



International JPIC Newsletter

Economic Justice

Volume 1
March 2020



Table of Contents

INTRO	2
 PRAY	 5
<i>On Risk-taking and Visioning</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Way of the Cross for Economic and Ecological Justice</i>	<i>6</i>
 LEARN	 7
<i>Background on China's Economy</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>The Price of Militarism</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>NAFTA 2.0</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>The Teashop Boy</i>	<i>12</i>
 ACT	 15
<i>Two New Livelihood Projects</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Educating the Educators</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>"Everything is connected"</i>	<i>17</i>
 ADVOCATE	 18
<i>Working with government to address poverty</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Justice for Laborers!</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Public Witness for Justice</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Civic Engagement</i>	<i>20</i>
 IN THE NEXT ISSUE	 21
 JPIC DIRECTORY	 22



Welcome to the International JPIC Newsletter

By Amy Woolam Echeverria, Co-Editor

I recently had a meeting with the head of the Vatican State Department, Cardinal Parolin. When I introduced myself as Columban, he smiled and said affectionately, "You're the ones that cause all the noise in the Philippines!" I smiled back and said just as affectionately, "We are, and lots of other places too!"

As I read the articles coming in for this inaugural publication, a sense of joy welled up inside of me. It was almost like seeing the Society again for the first time, after nearly 20 years since I first began in Chile.

It is humbling to be part of the Society's long tradition of JPIC that is noisy for justice, peace, dialogue, healing, reconciliation for our common home; to be a ministry that is intimately linked to preaching the joy of the gospel and at the heart of mission.

The stories that follow and the people who tell them speak for themselves. I can only express my gratitude to all who form part of the JPIC team for their dedicated work, often in very difficult realities.

I pray that this new newsletter, initiated by the team itself, will serve to strengthen the bonds of communion and collaboration in our missionary endeavors around the world.

We invite you to share our newsletter with others and let us know what you think!

In peace and gratitude!

Amy



Reflections on Economic Justice

By Wesley Coccozello, Co-Editor

In the struggle against injustice, advocates are always asking, "what is the root causes of this problem?"

What is the root cause of climate change?

What is the root cause of mass migration?

What is the root cause of extreme militarism?

While issues as complex as these three cannot be attributed to only one factor, scratch below the surface and you'll find a root cause that they all have in common: economic injustice.

Climate change is partially the consequence of the commodification of God's creation and the excessive consumption of natural resources by a wealthy few.

Mass migration is partially the consequence of one-sided free trade agreements that destabilize economies and neglectful government policies that allow for the exploitation of workers.

Extreme militarism is partially the consequence of a "profit-at-any-cost" mindset that prioritizes the interests of a few corporations and governments over the common good of everyone.

In our inaugural international JPIC newsletter, you will read stories about Columbians fighting against all three of these injustices and initiating projects that offer the world a glimpse of a more just way forward.

In our Society's [statement on economic justice](#), we say that "economic poverty is a form of violence against the dignity of the human person." That's because poverty takes away an individual's right to be the protagonist of their own destiny.

As believers in the God of liberation, we have an obligation to "support the struggle of the poor for real participation and against injustice."

As the threats we are facing around the world seem to be intensifying, how can each of us be an example of a better way forward? How can each of us, in small ways and in big ways, say "yes!" to an economy that allows *everyone* to thrive. ■



Mark Your Calendars! The Economy of Francesco

The Economy of Francesco is an international meeting between young scholars and activists in the field of economics, convened by Pope Francis.

The title of the event clearly refers to the saint of Assisi, an example par excellence of care for the least of the earth and for an integral ecology, but it also refers to Pope Francis. Ever since he wrote *Evangelii Gaudium* and then *Laudato Si'*, he has denounced the pathological state of so much of the world's economy, extending an invitation to put in place a new economic model.

The Holy Father met with the Bishop of Assisi, Domenico Sorrentino and the economist Luigino Bruni, Professor of Political Economy at Lumsa because of his genuine concern for the world. The idea of addressing the challenges of the economy, starting from the thought and economic action of young people, was supported enthusiastically by the Holy Father. This resulted in a call addressed to young economists and entrepreneurs of the world.

An international gathering of young scholars and activists will take place in Assisi from November 19-21, 2020.

Learn more about this project [here](#).

Upcoming JPIC Days of Prayer & Action

- March 22: World Water Day
- April 22: Earth Day
- May 1: Labor Day
- June 12: World Day Against Child Labor



On Risk-taking and Visioning

By Ellen Teague, UK

I learnt a new word recently: “financialisation.” This is the phenomenon by which finance and its way of thinking have come to dominate every corner of business, and inflict damage on the entire economic system, as well as the world’s natural life systems.

As people of faith, the world we want is marked by equity, inclusion, liberation, justice, solidarity, and interdependency. In this world, Earth’s natural gifts are used sustainably.

Each of us plays a different roles in the pursuit of this ideal.

Some of us are **frontline responders**, who quickly transition into rapid-response mode and organise communications.

Some of us are **healers**, who tend to the intergenerational trauma of capitalism, patriarchy, and the breakdown of ecosystems.

Some of us are **storytellers and artists**, binding the past and the present, channeling the histories and experiences of our ancestors to shed light on what is possible today.

Some of us are **bridge builders**, who can work across divisions with patience and compassion.

Some of us are **disruptors**, who speak up and take action even when it’s uncomfortable and risky.

Some of us are **visionaries**, with the ability to articulate and reconnect us to our values and visions.

Consider this: what are the injustices that outrage us, and push us to act? Where can we take bolder risks, especially if we hold different forms of privilege?

Columban missionaries build bridges between Christians and people of other faiths to tackle climate change, to take action to protect the Amazon rainforest, and to support refugees. We highlight the visionaries – some of whom are environmental martyrs – who say that the world needs ‘system change’ not climate change. ▪



Way of the Cross for Economic and Ecological Justice

By Scott Wright, USA

For the past twenty years, Columbans in Washington D.C. have joined Christians from across the ecumenical spectrum to observe a "Way of the Cross for Economic and Ecological Justice." This ritual takes place in the streets of downtown Washington D.C., the nation's capital, as we observe the fifteen stations of the cross before some of the most powerful economic, environmental, and political institutions of our day (for example, the Inter-American Development Bank or the US Department of Labor). Each year, we begin our devotion with this prayer:

"Today is Good Friday. Christian communities around the world are gathering in public places to recreate the story of Jesus' Passion.

Today in Washington D.C., we gather to cast the story of Jesus' final days in a contemporary context and meditate on the social sins of our own times. This is what we as disciples are called to do - to apply the message of the sacred story to our own lives, times, and places.

Here in Washington D.C., we are surrounded by powerful political and economic forces that mirror Jesus' journey to the cross, forces that are dealing death by war and by working to benefit a privileged few while millions of people live and die in debt and in dire poverty.

We touch, we feel, we live the pain of these many excluded ones. Because we are a global church, we are compelled to be in solidarity and to respond. We are also eyewitnesses to the destruction of our earth. Because our planet and all creation are gifts from God,

we must care for them and recognize God's presence revealed in them.

We know that the institutional roots of this suffering and devastation are here - in government, in transnational corporations, in international financial institutions, in the set of transnational agreements that give shape to economic activity around the world and even in our own religious institutions.

To some of these institutions - often staffed by dedicated and well-intentioned individuals - we come in prayer to name our common guilt,

to ask publicly for pardon, to call for repentance and transformation. Also present in our community are signs of hope - those organizations and institutions that nurture solidarity and action for justice. To these places we come as well - to pray for courage and strength on the journey toward a better world.

By these actions, we symbolically don the sackcloth of repentance, acknowledging our own complicity, calling for justice in the global economy and an end to environmental desecration.

We are seeking justice, mourning the suffering of people around the world impacted by a global economy rooted in corporate profits and industries that destroy the earth.

We are here to offer another witness, repairing the earth. We are claiming hope, recreating the world, praying for peace and the fullness of life for all of creation." ■





Background on China's Economy

By Fr. Dan Troy, China

China has the second largest economy in the world. While its per capita economic output is below that of many other countries, collectively China is a major player in international economics.

For 30 years, the economy has been growing at a rate of between six and eleven percent per year. Economies in other countries depend upon China as a key manufacturer of goods. China is also a major buyer of goods produced by other countries. Forty percent of the pork consumed in China is imported.

The sustained growth of China's economy means that in recent years it has been in a stronger position to focus on international projects. For example, China has initiated a huge international project known as the "Belt and Road Initiative." This project seeks to connect China with many other countries through new roads, pipelines, rail networks, shipping lanes, deep-sea ports, and air routes. This is already happening through the ninety-nine year Chinese lease of the Port of Darwin in Australia.

Another project is an economic corridor currently under construction from China's border with the north of Pakistan to the deep-sea ports in the southern cities of Karachi and Gwadar. Several East African countries also have infrastructure projects that are being built with Chinese assistance. In all of these projects, China's aim is to facilitate the efficient movement of products and natural resources.

Many people raise questions about who is actually benefitting from these projects. The economic corridor project in Pakistan started with the assumption that it would be a big support to Pakistan's struggling economy. In more recent times, this assumption has changed among people in Pakistan.

Similar to the building of infrastructure at an international level, China is also developing important contacts with people through education. The Chinese government provides thousands of African students with scholarships to study MA and PhD courses in China. In the long-term, many of these graduates will hold positions of influence in their own countries, something that is likely to benefit China. In Wuhan, there are 200 students from Pakistan studying at one agricultural university.

Within China there is a growing middle class. However, large numbers of people still live

close to or below the poverty line. It is worth noting that the Chinese government describes its economic system as a 'socialist economy with Chinese characteristics'. In practice, the economy is a capitalist system.

People who have poorly paid jobs struggle even further when they become ill or when a member of their family becomes ill. Health insurance will only cover some of the medical costs. The January-February 2020 coronavirus disruption means that several million people in central China will have minimal income for a few weeks since they are paid by the hour in their modest jobs.

A symbol of China's economic disparity is the train networks. The new high-speed train system is a fast and efficient means of transport in China, but tickets for these trains are somewhat expensive. Those who travel on these trains represent the section of society that has access to an amount of money above the national average.

By contrast, the older train system is still in place and runs on a different set of train tracks, but serves the same areas of the country. The speed of these trains is half the speed of the new trains. The tickets are half the price. Those with less financial security travel on these trains.

Housing in the expanding cities is divided in a similar way. Newly constructed high-rise housing developments for the middle class population overlook the simple dwellings of the poorer members of society.

It is difficult for people to raise any questions in a public setting about the current economic system.

In an economy that has grown continually for thirty years, some people do get better work and see their standard of living improve. However, this does not happen for everyone. Campaigning for changes to the system is not possible in China.

Many Church communities in China are in the rural areas, the places where poorer people live. The Church has been faithful in its service to these communities. It is an example of the Church's fidelity to its own poor people, which should be admired. ▀



Quick Fact about China's Economy

Taken from the [World Bank](#)

- Since 1978, China's GDP growth has averaged almost ten percent a year, and more than 850 million people have been lifted out of poverty.
- However, about 373 million Chinese are still living below the upper-middle-income poverty line of US\$5.50 a day.
- China's high growth is based on resource-intensive manufacturing, exports, and low-paid labor. This has led to economic, social, and environmental imbalances.
- China's rapid economic growth exceeded the pace of institutional development.
- China is the largest emitter of greenhouse gases, and its air and water pollution affects other countries.

The Price of Militarism

By Fr. Pat Cunningham, Korea

With over 82,000 flights and 14 million passengers a year, Seoul's Gimpo airport-Jeju Island route is the world's busiest flight path. Boasting three UNESCO Natural World heritage Sites, Jeju Island is a place of outstanding beauty. However, because of overdevelopment, over-tourism, growing militarization, and limited space, groundwater and natural resources are being pushed to the brink.

Large tracts of precious forest cover is being destroyed to develop access routes and make way for a second airport in the Seongsan area. The aim is to eventually accommodate a total of 41 million visitors annually to the island, which is environmentally unsustainable and represents a major threat to the groundwater, which presently sustain 690,000 residents on the island.

Jeju residents, supported by environmental, anti-militarism, and church groups, are calling for a suspension of planned construction until such time that the government can demonstrate that the new airport will not disenfranchise the livelihoods of local communities or undermine Korea's commitments to conserve biodiversity and legally protected species in the Seongsan. This species include the falcon (a natural monument) as well as endangered species such as the narrow mouth toad.

Mr. Kim Kyung-bae (a local resident) has undergone three hunger strikes in protest of this development. His latest one was conducted in front of the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) demanding that these endangered species be included in the the Strategic Environment Impact Assessment (SEIA) currently under review by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MOLIT). The original submission stipulated that there were no habitats of legally-protected species discovered in the proposed site of the second airport, which Mr. Kim and environmental

groups vehemently refute. Other issues include noise pollution and disrupting migratory bird sanctuaries nearby the proposed site of the second airport.

Fr. Huh Chan-ran, a Jeju Diocesan priest and supporter of Mr. Kim's sit-in protest and hunger strike, has been celebrating mass outside the Ministry of the Environment and stayed with him throughout the 10 day fast. A number of protests and vigils have also been conducted in Seoul, including a nine day prayer vigil and 100 bows by Fr. Mun Jeong hyun. Columban JPIC has been participating in these efforts.

Given recent pronouncements by the Minister of Defense and other officials, it is all but confirmed that the Air Force Base to be located at the Seongsan second airport site will now be called the 'Southern Search and Rescue Unit,' which sounds more acceptable and less irritable for all unsuspecting citizens unaware of the creeping militarization on the island. It smacks of the time when the Jeju Navy Base was described as the 'Jeju Civilian-Military Complex Beautiful Tourism Port'.

A recent petition calling for the halt of the Jeju second airport project described Jeju as a geopolitically strategic location for the Airforce Base given its closeness to the Jeju Navy Base and its utility as part of the United States domination strategy against China.

In line with the numerous protests, vigils, and bows in solidarity with the residents of Seongsan and the people of Jeju, Columban JPIC join with the campaign in requesting that the Moon Jae-in Government and the Jeju provincial government halt plans to proceed with the second airport project. ■



Quick Fact on War Profiteering

Taken from various sources

- Global military spending in 2018 topped over USD 1.4 trillion ([SIPRI](#)).
- The US spends the most on militarism (USD 649 billion) followed by China (USD 250 billion), Saudi Arabia (USD 67.6 billion), France (USD 63.8 billion), and Russia (USD 61.4 billions) ([SIPRI](#)).
- In 2017, 20 private companies generated USD 544.7 billion in sales from military spending. Eleven of these 20 companies are located in the US ([USAToday](#)).
- In 2017, the total value of the global arms trade was USD 95 billion. The US is the biggest exporter of arms ([Amnesty](#)).
- 335,000 civilians have died violent deaths as a direct result of the war on terror ([Brown University](#)).
- War deaths from malnutrition, and a damaged health system and environment likely far outnumber deaths from combat ([Brown University](#)).

NAFTA 2.0

By Rebecca Eastwood, USA

In January of this year, President Trump officially signed the re-negotiated North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), or as it is now known, the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). Although Canada still needs to ratify the agreement, President Trump's signature marked the end of the United States' process to finalize this deal.

The original NAFTA went into effect 25 years ago and irrevocably changed the course of the three countries' economies - delivering often devastating social and economic changes. Columbians saw this play out as millions of Mexican farmers were displaced by subsidized agricultural imports from the United States. This led to high levels of migration from central and southern Mexico to both the border region (to the newly established US company maquilas/factories) and further into the United States.

This quote from Fr. Bob Mosher describes the decades-long impact:

"At the US/Mexico border, we see the effects of free trade agreements like NAFTA on workers' rights. Recently, many people were laid off from a Lexmark company's 'maquiladora' assembly plant in Juarez because they wanted a better wage than \$33 a week and the right to organize a union. Without employment since last December, these workers continue to protest their firing, and are a living embodiment of the negative effects of trade agreements like NAFTA, which make it easier for companies to treat their workers unjustly, without any accountability, and is unconcerned with requiring a decent, living wage for them in the signatory countries."

President Trump announced his intent to re-negotiate NAFTA early in his term. This kicked off continuous negotiations until early 2020.

Because of impacts like the one Fr. Bob describes, the CCAO evaluates trade agreements on their human and environmental consequences. Most of the time, such agreements favor the interests of transnational corporations above the quality of life of working people and other vulnerable populations.

For this renegotiation of NAFTA, the CCAO worked closely with the Interfaith Working Group on Trade and Investment. You can read the working group's letter with our initial recommendations [here](#). Once the draft agreement became public, we worked with members of the US Congress to push for the inclusion of:

- strong and enforceable environmental and labor standards
- climate action
- lower barriers to access of life-saving medicines

The one area that we celebrated in the draft agreement was the near elimination of the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS). This is the mechanism by which corporations can sue governments when they think their investments are under threat or treated unfairly. For example, TransCanada sued the United States government for delaying the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline due to environmental impact concerns. Corporations have used this mechanism to evade environmental, health, and other laws that protect the common good. Unfortunately, this mechanism was eliminated for every industry except specific oil and gas companies with contracts in Mexico.

Upon passage, both Democrats and Republicans hailed the final deal as a 21st century agreement and a template for future trade deals. Trade justice advocates are divided on their support for the USMCA, but

most agree on one thing: this agreement falls short of being a model for progressive trade agreements.

While lawmakers made some improvements to NAFTA, we believe they did not take full advantage of this once-in-a-generation opportunity to fix an unjust economic model.

Below is more information on the labor, environmental, and medicines portions of the agreement from our friends at the [Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns](#).

Labor: For the first time in two decades, the largest federation of unions, the AFL-CIO, supported an international trade deal. Some AFL-CIO-affiliated unions dissented, expressing disbelief that the deal will stem the tide of job outsourcing as promised and disappointment with the lack of strong enforcement measures against labor violations.

The agreement requires Mexico to pass labor reforms that make it easier for workers to form unions and that prevent labor violations. The agreement will also

allow inspectors to visit manufacturing plants in Mexico where suspected labor violations are occurring and halt the shipment of products produced in these facilities if the company is violating labor standards. Over time, unions hope these measures will raise wages in Mexico and reduce job outsourcing.

However, many unions do not believe that jobs lost to international outsourcing are ever coming back, especially due to other policies such as the 2017 tax law, which encourages the outsourcing of jobs for corporate tax breaks. The deal will also do nothing to prevent anti-union laws in the United States.

"USMCA falls short of being a model for progressive trade in the 21st century."

-Rebecca Eastwood

Access to medicines: The original Trump Administration agreement would have expanded patents on new classes of drugs called biologics, which treat life-threatening illnesses, such as cancer, making these drugs more difficult to access for many people. Thanks to grassroots advocacy and Congressional champions, the bipartisan agreement removed these new provisions and prevents companies from reformulating a drug to extend the patent life.

Environment: Environmentalists expressed disappointment with the environmental provisions in the agreement, as they do not reflect the urgency of climate change. In fact, climate change is not mentioned in the agreement. While the deal includes adherence to the seven, binding multilateral environmental agreements that have been customarily included in trade deals since 2009, it does not incorporate other, more recent multilateral agreements.

On a positive note, the agreement eliminated a policy between the US and Canada that required each country to export equal amounts of oil and gas to each other, a policy which could have driven up oil and gas consumption in the long term. However, the deal also makes it easier for Canada to export tar sands through the Keystone XL pipeline.

The deal added environmental enforcement mechanisms similar to the labor enforcement provisions. However, it did not create an independent body with the capacity to investigate cases of environmental injustice and make binding decisions. ■



The Teashop Boy

By Fr. Kurt Pala, Myanmar

Zaw-Zaw was my little friend. He was working at my favorite teashop in Yangon back in 2017 when I used to live there. I would often go to local teashops to practice my Burmese.

Teashops in Yangon, Mandalay, and other places in the country often employ children. Most of the teashops are open 24-hours every day and the children work long hours waiting at tables.

Zaw-Zaw was a Grade 7 student, or around twelve years old at that time. He told me that he is from a village about six hours from Yangon. He lives in the teashop during the school break, which means about three months of work. Then he returns to his village to continue his studies. He is just one of many other children employed in the teashops of Yangon.

Labor rules and regulations covering teashops in Myanmar are included in the "Shops and Establishments Act," which requires that those employed must be with the minimum age of thirteen to fourteen years old. But like Zaw-Zaw, teashops continue to employ children below the age of fourteen.

A Myanmar Times report about teashops in Yangon said that most children that they interviewed looked younger than fourteen years old, but would reply that they are fourteen when asked their ages. Many of these children are vulnerable to various abuses.

In the same report, a UNICEF representative said that a child's engagement in work is often linked with dropping out of school. Further, a lack of access to education negatively affects longer-term outcomes for children.

Additional risks for these working children include abuse and exploitation, and a lack of access to support networks - particularly if the child has migrated in search of work and is away from their family.

Many children are also involved in hazardous and difficult situations like construction and mining industries. According to a 2018 International Labor Organization press release:

"Almost one in ten of Myanmar's twelve million children between the age of five and seventeen are engaged in child labour, too often exposed to hazards and risks. Pushed by poverty, estranged from school, children enter the workforce with little awareness about occupational safety and health (OSH) rights and responsibilities, and therefore at high risk of fatal injuries. There are over 600,000 Myanmar children engaged in hazardous work that harms their health, safety, and morals. From stretches of cultivated fields to teashops in the country's economic capital of Yangon, most of Myanmar child labourers, as in the rest of the Asia-Pacific, are found in the informal economy."



Fr. Kurt and Zaw-Zaw

It is a different situation for the people living in internally displaced camps in the Kachin State. Many of these children were born into the camps. They have never seen or been to their home villages. Most, if not all, of the villages are still unsafe to return to. Many of their villages were land-mined or converted into banana plantations by Chinese investors with or without their knowledge.

Education is a challenge for many children and youth in the country, especially in these camps. There are many camps all over the state of Kachin, where there is an ongoing conflict between the government and the Kachin Independent Organization. According to UNICEF report, "...over the 7.4 million people living in conflict-affected areas, over 940,000 are in need of humanitarian

assistance, including over 244,000 internally displaced persons and over 696,000 non-displaced. Among internally displaced persons (IDPs), children make up over 50 percent (53% in Rakhine, 46% in Kachin/Shan), while women and children combined represent approximately 77 percent of the population."

Children and youth in many of these camps are vulnerable to a number of difficult challenges. UNICEF reported that many were separated from their parents when they arrived and are at risk of violence, abuse, and exposure to harmful practices including child labour, trafficking, and drug abuse.

Children and youth are the most vulnerable sector of the population. The Columbans work in various ministries that help address some of these issues directly and indirectly.

The Mandalay Archdiocesan Higher Education Center (MAHEC) in Mandalay empowers young people to be mature and responsible parents/citizens by becoming leaders locally and nationally, teachers, activists/development workers, and educated persons for the common good of the country and the church. The Center provides a three-year residential course.

In the diocese of Myitkyina, the Prat Nnan Rehabilitation Center provides rehabilitation services for drug and alcohol dependents using the 12-step method for addiction recovery.

We continue to provide assistance for the education of children in boarding schools in many far-flung villages in Banmaw and Myitkyina. We work among the children, youth, and students through youth ministries, the Catholic Student Action Myitkyina movement, Family Commission, and orphanages. We also

helped in the formulation and promotion of a child protection policy among the religious and in the Church of Myanmar.

When Pope Francis visited the country in 2017, at the youth mass he told the young people of Myanmar, "be bold, be brave and above all be generous."

This was his invitation to the young people. But this is the same invitation the Pope calls us to be as Columban missionaries. In our work with the people, we need to be bold and brave, but never forget to be joyful.

I have no more contact with Zaw-Zaw, my little friend. But the last time I met him he was excited to return to his village when the school opens. I remember his smile every time I come and sit at his teashop. He smiles a lot and is very good with calculations. I hope he was able to continue with his studies and pass his matriculation exams.

I hope Zaw-Zaw is no longer a teashop boy. ▪



Spotlight: The Boycott List

Burma Campaign UK published a news briefing paper, "[The Boycott List](#)," listing products and brands produced by Burmese military-owned companies. The purpose of the briefing paper is to provide information for

individuals, embassies, donors, aid agencies, and companies to help them avoid purchasing goods and services from the military.

Military-owned and controlled companies are an important source of revenue for the Burmese military. Buying goods and services from the military increases their revenue and this revenue is used to fund their operations.

"The Burma Army's illegal business activities have come at the expense of mass human rights violations. This includes but is not limited to land confiscations, bribery, and threats and indiscriminate killings."

-Karen Women's Organization

Western Union, a US-based global financial transferservice, recently cutties with Myanmar's military-owned Myawaddy Bank after human rights organizations called on the company to sever its links in light of accusations that the military is responsible for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Myanmar beer is also included in the so called "dirty list."

For a list of the companies owned or operated by the military in Myanmar, click [here](#). ▪



Two New Livelihood Projects

Editor: The Columbans organize or support several livelihood projects around the world for migrants and communities living in poverty. Some examples include the [Preda Fair Trade Project](#) and [Subanen Crafts](#). These projects not only provide dignified and meaningful work for marginalized people, but also model for the world what a fair and equitable economy can look like.

Recently, Columbans have started two new livelihood projects, one in Fiji and one in Mexico. They are described below.

Sema Livelihood Program

By Marjorie Engcoy, Fiji

This livelihood program was born during the 2019 Season of Creation. It was inspired by an educational session on recycling for the women of St Pius X parish.

After a few months of working together on a few recycling projects, and having seen the value and use of the handicrafts, the pioneer members officially named the program 'Sema'.

'Sema' is a Fijian word that means 'connect'.

Their experience of connecting to each other and their life-stories, the purpose of the projects, and to the environment moved them to come up with the name.

By culture and tradition, Fijian people are very connected to nature and their community. The aim of the livelihood program is to advance practical and eco-friendly income generating ideas as alternatives to products and practices which causes long-term harm towards God's creation, and to provide livelihood opportunities to unemployed women young and old. Overall, they strive to be a community of empowered and ecologically conscious women. On March 8th on International Women's Day, Sema will hold their first exhibit of handmade products in the parish. ▪



Casa Acogida

By Sainiana Tamatawale, Mexico

The realities here at Ciudad Juarez/El Paso are migration and poverty. Even the Mexicans living in Rancho Anapra, our community, are migrants, coming from their home province to Juarez. They are fleeing from violence and poverty to find a better living and dream to cross the border to work in the US.

In 2018-2019, more migrants from Central American became to come, from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. These families are under the ["Remain in Mexico"](#) program, which traps them in Mexico while they wait for their court date in El Paso. They are waiting for four to six months or more.

In September 2019, we were able to find a house in Rancho Anapra to protect the women and children from living on the streets. However, we found out they were depressed, worried, scared every day because of the trauma they went through. Then one day the idea to do sewing and handcrafts came up, to help distract them from their sad stories.

We now are making embroidery bags. These women learned how to embroider in this house, Casa Acogida. The first bags they made were sold at the Alternative Black Friday event last year at the Mission Center in El Paso. We sell the bags for \$35USD: \$20 for person who made the bag and \$15 for the materials. It is really going on well. The migrants are very happy because it helps them a lot as personal therapy and they can send money to their families.



Residents of Casa Acogida with Columbians

P.S. A reflection on working for justice

A challenge for me is journeying with the migrants' suffering because I hear many sad and painful stories everyday. I feel their suffering and pain every time I'm with them, listening to them and crying with them.

One day I came home tired, I entered the chapel and asked God during adoration, "hasta cuando Señor! Until when lord!" The tears were my prayer that day.

After that experience, I felt the peace of God. I believe that God will listen to our cries, that God will help us and is with us always. These migrants, Mexican and

Central Americans, awaken us of our faith, to go out to meet Jesus the suffering Christ in them.

I try to help them by giving them my presence, my protection, and my love. That is what they need today because they are being treated inhumanely by an unjust society, by organized crime groups, by corrupt governments, by police and mafias, and by business people.

We are doing and practicing what Pope Francis said about migrants: "Our response to the challenges posed by contemporary migrants can be summed up in four verbs; welcome, protect, promote, integrate. If we put them into practice, we will help to build the city of God and man." ■



Educating the Educators

By James Trewby, UK

Economic justice has been one of the themes of James' work with educators. It has included staff retreat/training days for groups of teachers from various schools. They were run collaboratively with groups such as St Chad's Sanctuary, which supports refugees and asylum seekers in Birmingham. With the support of Danny Sweeney, a previous participant of the Invitation to Mission Programme and now the co-ordinator of Justice and Peace Scotland, and in collaboration with Pax Christi, James is exploring taking Catholic educators to Calais in Northern France, to engage with issues around economic migrants and safe passage for refugees.

Ellen Teague has worked with adult Justice and Peace activists to promote economic justice within the context of responding to "the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor." On February 9, she wrote up a talk by Fr. Augusto Zampini, Director of Development and Faith at the Vatican's Dicastery for Integral Human Development, who spoke to members of the Justice and Peace Network of England and Wales about the roots of "[unprecedented social-economic-ecological crises](#)".

Additionally, Ellen works with Catholic media to promote economic justice, as in this article titled "[Pope urges global finance leaders to reduce economic inequality](#)." ■



"Everything is connected"

By John Din, Philippines

Withdraw from Coal, Invest for the Future

The Philippines is one of the signatories of the 2015 Paris climate agreement. Its intended national contribution target is that by the next ten years the country will reduce its carbon emissions by 70%. Yet, current government policies run contrary. There are at least 23 existing coal-fired power plants operating across the country and 28 more on the pipeline.

Inspired by *Laudato Si'* and the CBCP pastoral letter, church groups and NGOs joined together to initiate the "Withdraw from Coal" campaign. The campaign calls on the local Philippine banks to withdraw their support to current coal projects and instead invest in renewable energy.

Rainforestation Program

As part of the JPIC three-year plan, the Philippine region continues to commit itself to rainforestation initiatives in Columban projects and parishes. Included in this project is the "Seed Storage/Seed Exchange" project to ensure that there is a supply of native and endemic seeds for the rainforestation program and organic farming.

Seed exchange is a traditional farming practice. The Negros Nine Foundation, the Columban Subanen ministries, and the Higaonon tribe of Cagayan de Oro are the centers of this project. ■





Working with government to address poverty

By Fr. Tom Rouse, New Zealand

I am a member of the "Ecology, Justice, and Peace (ELP) Commission" of the Archdiocese of Wellington. The Commission has four committees - Poverty Committee, Ecology Committee, Parish Communication Committee, and Bicultural Committee. I am a member of the Poverty Committee.

One of the EJP Commission's upcoming projects concerns New Zealand's September elections. We will host a panel for representatives of the major political parties to address a justice issues. I have been involved in setting up two of these panels in previous elections, one on child poverty and another on housing. We have not decided on an issue for this year's panel yet. These events are usually well attended because they give the public the opportunity to question the representatives about their policies and commitments to addressing injustices in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

On February 12, the Poverty Committee addressed the Government Finance and Expenditure Select Committee. Below is part of a report on our address.

"Raising benefit levels is essential if the Government wishes to achieve its budget goals to address child poverty and enhance child wellbeing," the ELP Commission told the Finance and Expenditure Select Committee. 'Benefit levels are so low that it is impossible to live on them,' EJP Commission Poverty Committee member Mary Margaret Schuck told the Select Committee, who are currently considering the 2020 Budget Policy Statement.

The Commission supports the overall budget goals to address child poverty, ensure a just transition to a low-emissions economy, lift Māori and Pasifika incomes, and improve physical and mental wellbeing. 'However, the Government must implement the Welfare Expert Advisory Group's recommendations to lift benefit levels,' says the Commission."



Justice for Laborers!

By Fr. Peter O'Neill, Australia

In November 2018, I was invited by the Australian Government to represent Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH) on the Government's newly established Australian Government's Seasonal Worker Programme Advisory Group (SWPAG) in order to engage effectively around the management of the SWP. I participated in the SWPAG teleconference on November 13 where we finalized the SWP Approved Employer Guidelines. I was happy to see that about half of my suggested amendments were included in the final document. During 2020, I will participate in the SWPAG quarterly teleconferences.

On November 8, I represented ACRATH at the Labor Hire Reform Conference at the Vic Trades Hall. The conference sessions covered labour exploitation in the labour hire industry, lessons from state-based regulations on labour hire, and policy recommendations for a national regulatory scheme.

The Queensland government began its Labour Hire Licencing Scheme in April 2018. 3,180 Labour Hire Providers (LHP) are now licensed in Queensland.

The Victorian government began its Labour Hire Licencing Scheme in April 2019. 4,100 LHP are seeking a licence. In Victoria, 450,000 employees are hired by LHPs. Both state's licencing schemes cover all sectors of employment. ACRATH and other networking partners are advocating for a National Labour Hire Licencing Scheme to cover all sectors of employment.

In mid-November I was a member of the ACRATH delegation to meet with the director of the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Canberra. The PLS enables workers from Timor-Leste and 9 Pacific Island countries to take up low and semi-skilled work

in rural and regional Australia for up to three years. The Scheme officially commenced on 1 July 2018. DFAT has invited ACRATH to network with them on the church partnership pilot program to assist the migrant workers by connecting them with local church communities that will provide them with support.

On Sunday December 22, I made my second visit to Warrnambool to meet the 25 Timorese workers who are working at the local eat factory on the PLS. I joined the local community for mass and met with the workers after mass. Although the work is very difficult they are appreciative of the opportunity to earn money to support their families at home. The workers have been warmly welcomed by the parish priest, Fr. Lawrence O'Toole, and the local parishioners. They were excited to be invited by the parish to sing some Christmas carols before the Christmas eve mass.

Finally, I am continuing to follow up with the Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) in the case of the twenty-two seasonal workers from Vanuatu. Their labour-hire contractor, Mr. Bani, was served with enforcement summons in May 2019. Hearings were held in June, August, September, October, November, and December at the Brisbane Federal Circuit Court.

ACRATH has written a letter to the Prime Minister requesting an Ex-gratia payment for the twenty-two workers. They have been waiting for over five years to receive their stolen wages totaling about \$80,000. ■



Public Witness for Justice

By Fr. Paul McCartin, Japan

Incensed by Brazilian President Bolsonaro "taking care of" the Amazon, I made a "Wanted" poster of the president and stood outside the Brazilian embassy for an hour in the rain. No one else was protesting. Quiet street, few passers by. After an hour minutes, two men came out, wanting to know what I was protesting against and if I belonged to an organization. When I replied, "the Catholic Church," one was quite taken aback. Not Greenpeace or the like? A few passers by said they were concerned about the fires.

The Japan HQ of Blackrock (an American global investment management firm) and Blackstone (a US private equity, investment banking, and asset management firm) are both reportedly financing the Amazon deforestation. I wrote to Blackrock and Blackstone about my concerns. No replies.

Editor: you can learn more about how US companies are contributing to the deforestation of the Amazon by clicking [here](#).

The Columban articles series on the Amazon Synod - Synod on the Amazon: Model for the World - can be accessed [here](#). ▀



Civic Engagement

By Mariella Martínez Rengifo, Peru

Editor: In Laudato Si', Pope Francis observes that "countries [that] have a relatively low level of institutional effectiveness ... results in greater problems for their people while benefiting those who profit from this situation" (LS, 142). In other words, a weak civil society makes economic exploitation by the powerful few easier. As Columbians, how can we work to strengthen civil society in the countries we work in? The work happening in Peru offers one example.

The Warmi Huasi Civil Association accompanies children at risk. Fr. Ed O'Connell is President of this small NGO, which works in San Benito, a township on the outskirts of the northern side of Lima and in the province of Paucar de Sara Sara, high up in the Andes mountains in the department of Ayacucho.

Among many other projects, the Warmi Huasi teams work directly with the Municipality of Carabayllo and the Provincial Municipality of Paucar de Sara Sara helping them set up their comunas (Municipal Committee for the Defense of Children and Adolescents) by training the municipal officials; the staff from the Ministries of Health, Education, and Justice; and the police in how to run a comuna. The team also monitors their progress and offers on-going formation. In Carabayllo this Committee responds to the needs of over 110,000 children and adolescents, and in the Province of Paucar de Sara Sara nearly 4,000 children and adolescents. ▀





Snapshots of climate change

By Fr. Liam O'Callaghan, Pakistan

According to Germanwatch's [Global Climate Risk Index 2020](#), Pakistan is the fifth most affected country in the world from climate change in the 20-year period of 1999-2018. During that time, 152 extreme weather events were recorded, which directly resulted in almost 10,000 deaths. The summer of 2019 was extremely hot, with temperatures in the high 40s from May to July. This winter has seen record cold weather. In Lahore on December 31, the coldest temperature in 35 years was recorded at 2 C°.

Fr. Liam and co-worker Danish Yakoob (the JPIC team in Pakistan) continue to work on environmental issues. One effort is a series of three seminars on topical issues with the same ninth-class of 60 student over two schools in Hyderabad. One such seminar was a session called "Plastic Pollution, Its Impact, and a Way Forward" on January 28 at St. Mary's high school in Hyderabad. ▪



Upcoming Newsletters and Submission Deadlines

Release Month	Theme	Deadline
June	Ecology	May 15
September	People on the Move	August 15
December	Peace and Nonviolence	November 15

Please email your submissions to Amy Woolam Echeverria at amywe@columban.org.



Central Administration

[Fr. Brian Vale](#), *Vicar General*

[Fr. Sean McDonagh](#), *Society JPIC Researcher*

[Amy Woolam Echeverria](#), *International JPIC*

Coordinador

[Cata Son](#) (CLM), *CLMCLT*

Britian

[Fr. Peter Hughes](#)

[Ellen Teague](#)

[James Trewby](#)

China

[Fr. Dan Troy](#)

Ireland

[Claire Carey](#)

[Michael O'Sullivan](#)

[Ger Clarke](#)

Japan

[Fr. Paul McCartin](#)

Korea

[Fr. Pat Cunningham](#)

Mynamar

[Fr. Kurt Pala](#) (JPIC and IRD)

Oceania Region

[Fr. Peter O'Neill](#), *Australia*

[Marjorie Engocy](#) (CLM), *Fiji*

[Fr. Tom Rouse](#), *New Zealand*

Pakistan

[Fr. Liam O'Callaghan](#) (JPIC and IRD)

Philippines

[John Din](#) (CLM)

South America Region

[Adriana Curaqueo](#), *Chile*

[Mariella Martínez Rengifo](#), *Peru*

Taiwan

[Fr. Taaremon Matauea](#)

United States

[Scott Wright](#)

[Rebecca Eastwood](#)

[Wesley Cocozello](#)