal debt). So, in reality, the debt was not paid off – it was simply moved to another creditor. Worse, while the IMF was charging a mere four percent interest on its loans to Brazil, the government was paying out 19.3 percent interest on its bonds (its internal debt), so economically, the deal was a failure. Worse still, the touted political freedom from the IMF didn't happen: On the same day that Brazil paid off its debt to the IMF, then Finance Minister Antonio Palocci issued a declaration saying that the payment to the IMF in no way meant that Brazil would sever its ties with the IMF or stop receiving advice from the institution.

The debt has become an ever-growing snowball with no end in sight. In 1978, Brazil's external debt was US\$52.8 billion. Yet even after paying US\$262 billion in debt payments, the total debt had grown to US\$243 billion by 2007. Today, it totals more than US\$441 billion. Perhaps more concerning has been the explosion in Brazil's internal debt. In the early 1990s, it was barely notable. But since then, it has been used to attract the dollars needed to pay the external debt. In order to attract dollars, Brazil's central bank raised its interest rates (the rate that is paid on its bonds) tremendously, rising to as high as 45 percent in 1997. Investors would buy the bonds with dollars to be paid back in Brazil's currency,

the real. As a result, the internal debt went from R\$62 billion in 1995 to R\$1.39 trillion in 2007, even though it paid more than R\$651 billion, just in interest, during that time period. Today, Brazil has an internal debt of more than R\$2.8 trillion (~US\$1.3 trillion).

This story has been repeated throughout the continent. According to Jubilee South, in 1970 Latin America owed US\$32.5 billion. In 2002, that sum had jumped to US\$727 billion despite the countries making more than US\$193 billion in debt payments. "We paid the debt six times over, and even so, it multiplied by more than 20," exclaims Jubilee South.

The 1988 Constitution called for an official audit of the Brazil's debt to be carried out yet this has never happened. In 2009, civil society organizations pressured Congress to carry out a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on the debt. That investigation found a number of surprising facts. Of the debts they investigated, 80 percent had no documentation proving the loan was actually made and/or how much had been paid. They also found a number of onerous clauses in the debt contracts. For example, 34 percent of the contracts demanded that Brazil not institute any type of control over capital leaving the country, while 37 percent demanded that Brazil pay its debt obligations before any other public spending. Almost a third of the contracts were for loans that could only be used to buy goods and services from countries selected by the creditor.

The investigation also found that only 12 financial institutions are allowed to buy Brazil's internal debt directly, and that short list includes international banks such as Citibank, JP Morgan, HSBC, Deutsche Bank and the Royal Bank of Scotland, together with some Brazilian banks and investment fund managers. Knowing this, they were especially concerned about another finding – that the Selic, the main interest rate for Brazil (and the rate that it pays on its bonds, or internal debt), is not determined by a set formula or defined characteristics, but through consultations with bankers and investment fund managers. In other words, the same institutions that directly benefit from the rising or falling of the Selic are the same people who are consulted to define that rate – a serious conflict of interest. These findings give more urgency to the call for an official audit of the debt.

Maria Fatorelli, a financial auditor and coordinator of the Citizen's Movement for an Audit of the Debt, estimates that the debt would shrink by as much as 70 percent if an audit were done. This estimate is based on experience. Fatorelli was a member of the team that in

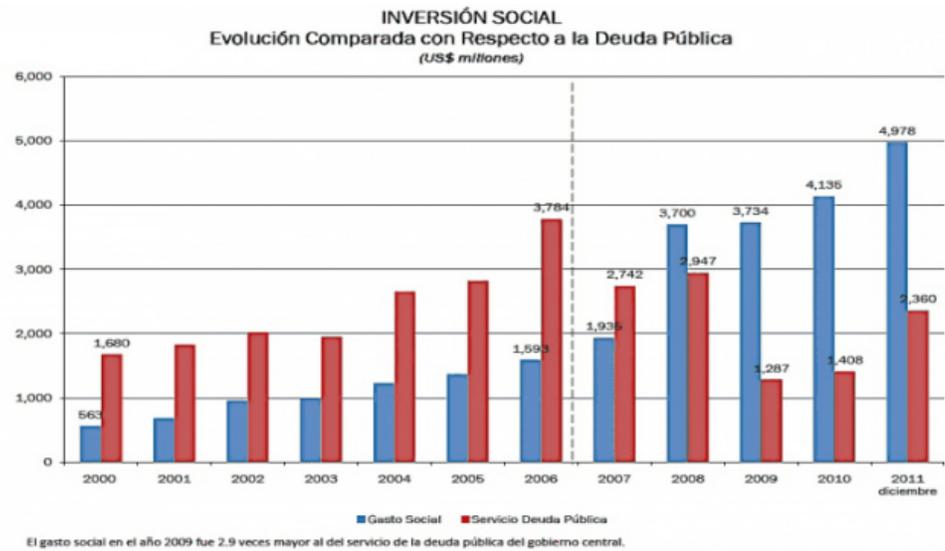
2006 carried out an official audit the public debt in Ecuador, a country with a debt history very similar to Brazil's.

After investigating all of the debt contracts made by Ecuador, they found that a large number of the debt contracts showed no proof that the government had in fact received the money that it was paying back. Numerous debt contracts were also carried out without the proper authority or clearance. In the end, President Rafael Correa renegotiated the debts, paying 30 cents on the dollar, and 95 percent of the creditors accepted these conditions, waiving the right to sue in any court.

The results for the Ecuadoran people were astounding. With the freeing up of US\$7.7 billion that would have been sent to foreign creditors, social spending in the country more than tripled in five years. (See graph above; the red bars [right] represent debt payments, while the blue bars [left] represent social spending on health care, education, transportation, etc.)

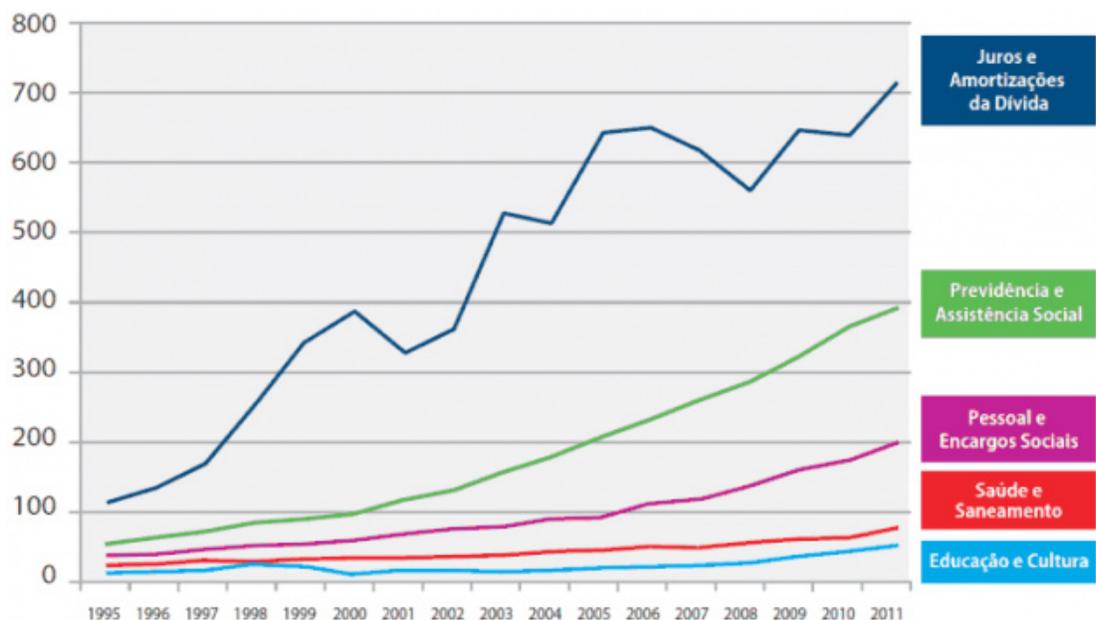
Fatorelli also points to Brazil's own experience with its last official audit of the debt in 1931. It found that only 40 percent of the debt had sufficient documentation and that there was no control or recording of payments made to other countries. As a result, Brazil drastically reduced its external debt and interest payments shrunk from 30 percent of exports in 1930 to only seven percent of exports in 1945. This freed millions of dollars that were spent to help create an economic boom in Brazil.

It is experiences like these that make the idea of an audit of the



debt so important. Looking at the current state of public spending in Brazil (see graph below; the top line [blue] represents debt payments, second line [green]: social security; third [purple]: public sector salaries and benefits, fourth [red]: health and sewage; bottom line [turquoise]: education and culture), it is not difficult to imagine the significant positive impact on the Brazilian people if their tax money could be spent on things like health care, education and transportation instead of filling the coffers of international banks. When you hear about protests in Brazil, remember one easy way that the government could provide better quality public services: Simply carry out an audit of its public debt.

Orçamento Geral da União – Gastos Selecionados (R\$ bilhões)



## Latin America: Deteriorating relations with U.S.

*In late September, when world leaders gathered at the 68th UN General Assembly, the media's focus was on the situation in Syria and the potential international conflict there. What they overlooked was the outpouring of disappointment and anger from Latin American leaders toward the U.S. because of a number of offensive actions that the U.S. had taken in previous months. The outcries are signs of the deteriorating relations between the U.S. and its southern neighbors.*

On July 2 four European governments (France, Italy, Portugal and Spain) refused to allow a plane carrying Bolivian president Evo Morales to land or refuel within their borders as he returned from an energy conference in Moscow. Spokespersons from those countries reported that U.S. officials had informed them that the plane carried Edward Snowden, the former contractor for the National Security Agency who disclosed classified documents revealing massive global surveillance programs being carried out by U.S. intelligence agencies. The reports on Snowden's presence on the plane turned out to be false; the episode infuriated many South American presidents who called an emergency meeting on July 4 of the Union of South American Nations (UNISUR) to determine the appropriate response.

At the July 4 meeting, Evo Morales proposed that all of the governments present expel U.S. ambassadors from their countries and discussed the possibility of launching international legal proceedings against Barack Obama for his "repeated violations of international law and diplomacy." Initially, Latin American leaders discussed boycotting the UN Assembly in protest, but instead decided to use the world stage to rebuke the U.S.

Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff, who gave the opening speech at the Assembly, set the tone with an impassioned discourse against the U.S. spying program, calling it "totally unacceptable ... Meddling in such a manner in the lives and affairs of other countries is a breach of international law and, as such, it is an affront to the principles that should otherwise govern relations among countries," adding that her country would create new legislation and technology to protect it from illegal espionage like that being carried out by the U.S.

On October 24, Brazil joined with Germany to propose a UN General Resolution to promote privacy on the Internet, a clear response to the U.S. surveillance programs. At least 19 countries, including traditionally close U.S. allies Mexico and France, are said to support the resolution.

In his speech to the Assembly, Evo Morales went further, calling for the UN headquarters to be moved from the United States to a politically neutral country, or if that was not possible, "the summit should be held in a different venue every year, but not in the United States, where we don't feel safe." Venezuela's president Nicolas Maduro, who did not participate in the UN Assembly, agreed with the idea of moving the UN headquarters, through the speech of Foreign Minister Elias Jaua.

Morales also proposed the creation of "a Peoples' tribunal" to try Obama for crimes against humanity, citing the examples of the war in Iraq, the bombing of Libya, the promotion of acts of international terrorism, and the financing of terrorist groups. "I would like you to be aware that the United States harbors terrorists and the corrupt. They take refuge here, and the U.S. does not help in the fight against corruption," Morales stated.

Another theme of the speeches of many Latin American leaders was the failed drug war being pushed by the United States. Even traditionally strong allies such as Colombia, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Mexico spoke out against the U.S.'s policy of a police and military-centered response to drugs, indicating the beginning of the end of the unpopular, and unproductive, policy.

Colombia's president Juan Manuel Santos stated, "Today, we must acknowledge that war [on drugs] has not been won... I say this as the president of the country which has suffered more deaths, more blood, more sacrifices in this war."

Despite the U.S.'s continued efforts to maintain the repression-oriented drug war, it is clear that many other countries are exploring new policies. Costa Rica's president Laura Chinchilla referred to a regional agreement "to reevaluate internationally agreed-upon policies in search of more effective responses to drug trafficking, from a perspective of health, a framework of respect for human rights, and a perspective of harm reduction."

Unfortunately, these strong statements from Latin America, mostly overlooked by the media, were also ignored by the Obama administration, to the detriment of all. Laura Carlsen, director of the Americas Program of the Center for International Policy, describes Obama's tone-deaf diplomacy well: "The U.S. government continues to play the neighborhood bully long after the kids on the block have grown up. The flurry of state visits to the region have generally aimed to reinforce unpopular policies, including the drug war and free trade, rather than listen to the calls for change."

## APRM@10: Transformative governance

*The following article on the African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was prepared by Julie Sharples, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns in New York.*

October 21-25 marked Africa-NEPAD Week at the 68th United Nations General Assembly, and the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the forerunner to the African Union (AU), and the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Office of the Special Advisor on Africa (OSAA). Throughout the week events were held to “facilitate and celebrate African narratives of past, present and future that will enthuse and energise the African population and use their constructive energy to accelerate a forward looking agenda of Pan-Africanism and renaissance in the 21st century.” One of these events involved a dialogue with the Diaspora, NGOs, youth and women’s groups, media and academia on “APRM@10: Perspectives on Transformative Governance and the African Union Vision 2063 Agenda.” The four speakers highlighted some of the accomplishments of the APRM and pointed out some areas for improvement moving forward.

The APRM focuses on four specific areas: democracy and good political governance, economic governance and management, corporate governance, and socio-economic development. In its 10 years of existence, the APRM has created a space for countries to learn from each other and share experiences and best practices. It has also encouraged countries to include citizen participation in policy development and formulation. It has created new forms of engagement between nation states and citizens. The APRM has also warned of potential areas of crises, and it has helped develop a framework to address crises when they occur.

In spite of their successes, the APRM needs to continue to improve in some areas. First, some groups in civil society are not well represented. Seventy percent of Africa’s population is under the age of 30, but this group does not play a significant role within the APRM and the governments. In order for the youth to become more involved, an emphasis needs to be placed on the quality and level of engagement with the educational systems.

A second criticism of the APRM is the existing gap between what is said and what is implemented. The APRM is able to raise issues, make recommendations, validate if implementations are followed, and moni-

tor progress made; but there is no mechanism to hold governments accountable for implementing the recommendations. One way to improve accountability would be to engage civil society such that adequate pressure is generated from within the countries failing to implement the APRM recommendations.

As the APRM continues to grow in its reach throughout Africa, it will need to find ways to address these challenges and any new challenges that come up in the future. The presenters saw this dialogue as a starting point, and they want to continue engaging with those present through e-mail and social media. The APRM recognizes the need to listen to a variety of voices in order to create a more peaceful and harmonious future for Africa.

This meeting also looked at Africa’s future, particularly with regards to development. According to the African Development Bank, Africa’s economy is growing faster than any other continent, but there needs to be a more developed infrastructure to be able to support this growth. Dr. Mustapha Mekideche, a member of the APRM Panel of Eminent Persons, highlighted 10 major development challenges for Africa. Specifically, the continent needs to:

- generalize self-evaluation to the whole continent;
- look at cross-cutting problematic issues the APRM has recognized as countries in all regions of Africa are evaluated;
- deepen what has been learned from peers;
- ensure the National Action Plan is implemented by the member states;
- contribute to regional economic groups;
- increase strategic partnerships, including finance and expertise;
- create a higher profile of APRM;
- promote collective ownership of APRM by governments and civil society;
- promote political, economic and social institutional good governance; and
- place specific emphasis on corporate governance.

As the African Union looks forward to the next 50 years, it will need to address these challenges by working with the APRM, individual governments, and civil society. It is only by remaining open to dialogue with one another and with civil society that African nations will be able to take full control of pan-African socio-economic development in the 21st century.

## A Cambodian Spring?

*The following article was written by Maria Montello, a Maryknoll lay missioner serving in Phnom Penh.*

For the first time in 28 years, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen's hold on the nation has been challenged. The opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP) made huge and unexpected gains in the July 2013 election over the long-standing Cambodian People's Party (CPP); however, the CNRP claims that widespread "irregularities" (people missing from voting lists, dead people voting, individuals voting twice or in the place of other people, etc.) took place and that the CNRP should in fact run Parliament.

After failed attempts to appeal to internal bodies (which the opposition claims are beholden to or controlled by Hun Sen), the newly elected CNRP representatives refused to take their seats in the National Assembly.

Opposition leader Sam Rainsy, who wants a UN-led investigation into the irregularities, has been making his case to the international community. The new government is illegitimate, he says, and denying citizens the right to vote amounts to a "serious human rights violation," something which, he argued to the State Department and the United Nations on a recent trip to the U.S., legitimizes international intervention per the Paris Peace Agreement of 1991, which ended the Vietnamese occupation and set the path for the 1993 democratic elections.

Despite the U.S. government shutdown, Rainsy's words did not fall on deaf ears. Sen. Lindsey Graham's (R-SC) resolution to suspend direct U.S. assistance to Cambodia should the Secretary of State deem the election an illegitimate expression of the Cambodian peoples' will is likely to be passed by the Senate Foreign Relations committee and move on to a vote on the U.S. Senate floor.

This issue is complex, however. It could be argued that China, Cambodia's largest foreign investor and major supplier of foreign aid, stands to gain from a U.S. pullout. Reduced U.S. support might give China more opportunity to influence this poor nation for its own political and economic interests. The economic powerhouse, which has cooperated with the ruling CPP in land deals and political "exchanges," was quick to congratulate Hun Sen on his victory.

All the while, there have been protests and a gathering of momentum not seen in Cambodia in decades. Marking the anniversary of the signing of the Paris Peace

Agreement, petitions requesting international intervention in the disputed elections, signed by two million Cambodians and carried alongside marchers (estimating from 15,000 to 20,000) who walked peacefully through Phnom Penh's streets, were delivered to the doors of the embassies of the 18 nations that signed the Agreement.

Youth, who do not remember the Khmer Rouge and are less controlled by fear mongering tactics, seem to be providing significant momentum for the charge. Facts (and perhaps fiction too) about the (mis)deeds of government ricochet through Facebook and other web-based social media, a communication medium the government does not control (though Facebook and other news web-sites have at times been mysteriously blocked).

Interestingly, an older generation of Cambodians from the countryside—always thought to be a reigning CPP stronghold—have flooded into Phnom Penh for recent demonstrations in support of the opposition CNRP party despite road blocks, intimidation and threats of violence. This new-found courage has come with a strong message: the government is giving away their land to foreign companies in the form of land concessions; corruption and greed are destroying their environments and livelihoods; and, despite Cambodia's economic growth unparalleled in the region, they remain crippled by poverty and the growing social ills that come with economic inequality.

This is the generation that lived through the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge—as victims, as bystanders, as perpetrators. Some of them are telling the youth to stay home and out of harm's way; it is their time to stand up where they didn't or couldn't in the late 1970s. This is unprecedented.

Unfortunately, messages of reform, social justice, and equanimity from CNRP leader Rainsy come peppered with incendiary anti-Vietnamese rhetoric to shore up support locally. These sentiments are deep-seated and harken back as far as French colonialism and the loss of formerly Cambodian provinces to Vietnam. For some, these sentiments go even further back. They remain convinced that the end of Cambodia's glory days (marked by the fall the Angkorian Kingdom in the 15th century) was a result of Vietnamese encroachment. This flavor of nationalism is not new to Cambodia and history has shown it does not have good results.

Cambodia suffered countless casualties in the early 1970s at the hands of the Viet Cong with whom they fought under the short-lived regime of General Lon Nol, military actions that (not coincidentally) lined up

with U.S. interests. “The enemy of our enemy is our friend” did not pan out well for Cambodia as the U.S. also bombed this country relentlessly during a secret “Vietnam War” campaign aimed at flushing out Viet Cong and destroying supply lines.

Anti-Vietnamese sentiment also fueled the charge by Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot. Under Pol Pot, Cambodians by the tens of thousands starved as their harvested rice was sent to China in exchange for supplies to fight Vietnam in an ill-fated war.

In recent years, despite movement toward greater cooperation through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), an organization of which both Vietnam and Cambodia are members, mistrust of neighboring Vietnam simmers for many Cambodians. Political leaders who stir this pot might enjoy short-term gains locally, but they come at a price—increased isolation, growing tension with a highly influential neighbor, and

an ideological foundation defined, in part, in negative terms. Cambodia can do better than that.

International support—direct or otherwise—of the process of reform in Cambodia should come with a strong message that, while there are likely legitimate reasons for friction between Cambodia and Vietnam, such issues should not be exploited but rather worked through in the spirit of collaboration and partnership.

The winds of change appear to be moving in Cambodia. While it is unlikely that a “Cambodian Spring” is on the near horizon, recent political activities which have been largely peaceful point to a different sort of Cambodia in coming years. How this future is mapped out is yet to be determined. The international community, once galvanized to pave a path toward democracy for this war-torn country in the early 1990s, would do well to see the job through—and prudently.

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## Immigration: Call-in day; November webinars

On Wednesday, November 13, the feast of St. Frances Cabrini, an Italian immigrant who became the first canonized U.S. citizen, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is sponsoring a national call-in day to Congress. On that day, callers from the U.S. using the toll-free number (855-589-5698) will hear a short recording instructing them to give the following message to their member of Congress: “Support a path to citizenship and oppose the SAFE Act.” After the recording, callers will then be prompted to enter their zip code on their telephone keypad and will be connected directly to their representative’s D.C. office.

[The Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement (SAFE) Act, HR 2278, passed the House Judiciary Committee on June 18. Among other things, it would permit state and local law enforcement officers, untrained in federal immigration law, to issue an immigration hold and detain an individual indefinitely, resulting in prolonged detention for U.S. citizens and lawfully permanent residents. The proposed detention policy calls for an increased number of detention facilities, an increase in the population to be detained (including all individuals awaiting a decision for removal) and an increase in funding for state and local governments to detain individuals in local jails, at a total cost of nearly \$1 billion per year. Provisions in the SAFE Act would criminalize religious leaders and houses of worship that provide humanitarian assistance to all persons regardless of immigration status. Section 314 of the SAFE Act would make it a crime to transport

undocumented immigrants and “encourage or induce a person to reside in the United States” if that person lacks immigration status. The penalties for engaging in any of these activities are steep, ranging from three to 20 years in prison.]

The USCCB and the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC) will host a series of free webinars held the first four Fridays in November, 2-3:30 pm Eastern/11 am-12:30 pm Pacific.

These webinars are for immigrant and social justice advocates, legal service providers, faith leaders, community organizers, and others working with and on behalf of immigrants and will address the following important issues:

- **Comprehensive immigration reform 2013-2014: The road forward from the Church’s perspective, Nov. 1:** This webinar will look at the legislation and politics which will shape the debate on immigration reform in the House of Representatives, explaining the Church’s position on individual bills.
- **Recent trends in state and local immigration enforcement, Nov. 8:** This webinar will provide an overview of collaboration between Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and local law enforcement agencies through the Criminal Alien Program, 287(g) Partnerships, and Secure Communities as well as the use of ICE detainers to identify potentially deportable individuals in state or local custody.

- **Immigration detention: Perspectives from D.C. and the field, Nov. 15:** This webinar will address immigration detention, including the federal mandate requiring the detention of certain immigrants, the recent rise of immigration detention, and alternatives to detention. Additionally, the panel will include local perspectives on the effects of detention facilities on communities and how local stakeholders can help combat this national phenomenon.
- **State and local immigration laws: Recap of 2013**

**and outlook for 2014, Nov. 22:** This webinar will review some of the anti-immigrant and pro-immigrant laws passed by states in 2013 on topics including state-issued identification and driver's licenses, refugee resettlement, immigration enforcement, and access to higher education. Panelists will also address the state-level immigration policy outlook for 2014.

Learn more about the webinars at CLINIC's website, [www.cliniclegal.org](http://www.cliniclegal.org).

## Story of Solutions: Replace more with better

On October 1, the Story of Stuff Project released "The Story of Solutions," the educational series' ninth webfilm; it focuses on how communities find answers to the problems named in the eight preceding videos, beginning with "The Story of Stuff."

Walking through the displays of innovative projects at the Green Festival in Washington, D.C., one can see vendors' stalls selling items made of recycled goods. While it is impressive that so much can be recycled, it is still stuff that ultimately will be thrown away, begging the question of whether buying more things addresses the underlying problem. In this latest eight-minute animated video, producer Annie Leonard takes an innovative look at the shifts needed to move our economy toward greater sustainability and equity. Both paradigm shifts as well as changes in our everyday activities are highlighted in what Leonard outlines as "the Game of More."

The underlying myth that the economy simply needs to grow has us all buying into a story of "more" and taking our focus away from "better." If we focus on "better" we can work together to create better health, better jobs and a better chance to survive on the planet, rather than competing with one another to gain "more."

What Leonard proposes is not easy; it means changing the goal of our entire economy. But doing so might bring us more in line with "God's economy." We're at a crossroad of social, economic and ecological crises, and at the heart of it all is an economic system that tries to lock interconnected societies into unsustainable patterns of production, over-consumption and waste generation, all driven by the mandate to grow. To date, this growth-driven economic model has proven to promote overgrowth in some areas while leaving vulnerable populations with no benefits of development.

Maryknoll missionaries who daily witness the quality of life diminish in isolated communities see the urgency of shifting the focus to earth as a whole. Through

the work of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, missionaries urge political leaders of all nations to turn their attention toward refocusing the objective of systems and institutions, especially economic ones, toward a life of fullness and dignity for all people and Earth.

Changing the goal of the global economy is a tremendous task, but if we turn our attention away from finding new ways to play the game of "more" to game-changing solutions we can steadily build an economy that values a life of fullness, complete with the important things like safer, healthier water, land and people who have just what they need to thrive and flourish.

Changing the point of the game empowers people to take back power from corporations. It decreases the wealth gap between those who over-consume the world's resources and those who have difficulty meeting basic needs; and it brings us closer to a world where people opt to live simply so that others might live with dignity.

The Story of Stuff project has been working since 2008 to generate a much needed honest conversation about the impacts of our consumer-crazed culture on people and the planet. Since its release in 2008, the first video, The Story of Stuff, has been viewed more than 30 million times worldwide and has gained on online community 450,000 strong.

Other educational resources available at StoryofStuff.org include a best-selling book, a co-created a high school-level educational curricula called Buy, Use, Toss, a study program for faith communities, and a hope-filled podcast series called The Good Stuff that chronicles the efforts of everyday changemakers. These resources in addition to eight online movies telling the story of some of the stuff commonly consumed (bottled water, cosmetics and electronics) as well as the underlying roots of unsustainable production (corporate influence on elections, how the U.S. budget is appropriated, what the solutions could be and finally how changes can be made.

## Solitary confinement: Penitence, or torture?

*The following was written by Kelly Kundrat, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

Solitary confinement within the United States prison system began at the Eastern State Penitentiary. This type of punishment originated from Quaker religious philosophies of natural healing with penitence and reform through isolation. The idea was individuals would use the time alone to reflect on the error of their ways and emerge with modified behaviors and attitudes. However, the practice of solitary confinement was abandoned—for a time—as cruel and ineffective. Isolation proved to be negatively modifying behaviors instead of positively promoting self-reflection. Individuals who experienced solitary confinement became psychologically destroyed and increasingly violent.

After September 11, 2001, solitary confinement reemerged as a main facet of the U.S. military detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In fact, a majority of those held in Guantanamo today are kept in prolonged isolation without due process. Camps 5, 6 and Echo are the units that qualify as solitary confinement within Guantanamo, although the facilities officials call them “single-cell occupancy” or “isolation” units. This punishment involves remaining in a 7x10x8 cell for 22-24 hours a day, with constant florescent lighting, a sink-toilet combination, a padded concrete slab for a bed and virtually no human contact. Many prisoners who experience prolonged solitary confinement complain of an inability to sleep and a slow disconnection from reality.

There are many troubling psychological and emotional consequences of solitary confinement, including anxiety, hallucinations, paranoia, and increased rates of self-mutilation and suicide. In an article published in *The Guardian* in 2007, Brent Mickum, attorney for prisoner Bisher al-Rawi, stated that al-Rawi was “slowly but surely, slipping into madness. Bisher is allowed no contact with fellow prisoners. Bright lights are kept on 24 hours a day. [He] is given 15 sheets of toilet paper per day, but because he used his sheets to cover his eyes to help him to sleep, his toilet paper - considered another comfort item - has been removed for ‘misuse.’” Bisher al-Rawi spent four years in Guantanamo. He was released on March 30, 2007 after enduring years of inhumane treatment without ever being charged for a crime.

In 2012, Juan Mendez, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, announced prolonged solitary confinement, lasting 15 days or more, constitutes torture. Mendez has called for “an absolute ban of solitary confinement of

any duration for juveniles, persons with psychosocial disabilities or other disabilities or health conditions, pregnant women, women with infants and breastfeeding mothers as well as those serving a life sentence and prisoners on death row.” By this definition, most prisoners at Guantanamo Bay have been subjected to torture.

In addition to the already troubling human rights violations at Guantanamo Bay (for instance, detainment without due process, forcible feeding, stress positions, etc.) the use of prolonged or indefinite isolation, deemed as torture by Juan Mendez, remains against international law. The Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (adopted by the United Nations in 1955) states, “Punishment by placing in a dark cell, and all cruel, inhuman or degrading punishments shall be completely prohibited as punishments for disciplinary offences. . . . All accommodation provided for the use of prisoners and in particular all sleeping accommodation shall meet all requirements of health, due regard being paid to climatic conditions and particularly to cubic content of air, minimum floor space, lighting, heating and ventilation.” These UN guidelines for international and domestic law are clearly being violated within the Guantanamo Bay detention facility.

Beyond human rights and international law violations, the use of solitary confinement within Guantanamo violates our faith. In their 2000 pastoral letter, “Responsibility, rehabilitation, and restoration: A Catholic perspective on crime and criminal justice,” the U.S. Catholic bishops stated, “We oppose the increasing use of isolation units, especially in the absence of due process.” This past June, the Catholic bishops of California released a statement opposing the use of solitary confinement: “We stand opposed to this treatment because it is not restorative. Placing humans in isolation [...] has no restorative or rehabilitative purpose. International human rights standards consider more than 15 days in isolation to be torture.”

### **Faith in action:**

This year’s Human Rights Day, December 10, marks Human Rights Day, the 65th anniversary of adoption of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. The National Religious Campaign Against Torture invites you and your congregation/organization to observe Human Rights Day during worship services, as a part of your religious education efforts and through advocacy activities during either the weekend of Dec. 6-8, Dec. 13-15, or another time of your choosing. Find a toolkit of resources at [www.nrcat.org](http://www.nrcat.org).

## UN: Renewed partnership for development

*“An effective global partnership needs to embrace a shared vision, embody an acceptable sharing of obligations and responsibilities ...” Millennium Development Goals Gap Task Force, 2013.*

On September 24, world leaders gathered at the UN for the inaugural session of the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), which replaced the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) whose last session took place on September 20. The HLPF is expected to help renew partnerships and enhance multilateral engagements. It will play the paramount role of ensuring implementation of the Rio+20 commitments and the post-2015 development agenda.

Referring to the importance of partnerships, Ambassador John W. Ashe, president of the 68th Session of the UN General Assembly, stated, “Our forum needs a broad range of tools for enhanced multi-stakeholder engagement and implementation, in particular partnerships. In this regard, effective partnerships should be advanced as a mature and scalable delivery mechanism to facilitate the achievement of the means of implementation for sustainable development.” In a report entitled “A life of dignity for all,” released several weeks before the September event, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon also noted that the post-2015 development agenda will need to be supported by a renewed global partnership grounded on the values of equity, solidarity and human rights. The partnerships should capture a spirit of mutual respect and mutual benefit.

Given the importance of partnerships as a tool for sustainable development, it is necessary to ask the basic question: What are partnerships and how has this concept shaped the development agenda in the past?

According to the MDG Gap Task Force 2013 report on Millennium Development Goal 8, *The Global Partnership for Development: The challenge we face*:

The word “partnership” describes a relationship voluntarily entered into to achieve shared goals. There is no presumption in the word itself that the relationship is an equal one. Some partners may have more of a stake in the partnership and receive more of its benefits, and some partners may have more power over the partnership than

others. Nevertheless, it is generally understood that each of the partners has certain rights as well as obligations to the other partners and each of the partners expects to benefit from it. An effective global partnership thus needs to embrace a shared vision, embody an acceptable sharing of obligations and responsibilities, and entail a package of commitments attractive enough for the partners to join it (9-10).

The above description raises the question about the values of equity, solidarity and human rights that the Secretary General mentioned in his report. The value of equity requires that the parties be on equal footing and be recognized as stakeholders contributing to the sustainable development agenda. Partnerships must not be perceived as a way of creating free market economies which by nature tend to create economic and political power inequalities which in turn cause friction. The question then arises: How can partnerships take place between rich and poor countries which are not economic and political equals? In order to overcome these difficulties, it is necessary to stress the importance of creating a common vision. The common vision will help move partnerships forward by focusing on such aspects as shared global governance that is supportive of national governance. The HLPF will serve as a platform that will facilitate this goal as well offer some prospect of fully implementing agreed reform agendas on the part of governments. The HLPF for Sustainable Development will also be a place where committing partners can hold each other accountable.

The HLPF holds the hope of providing the space for appropriate participation of all relevant stakeholders. In order to re-ignite confidence and enthusiasm, additional concrete steps will be put in place in order to enhance policy actions that will respect human rights. Development mechanisms must be resource efficient in production and consumption, apply appropriate health and safety standards, and promote a fair income distribution while addressing the issue of climate change.

In order for partnerships to attain their goal, they need to be all-inclusive and based on sound ethical standards which value equity, solidarity and human rights. All this works to safeguard the dignity of the human being who was created in the image of God and to whom God entrusted the care of the earth.



## World Food Prize: A report from Iowa

*The following report was written by our colleague Njoki Njoroge Njehu who is the executive director of the Daughters of Mumbi Global Resource Center\* in Nairobi, Kenya. Njoki was an invited speaker at the Food Sovereignty Prize events in Des Moines, IA, in mid-October; the Food Sovereignty Prize was created as an alternative to the World Food Prize. (See “Food sovereignty best addresses public interests,” September-October 2013 NewsNotes.)*

The 2013 World Food Prize was awarded to champions of biotechnology, in particular genetic modification. The winners were executives of Monsanto and Syngenta and the chairman and founder of Belgium’s Institute of Plant Biotechnology Outreach.



Even in a world that has become more laudatory of the corporate agenda, this was beyond the pale. Over 340,000 people signed a petition in protest of the choice; protests, teach-ins and press conferences were held during the week leading to the official awards ceremony (Oct. 16-19).

The UN states that women farmers feed 80 percent of the world’s population, so it is obvious that agribusiness is no answer to the world’s hunger and nutrition problems. (See “Rural women propose solutions, demand action,” September-October 2013 *NewsNotes*.) GMOs are not what the world needs to combat hunger and malnutrition. I believe that GMOs are the most prescient signal of a corrupt, moneyed corporate agricultural system that puts profits before people. Corporate agriculture [agribusiness], even in the global North, uses large tracts of land, expensive machinery, and a great deal of pesticides, fertilizers, and water -- and this is the model being considered for countries in Africa that have been targeted by the G8’s New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition.

The G8’s initiative sounds warm and fuzzy, but it offers a model to African countries that will not solve the hunger problems the continent faces. African women farmers hold the answers to nutrition and food problems and continue to feed their families under very difficult circumstances. Corporate agriculture is part of the problem that keeps food out of the mouths of African children as well as Indian, Latin American, and Asian children.

The “solutions” that the G8’s initiatives and other

schemes dreamed up by corporate agriculture include: land grabs which take away land from subsistence farmers; cultivation of biofuels rather than food; and genetically modified organisms that are fraught with danger for people and the environment. These along with food aid and farm subsidies decimate food security and violate human dignity by destroying the livelihoods of farmers and their communities. Ample research and evidence show the problem with hunger in the world is not lack of food but poor distribution of food, poor post-harvest storage, and of course, bad policy priorities that privilege agribusiness over farmers who feed the world.

The week that I spent in Des Moines with the Haitian winners of the Food Sovereignty Prize, with activists and organic farmers from Iowa and other parts of the Midwest, with men and women, old and young, who do not believe the hype, who are fighting for alternatives, gives me hope that even the most powerful GMO companies have not successfully sold their swill to farmers and to us. We have a charge and an obligation to keep fighting for alternatives, to keep fighting so that African farmers, Latin American farmers, organic farmers in the Midwest, and small-scale Asian farmers do not become a footnote in a future world where the loudly proclaimed drive to feed “nine billion by 2050” obliterates the need for healthy, organic and indigenous foods, while ignoring some of the underlying policy changes that keep food out of people’s reach.

From urban farmers to small-scale farmers around the world, to organic farming activists, the world says no to GMOs. We must keep fighting for food sovereignty, fight for the livelihoods of farmers, and build solidarity across borders and around the world, as the MST (Landless Rural Workers’ Movement) of Brazil is doing with peasant farmers of Haiti. The lines are drawn; it is about us and corporate agriculture. Simply put, we cannot afford to lose on this. We must not lose on food sovereignty, we must not lose on biodiversity, we must not lose on the livelihoods on millions and millions of people, hunger must not win. To paraphrase the late U.S. Rep. Barbara Jordan, the stakes are too high for our food’s future to be a spectator sport.

*\* The Daughters of Mumbi (DoM) Global Resource Center is an independent, non-partisan, non-ethnic Kenyan network inspired and informed by the struggles of African women. The network of autonomous groups (85 percent women) focuses on gender rights and food sovereignty; civic education and advocacy; and mentorship for members’ children (aged 6–19 years).*

## Pope Francis addresses “globalization of indifference”

*The following reflection was prepared by Fr. Dave Schwinghamer, MM.*

On July 1, over 300 Eritrean and Somali asylum-seekers drowned one half mile from the coast of Italy. When their fishing boat caught fire and sank near the island of Lampedusa they had travelled between 2,500-3,000 miles from their home countries in the Horn of Africa. The news of this tragedy moved Pope Francis to make a personal visit to Lampedusa

to offer his sympathy and to show his solidarity to the survivors and to the Italians who pulled them from the Mediterranean Sea. In a short but moving homily during a mass for those who had drowned, Francis called attention to one of the major challenges of the 21st century: the growing indifference to human suffering that has arisen in part as a result of globalization.

During the closing decades of the 20th century the Catholic Church’s perspective on globalization reflected two important contributions by very different popes. On January 1, 1972 in his World Day of Peace message, Paul VI declared: “If you want peace, work for justice.” This clear call to expand the Church’s understanding of its social commitment helped many Catholic organizations realize that action on behalf of justice was a constitutive part of preaching the Gospel. In 1974 the Church held a global synod on the theme of Justice in the World. The fruits of that Synod are still being harvested.

During his long pontificate Pope John Paul II was a strong advocate of “the globalization of solidarity.” He openly called for a new international system of values based on solidarity as opposed to a system of values that had competition as its backbone. In a message written for the 17th General Assembly of Caritas International, John Paul II called for a radical change in the concept of solidarity at the global level. For the aging pope, globalization had become the obligatory horizon of all politics in every nation. But according to John Paul II for solidarity to become a global reality, peoples of all regions of the world must be taken into account.

Pope Francis has moved beyond the perspectives of his predecessors in regard to globalization. His visit to the island of Lampedusa helped lay open a dark side of globalization that is not talked about enough today. This ugly side of globalization flows from both the effects

of the new communication technologies on our human personality and from the consumer culture that accompanies globalization. While addressing those who had survived the sinking of their little fishing boat, Francis spoke of what he called a culture of comfort that makes us live in a bubble that insulates us from human misery and can cause us to fall into indifference on a global scale.

In lamenting the needless deaths of African asylum seekers – both Christians and Muslims – Francis asked us to weep for “all those who in anonymity make social and economic decisions which open the door to tragic situations” like Lampedusa. Likewise, he begged God to have mercy on those who “by their decisions on the global level have created situations that lead to these tragedies.”

But it isn’t just weeping and lamenting that Francis is concerned with. He intends to expose some of the hidden forces and underlying values, such as unbridled consumerism, that are shaping the interior world of many people in such a way that we are becoming incapable of even being moved by tragedy. These forces operate out of sight under the mask of anonymity and superficiality of thought and lead to a cultural disorientation. The pope asks us: “How many of us, myself included, have lost our bearings; we are no longer attentive to the world in which we live; we don’t care; we don’t protect what God created for everyone, and we end up unable even to care for one another!”

In a gentle but prophetic manner, Francis calls out those who have caused the Lampedusa-like tragedies by asking who is responsible for the blood of these brothers and sister of ours. Unfortunately, it seems that nobody feels responsible. The bubble of material comfort, a potent byproduct of globalization, has resulted in the illusion that such tragedies can take place and nobody is to blame. But Francis also implies that this is a superficial answer. Behind this growing anonymity are human beings who make social and economic decisions on the global level and that these decisions have created situations that lead to tragedy for those on the margins of globalization.

After Lampedusa we can no longer look at asylum seekers, migrants, refugees and internally displaced peoples as unconnected to the process of globalization. To do so would be to continue to live in a bubble.



*Photo: Catholic Church England & Wales*

## Reasons for optimism on clean energy

The U.S. Department of Energy recently released its International Energy Outlook (IEO) that attempts to predict future energy use if “business as usual” prevails. It calculates that in 2040, fossil fuels will still supply almost 80 percent of the world’s energy with coal, the most carbon-intense of all major fuels, supplying more energy than renewables, nuclear and hydropower combined. This would imply an increase in global carbon emissions of 46 percent between 2010 and 2040. As one reviewer wrote, “If the trends identified in the Department of Energy report prove enduring, then the world of 2040 will be one of ever-rising temperatures and sea levels, ever more catastrophic storms, ever fiercer wildfires, ever more devastating droughts.”

Yet the IEO overlooks a number of significant changes. In some locations, rooftop solar panels are already a cheaper option than traditional utilities. Electric vehicle technology is also quickly becoming a cheaper option than gasoline-driven vehicles. In addition, financial markets are increasingly bearish on fossil fuel companies due to the fact that 70-80 percent of their fossil fuel reserves may never be able to be used if we are to maintain global warming to two degrees Celsius. (See related articles on page 18 and in the September-October 2013 *NewsNotes*.)

Tony Seba, lecturer on entrepreneurship, market disruptions and clean energy at Stanford University, predicts that by 2030, solar energy will make the fossil fuel industry redundant and that electric vehicles will do the same to the oil industry. He bases his estimates on the rapidly falling cost of solar panels and electric vehicle (EV) batteries combined with rising prices for fossil fuels.

In the case of EV batteries, affordable technology was thought to be decades away, but thanks to recent innovations, they are rapidly dropping in price and increasing in potency. Seba writes, “The tipping point for the mass market to move from internal combustion engines to EVs is between US\$250 and US\$300/kWh. Once it gets to US\$100/kWh, it is all over. I think we will get to US\$250/kWh by 2020. By 2030, when batteries are at \$100/kWh, gasoline vehicles will be obsolete. Not on their way out, obsolete.” He thinks that mass migration will start around 2018 to 2020.

At one point, it was difficult to replace fossil fuel utilities with rooftop solar due to the lack of affordable high-quality batteries to store energy for nighttime hours or cloudy days. This technical challenge has been

overcome, and a revolution in home energy delivery, with dozens of centralized fossil fuel power plants being quickly overtaken by solar panels, is taking place in countries like Germany and Australia. Even Bangladesh, with its severe poverty, has more than a million solar installations – without any subsidies. Solar is already cheaper than the grid in dozens of countries, leading the Swiss financial giant UBS to recommend that investors sell stock in any power utilities using coal or gas-fired generation. Centralized fossil fuel-generated energy in Europe “is in structural decline,” and this decline is taking place at “remarkable” speed.

Jon Wellinghoff, chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), which regulates utilities in the U.S., predicts the same in this country, saying, “Solar is growing so fast it is going to overtake everything,” adding, “at its present growth rate, solar will overtake wind in about 10 years. It is going to be the dominant player.”

Financial markets see the writing on the wall and are reconsidering the value of fossil fuel companies due to “risk of stranded assets,” which is the risk that they will be stranded with large reserves of fossil fuels that cannot be burned. This “carbon bubble” will pop some day. The question is not if it will, but when. One study found that, “regardless of what government actually does, the market will at some point respond to the political and commercial risk of the potential for government to act... Markets could react to this predicament next month, next year or in 2014. We can’t know exactly when, but logic suggests there could be serious traction gained at some point over the next five years that will lead to carbon-induced financial disruption on a global scale.”

The reckoning has already started: British multinational bank HSBC has predicted a market value loss of 40-60 percent for major oil and gas companies if the world acts to keep global warming below two degrees. The International Energy Agency has forecast that the global coal industry will lose \$1 trillion in revenue each year by 2035.

While UN summits and other international forums about climate change appear to be failing, the technologies and economics of renewable energy are rapidly changing possibilities, offering a glimpse of hope that humanity may be able to avoid surpassing the two degree rise in temperature and dodge the worst of climate change effects.

## Fossil fuel companies called to assess risks

*Cathy Rowan contributed the following piece (and many previous articles on corporate accountability.)*

On October 24, a group of 70 institutional investors managing more than \$3 trillion of collective assets launched the first-ever coordinated effort to spur the world's 45 top oil and gas, coal and electric power companies to assess the financial risks that climate change poses to their business plans.

Recent studies by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the International Energy Agency have suggested that, in order to achieve the international goal of limiting global warming to 2°C, the world will need to live within a set carbon budget, and a significant portion of proven global fossil fuel reserves will need to be left in the ground.

However, the world is currently on a path toward global warming of 4°C or more, which the World Bank warned must be avoided in order to prevent catastrophic climate change impacts.

The investors, most of them based in the United States and Europe, include California's two largest public pension funds, the New York State and New York City Comptrollers, socially responsible investment firms and faith-based institutional investors such as the TriState Coalition for Responsible Investment, Maryknoll Sisters, Mercy Investment Services and the Presbyterian Church USA. In September they wrote to the fossil fuel companies, requesting detailed responses before their annual shareholder meetings in early 2014.

"We would like to understand [the company's] reserve exposure to the risks associated with current and probable future policies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050," the investors wrote. "We would also like to understand what options there are for [the company] to manage these risks by, for example, reducing the carbon intensity of its assets, divesting its most carbon intensive assets, diversifying its business by investing in lower carbon energy sources or returning capital to shareholders."

A new report by the Carbon Tracker Initiative finds that between 60-80 percent of the coal, oil and gas reserves of publicly listed companies are "unburnable" if the planet is to have a chance of not exceeding global warming of two degrees Celsius.

According to the Unburnable Carbon report, in 2012 alone, the 200 largest publicly traded fossil fuel companies collectively spent an estimated \$674 billion on finding and developing new reserves, some of

which may never be utilized. This initiative highlights the opportunity to redirect this capital, rather than it being wasted on high carbon assets that could become stranded.

"The world is taking climate change seriously and global pressures to reduce fossil fuel use will only grow stronger," said Jack Ehnes, CEO of the California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS), the nation's second largest public pension fund with \$172 billion under management. "As long-term investors, we see the world moving toward a low-carbon future in which fossil fuel reserves that companies continue to develop may actually become a liability, which could take a toll on shareholder value."

As of October 23, investors had received preliminary responses from 20 companies. Detailed answers to the investors' questions will come in follow-up responses and meetings with the companies. Participating investors are asking their peers to support this effort, which is being called the Carbon Asset Risk (CAR) initiative. The effort is being coordinated by Ceres (a non-profit organization that works with businesses and investors on climate change, water scarcity and other sustainability challenges) and the Carbon Tracker initiative, with support from the Global Investor Coalition on Climate Change.

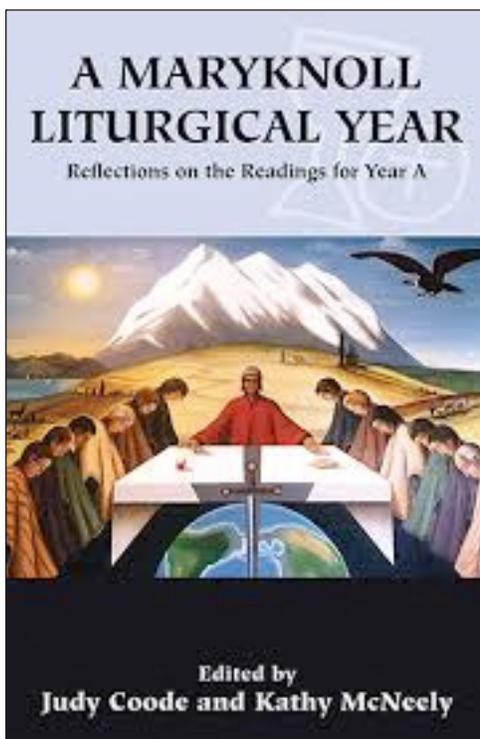
"Many of the responses investors have received from the companies thus far acknowledge that there is a legitimate risk issue around carbon reserves, and companies are open to continued engagement from the investor community to determine the scope," according to Mark Fulton, a member of the Carbon Tracker's Advisory Board and a Ceres adviser.

Meanwhile, members of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility are building on the foundation of past shareholder resolutions that called for setting greenhouse gas emission reduction goals and raising new questions about climate change with corporations as a whole and fossil fuel companies in particular. For example, they are calling for companies (especially fossil fuel companies) to review their present public policy advocacy and move to support national, state and local policy and legislation addressing climate change. Conversely, they will call on companies to stop lobbying, directly and indirectly, in opposition to the EPA regulation of greenhouse gas emissions or legislation addressing climate change.

For more information on carbon asset risk, visit [www.carbontracker.org](http://www.carbontracker.org)

## Resources

- 1) **Pax Christi USA's Advent 2013, "Unshakeable Belief"**: Daily reflections on the Advent Lectionary readings with questions for contemplation or discussion. Four esteemed authors share their reflections with you and ask you to pray and contemplate through Advent: Dr. Darleen Pryds, Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley; Msgr. Ray East, Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.; Kim Mazyck, Catholic Relief Services; and Dr. Alex Mikulich, Ph.D., Loyola University New Orleans and member of the Pax Christi Anti-Racism team. Quantity breaks available at 10, 25, and 100 – member discounts and wholesale discounts available as well. Contact Resource Sales for help with an order, to get a quote, request an electronic sample, or for further details. Price: \$3.50 + s/h. [sales@paxchristiusa.org](mailto:sales@paxchristiusa.org); 814-520-6245.
  - 2) **First Committee briefing book**: Published by Reaching Critical Will (RCW), a project of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), this briefing book gives a quick overview of some of the most pressing issues that will be addressed at this year's UN General Assembly First Committee on Disarmament and International Security. It also provides recommendations for govern-
- ments from some of the main civil society coalitions working on these topics. (WILPF created RCW in 1999 in order to promote and facilitate engagement of non-governmental actors in UN processes related to disarmament.) Some topics addressed in the briefing book include nuclear weapons; landmines; small arms and light weapons; and gender and disarmament. The 24-page document is available as a PDF on the RCW website, <http://www.reachingcritical-will.org/>; it is free of charge to download but donations to the RCW project are welcome.
- 3) **Campaign Nonviolence**: This new initiative from Pace e Bene strives to take a stand against violence and injustice by promoting and activating the power of nonviolence in our lives, our communities, our nation, and our world. At this critical turning point we are called to become people of nonviolence working to transform our world of violence into a new nonviolent culture where people everywhere practice nonviolence toward themselves, one another, and the earth and its inhabitants. To support this long-term goal, Campaign Nonviolence is launching a movement integrating education, action, and networking for nonviolent change. Learn more at <http://paceebene.org/campaign-nonviolence>.



### A Maryknoll Liturgical Year: Reflections on the Readings for Year A

Maryknoll missionaries' experiences of crossing into new cultures and sharing life with new communities bring fresh meanings of the sacred scripture to light. In this second volume of reflections that explore the readings of the liturgical calendar, readers find life described in its fullest – the deep pain and struggle that people endure, as well as the hope for a new heaven and a new earth. Maryknollers describe how people cope with climate changes; they celebrate the solutions people have employed; and rejoice in the places where they find hope for the future of the planet. At the same time, Maryknollers celebrate diversity, the fact that they are warmly welcomed into the communities in spite of differences in appearance, language, and culture. These are the kinds of stories elevated in this book: stories of reconciliation, of inter-religious collaboration; stories of ways in which groups have overcome their differences to take on projects that serve the common good.

Paperback, 224 pages, \$20  
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or call 800-258-5838