



JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION
MISSIONARY OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE – ZAMBIA DELEGATION

Box 320009, 11 Ng’umbo Road. Lusaka, Zambia. Tel: 260-1-257341
www. omizambia.org.zm/ccjdp

Email: oblates@zamnet.zm

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OMI ZAMBIA SETS UP JPIC DESK

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate Zambia Delegation Council resolved to set up a Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) desk at the Administration office in Lusaka. This was during the council meeting of March, 2007.

The goal of the office will be to coordinate activities of JPIC in all Oblate Units. Currently, there is a structure in place that deals with issues of Justice and Peace in all Oblate parishes in the Western Province. This is under the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC)’s Catholic Commission for Justice Development and Peace (CCJDP), which coordinates such activities in Zambia.

Though there is a difference in terminology, JPIC and CCJDP have the same objectives therefore Oblates will collaborate and work together with the vision of the CCJDP in Zambia. Oblates have been vigorous in setting up and strengthening the activities of the CCJDP in all their Units.

JPIC will carry the OMI mandate from the Acts of the 34th General Chapter of the Missionary Oblates of 2004, which states: “*Oblate Units develop a program of community life, formation, and ministry that will promote Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.*”

The Chapter further mentions that, “*Oblates will live values of JPIC in our own personal lives, integrating all our various daily activities towards making an important contribution to the construction of a more just society.*”

The Chapter also challenges Oblates to help form people towards making an impact in the areas of politics, public policy, and decision-making. We hope that through this newsletter, we will be able to share the activities of the Oblates in the areas of Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation.

We felt that JPIC other than CCJDP terminology will be more appropriate in our parishes because the United States Oblate Province, to whom we belong, has a similar department. This will help us coordinate our activities better with the Province. However, activities and people involved in this grouping have not changed.

COMMERCIAL TREE CUTTING IN LUKULU: A CALL TO CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

A land without trees becomes susceptible to droughts that in turn create deserts. The Western Province area (and Lukulu district in particular) is a semi-desert, an extension of the Kalahari desert, which need plantations of more trees. Cutting down of trees on a commercial scale, is more likely to impact on the environment negatively in this area and it would be catastrophic in years to come.

The Government of Zambia has awarded concession licenses to Easi-Build Zambia Limited and Zambezi Hardwood to exploit the forest in Lukulu. These companies will be trading in selected trees, such as Muzauli and Mukwa.

Even though the two companies have already started cutting down trees, several fundamental considerations need to be observed. The companies have the responsibility to cultivate a nursery of trees and plant two trees for every tree cut down. However, for Mukwa and Muzauli trees, it takes an average of a hundred years to grow to maturity. Are these companies going to replace the same species of the trees lost?

We have to realize that forests are an integral part of the eco-system and hence the need to be protected by all means. They produce economic income means for the local population. It is for this reason that the two companies have a responsibility to the environment and the people living within the selected forest reserves.

The question that must be in the minds of every Lukulu resident is whether government and the forest department carried out an environmental assessment to find out the impact that it will have on the forest and indeed the environment?

Lukulu district has no proper road network, with the heavy load of trucks transporting wood, the already bad state of Lukulu road will continue to deteriorate further. Will these companies be responsible for the maintenance and repair of the road as a result of the heavy traffic?

We have seen in the past that most of the companies operate on the principle of “maximizing profits and minimizing costs.” As of now, the forest department in Lukulu does not have a vehicle to carry out any monitoring exercises on the activities of the companies. How does the government make the companies accountable if they have no means of monitoring the activities?

Trees are natural resources of Lukulu district; as a result these resources have to benefit the people of Lukulu. It is for this reason that this needs assessment be carried out, to find out what the local population will benefit from these resources. So far the companies have made promises of renovating some schools, but nothing substantial is being done on the ground

JPIC would like to urge the people of Lukulu to call upon Easi-Build Zambia Limited and Zambezi Hardwood to be responsible, transparent and accountable for their actions in the district. This is because they have the duty to protect the environment and plough back into the local community in terms of infrastructure development.

We (JPIC) have also called upon the members of parliament for both Lukulu East and Lukulu West to monitor the activities of the two companies.

OMI ZAMBIA SPEAKS OUT AGAINST VULTURE FUNDS

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) Zambia Delegation, a catholic religious congregation of priest and brothers working in Zambia recently joined the many voices within and outside Zambia in campaigning against the vulture funds scam involving Donegal International.

In 1999, Donegal International bought a debt owed by Zambia, originally worth \$15 million and then valued at about \$30 million, for a knock-down price of \$3.3 million. It then sued Zambia for the full amount, plus interest and costs which went to a staggering total of over \$55 million! On the 15th of February 2007, a London court rejected the size of Donegal’s claim, but said that under law it is still entitled to some payment from Zambia.

Fr. Joseph Phiri, OMI, the Superior of the Oblates in Zambia said that Zambian citizens need to rally behind the call for Donegal International to withdraw their monetary claim on Zambia. He said despite the matter being a legal one, it would be morally right for the company to withdraw the claim and the benefit would give a chance for most poor people in Zambia to have access to better health, send their children to school and have access to clean and safe water.

At the time Donegal International bought this debt cheaply, Zambia was already eligible for debt relief and seeking to extract money from a country that has recently received life saving debt cancellation is inhumane. OMI urged Donegal not to demand this money as Zambia cannot afford to pay it out.

Zambia's debt cancellation has begun to pay with an increase in the number of teachers and medical personnel so far recruited. The Donegal International's cancellation of its claim is a matter of life and death for most Zambians. OMI urged Mr. Michael Sheehan, the owner of DAI and Donegal International to reverse the decision that would deny millions of Zambians from accessing essential services of health, education and sanitation.

A number of Zambians and civil activists based in and outside the country participated in the campaign by calling Mr. Sheenan, asking him to withdraw his plans.