

United Nations Association of the
United States of America (UNA-USA)
Greater Chicago Chapter

Newsletter – 2009

Editors:

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United Nations Association
Of The United States Of America
Greater Chicago Chapter



CONTENTS

1. Letter from the Editors
2. Letter from the President
3. Board & Advisory Council
4. 2009 UNA-USA Chicago Chapter Events – An Overview
5. On the Spotlight: UNA-USA Chicago Chapter Supports Local & Global Implementation of The Growing Connection.....*Sarah Elizabeth Ippel*
6. UN-NGO Conference in Mexico City.....*Marco Tavanti*
7. Model UN: Jumping Off The Page..... *Peggy Fleming*
8. Model UN in Forming the Teenage Psyche.....*Peter Haleas*
9. The Reckoning- Battle for the International Criminal Court..... *HuiHui Ooi*
10. Focus on Congo *Janet Bean*
11. International Justice Mission's Year in Uganda *Sara Williams Staley*
12. Mission Trip to Ghana and Nigeria..... *Sandra Reed*

Letter from the Editors

As autumn rolls through Chicago, UNA USA Chicago Chapter's second newsletter rolls off the presses. You will find a listing of our Chapter's 2009 events, including a visit from our new UNA USA President, Ambassador Thomas Miller. Our website is always updated with opportunities for participation that may interest you, our readers and Chapter members.

In this edition, we've included a bountiful harvest of internationally cultivated articles. Our contributors have shared their stories, many of them personal overseas experiences working with agencies that reflect the United Nation's vision of humanitarian aid. We have three articles focusing on Africa and one on Mexico. On the home front, our Growing Connection project spotlights the efforts of one local school to engage children in global citizenship through organic gardening as they reach out to their counterparts in Africa. Two articles are written by local high school students with their reflections on the value of participating in Model UN.

We lead off with a letter from our Chapter President, Lydia Lazar, who will be stepping down from the helm at the end of November. Her dedication to the Organization and unflagging support of Chapter members will be missed. Become a Chapter member today and come to the November 24th Board meeting to cast your vote for our new slate of officers!

Our newsletter is meant to reflect your interests. Please email questions, comments and articles to cjaccarino@unachicago.org and aemmanuel@unachicago.org.

Happy reading!

The Editors: Claudia Jaccarino and Abraham Emmanuel

Letter from the President

What an exciting time to be an internationalist! We have an active, internationally-engaged administration in Washington, D.C., and there has been a tremendous outpouring of support and commitment from people all over the United States to help repair the damage to our country's relationships around the world. Here in Chicago the excitement about global affairs is truly palpable: from Olympic fever to the development of new internationally oriented organizations and programs to heightened attendance at speaker events, our community is more actively engaged than ever before.

The UNA USA has a new president, Tom Miller, a reinvigorated staff and a beautiful revamped webpage: www.unausa.org In Chicago, 2009 has been a year of good progress for our chapter as we met regularly and have begun to develop strong relationships and a good team.

I encourage each of you to step up your advocacy and involvement in international affairs and be more active in our chapter - come to events and plan new ones, write for the newsletter, join the board...we are open to your ideas and your energy - please contact me or any of the board members at any time through our UNA email addresses.

There are many ways to support the work of the UNA-USA and the Chicago Chapter - just click on the committee or topic of your interest and you will find the information you need to get started. Be sure to join today so that you can start getting the award-winning magazine *The Interdependent*. Visit <http://www.unachicago.org/membership.html> to start participating right now!

Sincerely,

Lydia Lazar

President (2008, 2009)

Background on the UNA USA:

UNA-USA is a national organization with headquarters in New York and chapters throughout the fifty states. UNA- USA Chapters work on educational and humanitarian campaigns, and at the national level, the UNA USA directs policy and advocacy programs that stress the importance of nations working together as well as the need for United States leadership in the United Nations.

Background on the Chicago Chapter of UNA USA

Here in Chicago we are a diverse group of citizens who work together to support and promote the goals of the United Nations. We believe in a strong US presence in the UN and support and encourage US involvement and leadership in the many UN related agencies and institutions that are working to combat the scourges of disaster, disease, hunger and poverty that continue to plague our planet. We partner with other groups to sponsor speaker events and undertake a wide range of activities to raise awareness about international issues.

Board & Advisory Council

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2009 UNA-USA CHICAGO CHAPTER EVENTS – An Overview

*2009 Event Highlights *(thru October).*

1. Hot Commodities: Raising the Incentive to Lower Greenhouse Gases
The Chicago Council on Global Affairs Young Professionals organized the event to learn how the CCX system is trying to “green” the corporate world. This was a UNA-USA Chicago Chapter cosponsored event.
2. Chicago Public School’s Model UN Conference & UNA-USA Chicago Members Luncheon with Ambassador Tom Miller, President UNA USA at McCormick Place, May 2009
3. Reception for Ambassador Tom Miller, President of the UNA-USA.
Chicago Chapter held a reception/meeting with Ambassador Tom Miller, the new President of the UNA USA. May 28, 2009.
4. The Role of US and British Allies in Congo's Resource War
Kambale Musavuli, Congolese Activist & Student Coordinator/Spokesperson for Friends of the Congo spoke on the conflict in Congo. May 20, 2009
5. Unity Walk and Peace Rally
The Chicago Commission on Human Relations hosted its tenth annual Unity Walk and Peace Rally on Saturday, Sept. 26, 2009. Event was co-sponsored by UNA-USA Chicago Chapter.
6. UNA Recruitment Desk at CPS High School Fair at McCormick Place.
7. Showing of the documentary film *The Reckoning: The Battle for the International Criminal Court*
In honor of International Justice Day and in commemoration of the adoption of the Rome Statute. After the film there was a panel discussion featuring Chicago-Kent College of Law Professor Bart Brown and Professor Daniel Rothenberg of DePaul University.
8. Events on Congo
Congo Crisis in Perspective: Artists, Activists, Researchers Speak Out. October 14, 2009,
Three Short Films and Discussion by Congolese Filmmaker Petna Ndaliko Katondolo
October 9, 2009. Both are UNA-USA Greater Chicago Chapter co-sponsored events.
9. Chicago International Education Conference
A collaboration between Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Sisters Cities and the Mayor's Office of International Relations. Chicago Chapter Board Members to represent UNA-USA Global Classrooms Program. Oct 2009

** Please note that not all events are listed here.*

On the Spotlight: UNA-USA Chicago Chapter Supports Local & Global Implementation of The Growing Connection

By: Sarah Elizabeth Ippel, Vice-President Education, UNA-USA Chicago



Megan Ellis, Founding Teacher at the Academy for Global Citizenship, plants EarthBoxes with students in Nyamuswa, Tanzania.

A Global Expedition

In July of 2009, two of AGC's founding teachers, Noa Goldberg and Megan Ellis, embarked on an adventure to Nyamuswa, Tanzania to implement The Growing Connection, a globally collaborative organic gardening initiative that connects students through sustainable food production around the world.

Excerpt from Noa and Megan:

The purpose of the journey was to plant the seeds of a relationship between the Academy for Global Citizenship and a school in Nyamuswa. In the first phase of the work we set up EarthBoxes at Ikizu A Primary School. We also established sustainable means of communication between Nyamuswan students and our students in Chicago. The second phase of work focused on collecting the cultural stories of Tanzanian children as well as pictures, videos, and artifacts of their everyday lives. These artifacts will give the students of AGC tangible examples of life in another country and will serve as a springboard for their inquiry and understanding of how their lives are similar and different from their global neighbors. We also took a one-day safari into the Serengeti to gather pictures and videos of the flora and fauna native to the experiences of Nyamuswan children. The students of AGC will use the culturally relevant stories of Nyamuswan students and the names of those students and their families to create empowering books unique to each student.

Creating a sister school partnership with Ikizu A Primary School will truly bring the students of the Academy for Global Citizenship into an international community of learners. It is not enough to teach an international curriculum - we must also foster personal and educational relationships between our students and students in other countries. Our hope is not only to enrich the education of our students but also to serve as a model for other schools that recognize the importance of growing global citizens.

About The Academy for Global Citizenship

The Academy for Global Citizenship (AGC) is a unique Chicago Public Contract School, located on the Southwest side of Chicago. Our mission is ambitious yet simple: to empower and nurture children with a broader understanding of the world around them and the positive role they can play in it.

Core values we teach and instill include: environmental sustainability, global citizenship and personal and communal responsibility. We welcomed our first students (kindergarten and first graders) in August 2008. Each year, we will add one grade level until eighth grade is reached in 2015-2016.

Our larger goal is to change and improve the way society educates the lifeblood of our future. Our children will be the environmental, social, and political stewards of tomorrow. We are committed to equipping them with the advantages and opportunities afforded by high self-esteem, unsurpassed education and the dream of potential.

About The Growing Connection

The Growing Connection (TGC) is a grassroots project developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) supported by a progressive coalition of private and public sector partners.

The Growing Connection links people and cultures in a revolutionary campaign that introduces low-cost water efficient and sustainable food growing innovations hand in hand with access to technology and information via existing and emerging technologies. It provides a sound educational foundation,

and offers hundreds of families, both in America and abroad, a concrete opportunity to earn income and climb out of desperation. Perhaps most important, The Growing Connection engages people – a network of committed individuals - in an elegant solution to one of humankind’s fundamental challenges.

How does it work? School gardening programs and community gardens around the world grow vegetables in an EarthBox system that becomes a common growing platform for all participants. Students grow food, conduct horticultural experiments and share their lessons and experiences with each other using IT connectivity. Through modern IT installations, The Growing Connection participants in a number of countries are directly linked. And importantly, they are also connected to sources of vital information and advice on growing food. Those once the most isolated can now grow, learn, and chose their own opportunities and destinies.

If you like to get involved in the growing connection please contact Sarah Elizabeth Ippel at: sarahelizabeth@agcchicago.org



The UN-NGO Conference in Mexico City

By: Marco Tavanti,

Professor of International Public Services at DePaul University and UNA-USA Chicago Broad Member

On September 9-11, 2009 UNA-USA members and International Public Service students of DePaul University in Chicago attended the 62nd Annual United Nations Non-governmental Organizations (NGO) Conference in Mexico City. Under this year's conference theme on disarmament as the condition for peace and development, they participate in the discussions, presented in a workshop and networked with about 1,400 other NGO representatives from more than 70 countries. The site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Mexico City was chosen to commemorate the historic "Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America" commonly known as the "Treaty of Tlatelolco," which was signed on 14 February 1967. The conference convened under the title and slogan "For Peace and Development: Disarm Now" in direct support of the Security Council summit on 24 September, chaired by President Barack Obama, to address nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. Disarmament is also the theme of the 2009 International Day of Peace.

Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon opened the conference inviting NGO representative to pressure State parties to comply with the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and transform the \$1 trillion global weapons industry. His candid invitation was to build on the moment in preparation of the review of the NPT's three pillars: disarmament; non-proliferation; and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Speaking in the picturesque Mexican ex-convento San Ipolito, he passionately asked for the support of this plan "to stop the bomb" (first introduced on October 24, 2008) to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. "The world is over-armed and peace is under-funded," Mr. Ban said. "I urge you, civil society and the NGO community, to continue speaking out to leaders across the board to stress that nuclear weapons are immoral and should not be accorded any military value."

Nobel Peace Laureate Jody Williams, the well-known passionate activist and organizer for the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, challenged the audience to stand behind the Un call for disarmament and peace. Ms. William said: *"If we lose this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to stop the world's nuclear arms race and start building sustainable peace and security in a world free of nuclear weapons, we could easily tip in the opposite direction and see a renewed and volatile arms race with an increasing number of players."*

DePaul participants observed how "disarmament" alone cannot be achieved unless a true education for the promotion of a culture of peace is not implemented by universities, NGOs and all stakeholders. Investment in weapons instead than people prevents achieving human security and human development. The voice of various speakers and NGO representative was unanimous in calling Governments worldwide to cut defense budgets in favor of poverty reduction and sustainable development. The United Nations system, whit all its imperfections and needed reform is still the most important institution that reminds us how investing in human development is building human Security. In the last decade countries have increased their military spending of 40 percent in spite the

world economic crisis, environmental degradation and world poverty. Military overspending is clearly preventing to support global efforts to achieve the millennium development goals (MDGs) and the essential forms of human security such as having access to adequate food, schools, water and jobs.

The UNA-USA Greater Chicago Chapter shares the responsibility to support Secretary General Ban and President Obama's leadership on disarmament for peace and development. DePaul University, as the first American academic institution recognized by the United Nations as an NGO, is committed to educate for a culture of peace, social justice and conflict resolution. Prof. Pat Szczerba and Dr. Marco Tavanti (UNA-USA Chicago Board Member) have been coordinating the participation in the conferences along with numerous collaborative activities with UN ambassadors, offices and programs. This is the second year that the DPI/NGO Conference was hosted UN Headquarters in New York City. Last year, the 61st Annual Conference, dedicated to "Reaffirming Human Rights for All," was suitably held in Paris, France, where the Universal Declaration for Human Rights was adopted six decades earlier. DePaul students and alumni wanted to do more than participate in a UN conference. They wanted to concretely contribute to building peace, solving conflicts and promoting development. After spending three days building dialogue and alleviate tensions in violent communities and divided indigenous organizations in Chiapas, they came to the conference in Mexico City, sharing about the University and NGO partnership for Chiapas disarmament, peace and development.



Model UN: Jumping Off The Page

By: Peggy Fleming, Saint Ignatius College Prep Senior

To those who have not had the privilege of experiencing the wonders of the Model United Nations world firsthand, MUN probably appears as an activity reserved for the highbrow, studious percentage of the high school population who like to hear themselves talk. On paper, MUN may seem like a form of research symposium or a debate match. While MUN conferences do incorporate both elements of research and public speaking skills, the experience of participating in one goes above and beyond that of any other activity. Model UN exclusively gives students the chance to live out real world situations, as opposed to simply researching or discussing what already happened. Many claim that MUN is an amazing opportunity for shaping the leaders of tomorrow; the reason that MUN can do this better than any other activity is because it allows students to take the

information they have learned and apply it by stepping into the shoes of actual leaders and solving the problems themselves. The world could learn a thing or two from the delegates at MUN conferences.

I got the chance to truly dive into this aspect of MUN last January when I attended CMUNCE –Columbia University’s annual Model United Nations conference for high school students. I represented Robert Phillips, Director of Counter Intelligence for the CIA in the CIA – KGB joint crisis committee which was simulated during the Cold War circa 1953. My research of the historical events and the time period helped me to understand what was going on in my committee and my speaking skills helped me to better convey my ideas to other delegates in the cabinet, but in the end it was problem solving skills and the ability to quickly react to crises that ensured success. Throughout the weekend my fellow delegates were faced with assassination attempts, security breaches, nuclear threats and espionage. We were all forced to think on our feet and work together to achieve our common goal. It was an exhilarating feeling to work with people who actually valued my opinion and counted on my advice for success. I have never felt so powerful. That experience truly showed me how much I can make a difference and made me realize my ability to create change by serving as a leader.

Model United Nations does this for every student that chooses to participate. Once you are assigned your position you are given the unique power to be able to change the world. The beauty of the entire process is that by the end, you realize the power is not so unique—anyone can possess it if you have the determination to make a difference.

Model UN in Forming the Teenage Psyche

By: Peter Haleas, 2009 St. Ignatius College Prep Senior

It is a common held notion today that teenagers need to be exceedingly active and participatory in an astronomical amount of clubs and teams to supposedly build (that oft used yet perpetually undefined term) “character”. Adolescents are notorious for their noxiously ignorant and misinformed opinions about sociological, economic, and political affairs. Furthermore there is always the persistent and justifiably ageless stereotype of low-shouldered teenagers with inexpressive idiosyncrasies and apathetic attitudes, obsessed solely with the marketing whims of popular culture and in turn purposefully shunning the current events surrounding “higher” society. Worse yet, school atmospheres seem to be proliferating and crafting these misperceptions into fleshed reality. One club however is slowly jettisoning these abysmal “characteristics” and is instead edifying the erudition of students nationwide.

Model United Nations challenges social irresponsibility directly by highlighting the common issues that lattice together the human race, and by daring students to create pragmatic

solutions for idealistic causes. Currently, the expanse of world problems are feuds between rapper moguls and divorces of famous actresses, yet instead of allowing teenagers to submerge themselves in these trite marketing ploys, Model UN conversely breeds students whom are politically charged, comprehensive, and engaged. When asked if he was learning anything from his Model UN experiences in committee, Samuel Frith of St. Ignatius College Prep explained: *“Learned is too passive a word here, I would instead say immersed. In my OPEC committee I was challenged in simulations to compose a resolution that would help curb the rise of oil prices, while also ensuring market stability for the producers. With that committee I was not a Model UN delegate, the word model was nowhere to be found, I was in body, mind, and soul a struggler for oil rights. After the conference I embedded myself in information pertinent to the oil situation and have pursued it actively as a hobby ever since. As a matter of fact, shortly after the conference I was debating with my uncle who is an oil stock analyst and he was just astounded by my ability to evenly challenge him in debate after only four days in a committee session.”*

Indeed it is evident that Model United Nations is creating a more genuine political interest and instilling phenomenally informed, erudite political sentiments in those same disinterested teens. Model UN serves as a political boiler for students in that first they enter with lukewarm opinions and yet slowly they rise into a bubbled blast of fervor.

In addition to making teenagers more politically aware, Model UN also is breeding sensational communicators and public speakers, which through the debates and negotiations of committee become masters of spoken prose with a singular bureaucratic flair. *“It changes your mindset really. Before I was “that shy kid”, but now I’m a go to person for presentations in classes. After I make a speech for a now dumbfounded teacher, they always then collect themselves and chuckle, “of course you must be one of the Model UN kids.” These are lessons I never could have gotten from sports or any other club,”* George Holding of St. Ignatius College Prep shared a near universal sentiment. The Model United Nations process is budding and gestating the leaders for a new generation, exceptional in conduct, platform, and voice. Even on a personal level many students have claimed that Model UN has helped them understand friends and family better and also to communicate better with them.

With all the apocalyptic fears and future worries surrounding people today, it appears we can all expel a collective sigh of relief and also extol the virtues of Model United Nations, for if this activity continues to form such empowered and aware young men and women it’s easy to see; the world is in good hands.

The Reckoning- Battle for the International Criminal Court

*By HuiHui Ooi, UNA USA Chicago Summer Intern
Miami University of Oxford, Ohio*

On July 17, the film *The Reckoning: The Battle for the International Criminal Court* and a panel discussion was presented at the Chicago-Kent College of Law. This was to honor International Justice Day and in commemoration of the adoption of the Rome Statute, the treaty that established and now governs the International Criminal Court.

The event was sponsored by the Chicago chapter of the UNA-USA, Amnesty International, the Chicago Alliance for the ICC (CAICC) and Chicago-Kent College of Law, started with the movie viewing. The film showed the formation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the struggles it faces with establishing its role in prosecuting leaders of states charged with crimes like training children to become soldiers and the massacre of innocent people. The ICC does not have the support from three of the world's most powerful countries- the United States of America, China and Russia yet continues to have more countries join its ranks. The countries of Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Columbia and Sudan were brought up in the film and used as primary examples to highlight the ICC's struggles and efforts in trying to arrest criminals like Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, Joseph Kony and Omar al-Bashir who were proven to have committed crimes against humanity.

A panel discussion moderated by Attorney Dan Thomann featured Bart Brown- a Chicago-Kent College of Law Professor and Daniel Rothenberg- the Managing Director of International Projects for DePaul University was conducted immediately after the film. The main issues discussed were the future of the ICC, the effectiveness of the court, and speculation as to whether the US, China and Russia will one day join the ICC. The panelists all agreed that this film is an inspiration and provides the victims some hope and justice. This event was attended by about 35 people including a group of Chinese Law students currently doing a summer program at Chicago-Kent College of Law.

Focus on Congo

By: Janet Bean, Vice President Programs, UNA-USA Chicago

The Chicago UNA-USA chapter was honored to host, during our May 20th Board of Directors meeting, an informative presentation and follow up Q&A on the state of conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Our guest speaker was Mr. Kambale Musavuli, a Congolese student activist and representative for the Washington, D.C. based organization Friends of the Congo. A not for profit organization since 2004, Friends of the Congo work with “Congolese human rights and grassroots institutions to bring about peaceful and lasting change in the Democratic Republic of Congo, formerly Zaire.”

Mr. Musavuli, spoke insightfully and passionately about the DRC and the role outside forces have played in maintaining a habitual state of impoverishment and violence in such a resource rich nation. Mr. Musavuli’s presentation titled; “Conflict in Congo: The Role of US and British Allies in Congo's Resource War.” educated us through his thoughtful analysis and slide show presentation.

Mr. Musavuli spoke at length on Congo’s recent history; most notably the last 12 years during which two devastating wars have taken place. The first in 1997 saw the ousting of the notoriously criminal and U.S. supported dictator, Mobutu Sese-Seko. Mobutu, who fled to Morocco, was replaced by the Rwandan, Ugandan and Angolan backed rebel Laurent Kabila. Leader of the rebel movement, Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo or AFDL, Laurent Kabila irked his backers, primarily Rwanda and Uganda, by demanding their withdrawal from Congo. This prompted the second war in 1998. Referred to as Africa’s First World War it involved 5 other African nations. This second war formally ended in 2002, a year after the assassination of Laurent Kabila, with the Sun City Accords signed by several of the warring parties during peace talks held in South Africa.

Despite the Sun City Accord, the construction of an interim government led by Laurent Kabila’s, son Joseph Kabila and the subsequent election of Joseph Kabila in 2006—this was the country’s first democratically held election since the 1960 election of Patrice Lumumba as Prime Minister—the country remains in a state of constant conflict. Warring parties have been many; the Congolese Army, the Rwandan Army, Ugandan State forces, local militias referred to as Mai Mai and countless rebel forces backed by outside interlopers with their eyes on Congo’s prize.

The endless bloodshed has produced deaths in greater number than any other conflict of the 20th century. It is said to have amassed a death toll only second to that of World War II. Estimates place the dead at over 6 million. Over 75% of the population has been affected either directly or indirectly by the violence. Sexual violence perpetrated in unprecedented numbers against women and girl children has destroyed, as is its intent, not just the lives of those attacked but deep foundational social structures.

The explanation for this crisis often appears to be so complex as to be impenetrable and thus hopeless, but it is not. Why does this chaos and bloodshed, this violence and poverty persist? It persists because of the vast natural resources; some of the most coveted in the world that lies within Congo's borders. This is Congo's prize and this is Congo's curse.

The scramble for Congo's resources is not a new one. The raping of Congo's resources began long ago under the reign of King Leopold II of Belgium with the brutal culling of its ivory and forced harvesting of its rubber through Congolese slave labor. Leopold's tyrannical reign, of the erroneously named Congo Free State, from 1885 to 1908 resulted in the halving of Congo's population. The raping continues today with the continued scramble for its resources. The world has swapped its lust for Congo's rubber and ivory for its other resources: minerals, diamonds, gold, oil, timber and more.

Part of the Congo exists not only in many of the gemmed baubles we buy, but also in our cell phones, our lap tops, our DVD players, and our latest aerodynamic engineering feats in the form of coltan, cassiterite, copper, cobalt, tin and niobium. The uranium used in the bombs dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima was mined in Congo. These natural substances are what fuel the violence. Their illegal extraction buys the guns that in turn terrorize the population.

This illegal extraction, primarily taking place in the eastern portion of the country bordering Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi is not just the work of rebel groups and invading armies, but also major world corporations based in Europe, China, the USA, Africa and Asia which are operating under fraudulently unfair mining deals.

The United Nations, through the peace keeping operation known as MONUC, has played a significant role in peace keeping efforts in the region. MONUC, created after the 1999 Lusaka Cease Fire Agreement, is the UN's largest peace keeping operation in effect today. It is comprised of 51 nations, 17 of which are African. But it is not just MONUC where the UN has played a leading role in working to end this violence. The UN has also played a leading role in documenting players and contributing factors in the conflict through expert reports and resolutions.

The International Criminal Court is also doing its part having indicted and placed on trial 3 Congolese war lords formerly operating with impunity. The world is slowly taking notice. Media is finally getting information out there. Secretary of State; Hillary Rodham Clinton visited Congo this August urging her audience "to speak out. Speak out to end the corruption, the violence, the conflict that for too long have eroded the opportunities across this country."

The end of King Leopold's reign was ushered through in no small part by the efforts of Mark Twain and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's writings in 1905 and 1909. Twain's work, King Leopold's Soliloquy and Doyle's, The Crime of the Congo brought to the public's attention atrocities committed in a land far removed from their consciousness. Atrocities committed to satisfy their lust for the newly massed produced automobile, the telegraph and telephone all requiring Congo's rubber.

We must again rise to the call from our Congolese brothers and sisters and decry this violence, decry corporate theft of their resources, decry countries that hide behind past injustices they've endured while committing injustices upon Congo with impunity. And we must decry actions taken by outsiders, in the name of working toward solving this conflict, that benefit the actor over the Congolese. We must stand with Congo in working towards creating a space in which the Congolese themselves can create a political framework that speaks to their needs and ambitions, that moves this dynamic and beautiful country towards achieving a peaceful and prosperous society.

For more information on the UN's Peace Keeping mission in Congo please visit:

<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/monuc/>

To read the UN's 2001 "Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo" visit:

<http://www.un.org/News/dh/latest/drcongo.htm>

To read all other UN sponsored reports on the Democratic Republic of Congo visit

<http://www0.un.org/apps/news/docs.asp?Topic=Democratic+Republic+of+the+Congo&Type=Report>

For information on the ICC proceedings currently underway against Congolese war lords visit:

<http://www.icc-cpi.int/Menu/ICC/Situations+and+Cases/Situations/Situation+ICC+0104/>

For more background on the conflict visit: <http://www.hrw.org/africa/democratic-republic-congo>

To get involved in ending this violence please visit: FriendsOfTheCongo.org and CongoWeek.org

International Justice Mission's Year in Uganda

By: Sara Williams Staley, Long-Term Fellow International Justice Mission

I awake to the “sweep, sweep, sweep” of a broom and a vendor forcefully and urgently shouting the word matoke (a staple food in Uganda) outside of my window. I snap out of my dream and promptly begin to get ready for the day. Grabbing our travel mugs full of Ugandan coffee and pausing long enough to listen to our freshly downloaded NPR five-minute news summary, my husband Jamie and I rush out the door to begin another day in the “Pearl of Africa.”

We make the ten-minute walk to our office, turning down rides from several boda boda (motorcycle taxi) drivers along the way. Cars zip past me as I maneuver around the potholes, livestock, and other random hazards – a ritual that has become both endearing and mildly irritating. We reach the office just in time for Morning Prayer – International Justice Mission (IJM) is a faith-based organization, and every day is begun this way.

Jamie and I pile in the car at 9:00am along with several of our colleagues. Today we are both headed to IJM’s project area, a mostly rural county approximately forty minutes outside of Kampala, the capital city in which we live. We plan to split up once we get there: Jamie will be conducting a community legal education in a small village and I will be meeting with several organizations to determine whether their services could benefit our clients. We drop off Jamie and our colleagues involved in the legal education first; they set up their presentation and wait for the first community members to trickle in. If this is a typical education, 50-100 people will attend to learn about inheritance rights under the law of succession and how to write a valid will.

In Uganda, succession-related property grabbing is a prevalent human rights issue that largely affects the most vulnerable of society: widows and orphans. According to traditional tribal practice, when a woman’s husband dies or when a child’s parents die, the brother of the late is expected to take over the land and care for the widow and orphans left behind. However, with the onset of individual (as opposed to tribal) land ownership and the rapidly ascending value of land, powerful family or community members will claim ownership rights to the late’s property with little or no regard for the welfare of the widow and children.

It takes surprisingly little to push a widow and children off of their land. Often they do not know their inheritance rights and, even if they do, perpetrators commonly threaten violence or will actually remove the widow and children by force. Further crippling these victims is their nearly nonexistent access to justice. Culturally, women and children are regarded as having few rights in Uganda – though the law dictates otherwise. Additionally, the poor cannot make the “grease payments” – or flat out bribes - that the justice system demands. A policeman may insist that gas is put in his car before he will drive to the scene of the crime or may require the victim to pay for the photocopies and files needed for a proper police report. And certainly if a widow or orphan cannot afford these things, an advocate is out of the question. Whatever the scenario, one thing is certain. Without their land, a

widow and her children are not likely to survive. Uganda is an agricultural society and, with most people making less than a dollar a day, an unskilled widow's only hope for food and shelter comes from what she can grow and build herself – on her land.

And this brings us back to my husband and several IJM lawyers, who are spending the day educating the community so that potential perpetrators and victims, as well as the community-at-large, understand the protection Ugandan law provides for widows and orphans. Afterward, they will invite attendees to report cases of property grabbing. A team of IJM lawyers will review these reports to determine whether IJM can intervene, providing the victim a pro bono advocate who will work to restore her property to her through mediation and, if necessary, civil and/or criminal suits.

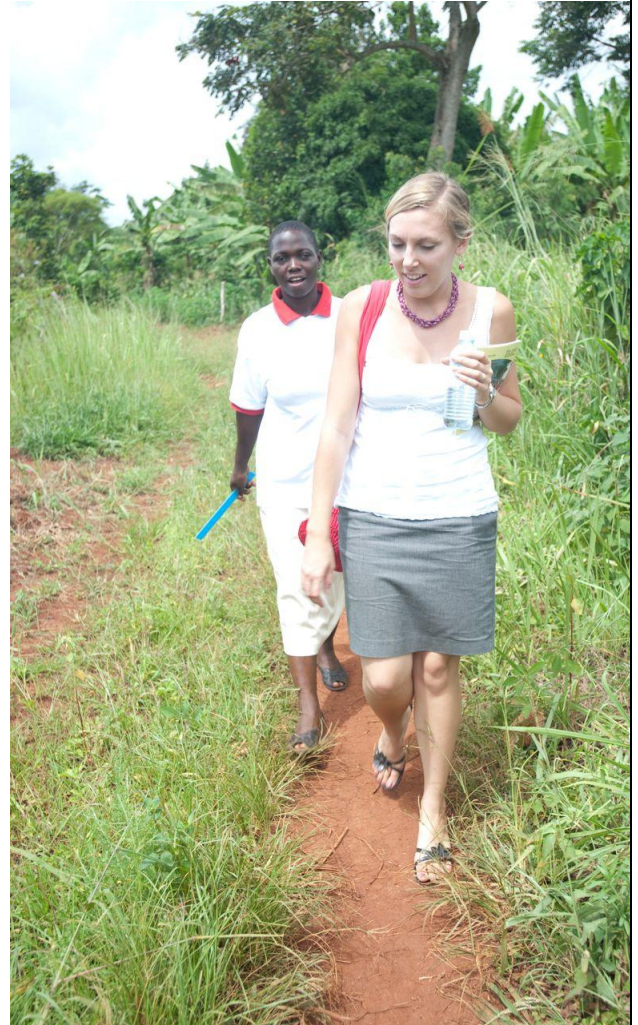
I leave the legal education team and travel on to another rural village. Here I visit an organization that provides education to destitute children through child sponsorship. Our clients are very poor and lack even basic necessities. Providing both psychosocial support and other social services is vital to the development of a thriving and self-sustaining life situation for them. IJM social workers and contract counselors help the victim through the dual trauma they have experienced due to the loss of a loved one and their livelihoods. However, other pressing services are met through partner organizations, and that is what I am doing today – meeting with other organizations to determine whether they would be a good fit for partnership with IJM. I move on from the child sponsorship organization – we established that IJM can refer twenty children to them per year if we hold a legal education for the caretakers of their sponsored children (note: draft a Memorandum of Understanding ASAP)!

I visit an organization that educates women in microenterprise, another that provides wheel chairs for the elderly, and a third that distributes antiretroviral drugs for HIV+ community members. I am tired, but feel accomplished – a long day of documenting these meetings is ahead of me tomorrow.

We pick up the legal education folks and head back to Kampala. Indian food sounds good for dinner tonight, so Jamie and I head to our favorite restaurant, Pavement Tandoori, with some friends. All is quiet except for the wild dogs, car horns, and rooster crows as we drift off to sleep. Ah, this is Africa...

Sara Staley and her husband Jamie are long-term fellows with International Justice Mission, a human rights organization that secures justice for victims of slavery, sexual exploitation, gender-based violence and other forms of violent oppression. IJM lawyers, investigators and aftercare professionals work with local officials to ensure immediate victim rescue and aftercare, to prosecute perpetrators and to promote functioning public justice systems. Learn more at www.IJM.org.

Pictures from Sarah Staley's Visit to Uganda



Mission Trip to Ghana and Nigeria

By: Sandra Reed, Director

Myria Reed Foundation for Children with Special Needs

On May 14-27, 2009, a team of eight from Uptown Baptist Church of Chicago, Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA USA), and Myria Reed Foundation for Children with Special Needs went on a mission trip to Ghana and Nigeria. The team members consisted of Pastor Michael Allen and Pastor Laudariji (co-Leaders), Doug Nguyen (team administrator), David Onouha, Laura Jarrett, John Amissah, Autumn Krause, and of course myself Sandra Reed. To have such a diverse group of people from Jamaica, Ghana, Nigeria, Belize, Florida and Louisiana representing many parts of the world was such a blessing. The purpose of this trip was to take much needed supplies and encouragement to mission groups, orphanages and a woman medical center and have an impact on spiritual and humanitarian needs. Acts 1: 8 was the team's challenge and inspiration: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and the ends of the earth."

This challenge led the team to Ghana and Nigeria. Both countries are so much similar and yet very different, but they both carry the scars of slavery. In these two countries, people work intensely hard to improve their way of life, but there is a big need for better health facilities, fewer deaths among children, running water, electricity in homes and greater educational opportunities. The monumental problem is the dark shadow of inequality and abusiveness that lingers over the lives of women and children. In Nigeria and Ghana's culture there are underlying impediments that affect the lives of women and children and hinder their progress into a more free and unrestrictive society.

When the team arrived in Ghana, First Tema Baptist Church under the leadership of Rev. O.K. Nkrahene and Rev. Dr. Dora Bortey, welcomed us warmly. They assigned each team member to a perfectly matched host family, which gave each person a good opportunity to understand as well as become a part of the culture. First Tema members organized and meticulously planned the four-day itinerary, which was educational, spiritual, enjoyable and hassle free and the women played a vital role. The Ghanaian women are exceptional leaders and entrepreneurs. First Tema Baptist Church is doing an excellent job with their outreach services by adopting and supporting other churches in Ghana, which also house schools. We had an opportunity to participate in a two-day outdoor crusade in Bethlehem Tema-East, which is a poverty-stricken area. The team witnessed children and adults, searching for faith, hope and love. Seeing all the humble children coming for blessings and prayers was a cathartic moment. The following day, we visited mission churches and several one-room dilapidated schoolhouses; the children excitedly huddled around us, singing and pleading for whatever goodies individual team members offered them. The children have so little yet do not ask for much. Ghanaians are religious, moralistic and have strong family values. You can sense the independent spirit shining brightly through the lives of the women, who run the open-air-markets, which are

organized and carefully regulated. Regardless of the poverty and the lack of vital resources, you can still feel the positive changes that are emerging in Ghana.

While visiting the Cape Coast Castle in Ghana, many of us retraced the steps of our ancestors. When we visited the dungeons where the slaves were held captive and peered through the “door of no return”, it gave us a different perspective of life in Africa. This was a healing moment for many on the team and a harsh reflection of the past, but the scars of slavery have instilled fortitude, tenacity, stamina, and integrity in many Africans. As an African-American, this historical moment strikes a chord. Walking the brutal path of my ancestors and being reminded of why it is so important to embrace my heritage, shines the light on what we need to do as a people. Martin Luther King Jr. said it best, "Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, struggle and the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals."

You can see the sufferings and struggles in Nigeria, which is a disorderly nation and over populated. When the team arrived in Nigeria, corruption and inefficiency polluted the air, Regardless of the danger, it was important for the team to bring needed support to various groups. We first visited Dignified Youth Development Mission in Lagos, Nigeria led by the director Christiana Bola A. Adeniyi. “Their vision is to be an efficient, focused and ethical organization contributing to raising uncommon and healthy future leaders with power and integrity in Nigeria and other parts of the world.” They work especially with orphans and vulnerable children. The work that they are doing is commendable. After a one-day stay in Lagos, we traveled to Umuahia, Nigeria escorted by three military security guards. We visited Motherless Babies Home and Sister Mary Anita Ogbonna shared with us the conditions and ongoing problems at the orphanage. We toured the facility and had a chance to interact with the children and felt their heartfelt excitement through their gazing eyes. Visiting both orphanages gave the team a chance to witness the positive works that these organizations are doing. It felt so good delivering the needed clothes, games, school supplies, and especially giving our love and support.

The team then took a long journey to Jos, Nigeria, and on arrival, we stayed in ECWA (Evangelical Church of West Africa) mission house. Once we settled in, we had dinner at a Baptist Mission House, where the mission leaders debriefed us on their work among the various tribes and enormous need for volunteers, finances and others to adopt a people group. The next day we visited Urban Frontier Mission, which has a rehabilitation program that empowers young college students that are addicted to alcohol and drugs. During our visit we heard some powerful testimonies from these young people, especially how their lives have changed. Touring the facilities, we saw a great need for computers to continue training the students; the measly five computers were outdated and archaic.

Because of the massive and threatening needs in Nigeria, Evangelical Church of West Africa, one of the largest church denominations in Nigeria, has established mission stations, bible schools, academic schools and medical schools. One of their outreach facilities is Evangel Hospital for Women, which also houses SIM Medical Center. Touring the facility, we saw the emotional and physical scars of mostly Muslim women. According to the one of the physicians, the girls are forced at the early age of nine into marriage. Pregnancy is a big concern at such a young age because their bodies are not fully developed by the time they are forced to bear children. Young girls may have vascular fistula because the womb is too small, the child cannot come out, and so when they give birth the vagina may burst into the bladder. Some of the women patients have a condition called enterocutaneous fistula; they develop a leak in their intestines, which result in stool leaking out their abdominal wounds or their vaginas and surgery is imperative to renew the bladder. With the help of Chicago Pacific Garden Mission, we were able to donate medical supplies. Most of the women come to the hospital very sick, dehydrated, severely malnourished and anemic and some naked and near death. What we witness and heard brought tears to our eyes. Most of the women are illiterate, but they do go through rehabilitation, counseling, and have classes in arts and crafts.

This mission trip to Ghana and Nigeria was such an awesome experience. The needs are so great and the workers are so few. One of the most significant solutions is the voices of the youth, which can bring about real transformation to both countries. During our visit, we saw the spirit, determination, tenacity, eagerness and stamina of the youth. Regardless of dire poverty, lack of running water and electricity, chaos and corruption, The Ghanaians and Nigerians still have traditions, integrity and family values and cannot survive without the faith and strength of women and the innocence and fortitude of children.

Myria Reed Foundation for Children with Special Needs is a not-for-profit 501©(3) organization that was established on May 31, 2000, in order to provide the necessary resources and tools that will assist special needs children in finding their way in an already difficult world. Our motto is "Help one child today."

Pictures from Sandra Reed's Visit to Ghana & Nigeria



