



African Exposure and Training (AFEXT) 17-19 January

CPLO held a short training course on public policy advocacy for participants from three African countries, from 17 – 19 January. In Nigeria, the Caritas department of the Bishops' Conference is planning to undertake advocacy with the national parliament in Abuja, while in Swaziland attempts are being made to create a structure to engage on behalf of the Church with that country's parliament. A CPLO has been operating in Namibia for a few years, but it has recently expanded to include a new advisory committee, and is in the process of planning various activities.

During the course, the delegates met with the President of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Stephen Brislin. With him are (left to right) Mr Musa Dlamini and Mr Alfred Mndzebele, from Swaziland; Fr Uche Obodoechina, Nigeria; Mr Danisa Khumalo of the Denis Hurley Peace Institute; Ms Innocentia Mbat and Ms Theresia Nepolo, from Namibia; Adv Mike Pothier of CPLO; Mr Cletus Alope, Nigeria; and Ms Karen Morris of CPLO. Bishop José Luis Ponce de Leon of Manzini, Swaziland, also attended the course.



Fr Peter-John Pearson (Director, CPLO) greets attendees of the Mass

Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act Mass,

1 February 2017

A large group of worshippers attended the Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral, organised by the CPLO, to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the passage of the Termination of Pregnancy Act on 1st December 1997. Representatives from several pro-life groups attended as did Ms Cheryllynn Dudley MP from the ACDP. Fr Peter-John Pearson celebrated the Mass together with Fr Morare SJ and Fr Makore. The Mass was attended by a number of women from the Mater Domini Home, a home that cares for women in crisis pregnancies.



Post-Truth, Post-SONA Debate, 10 February 2017

About 160 people attended the post SONA discussion on the morning after President Zuma delivered his state of the nation address. The event co-hosted by CPLO, the Jesuit Institute and the Daily Maverick, analysed both the disruptions by opposition political parties as well as the contents of the speech. Some speakers were at pains to position both aspects the various political parties. There was lively participation from the floor.



Ms Annie Lennox and her husband, Dr Mitchell Besser, was also in attendance



L-R: Mr Stephen Grootes, Ms Ranjeni Munusamy, Ms Marianne Thamm, Mr Richard Poplak, & Fr Peter-John Pearson.

The CPLO and the Hanns Seidel Foundation co-hosted a roundtable discussion on the draft Prevention, Combating of Hate Crimes, and Hate Speech Bill. The discussion was attended by 72 people and was addressed by two speakers: the Deputy Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, Mr John Jeffery; and the secretary of the Hate Crimes Working Group, Mr Matthew Clayton.

Mr Jeffery explained that the new law would help to ensure that hate crimes were taken more seriously by the courts, and it would provide minimum sentences for the more serious crimes such as murder and rape.

Mr Jeffery conceded that it is difficult to define hate speech in such a way that it does not infringe on freedom of speech; however, the Bill had been circulated for comment precisely in order to allow people to have their say on this contentious aspect, and government is open to tightening up the wording if necessary.

Mr Clayton noted that the hate speech provisions were far too wide-ranging and could be used to clamp down on

Hate Crimes and Hate Speech,

14 February 2017



L-R: Fr Peter-John Pearson (Director, CPLO), Mr Matthew Clayton, Mr John Jeffery and Bishop Victor Phalana of Klerksdorp Diocese

debate, on political criticism, and on the free expression of contentious ideas.

Mr Clayton also questioned whether the criminal law was the correct mechanism for dealing with the social problems of racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. An educative and conscientising approach was more likely to bear fruit in the long run.

The meeting ended with a dynamic discussion from the floor, and participants were encouraged to read the Bill for themselves and to comment on it once the final version is tabled in Parliament in a few months' time.



L-R: Ms Joan Armstrong (Director of Centre for Pastoral Development and Moderator), Mr Syd Eckley, Mr Gavin Weir, Dr Sebastiana Kalula, Ms Lois Law (Researcher, CPLO), & Mr Gerald Moore (Research Assistant, CPLO)

Older Persons and Accommodation, 21 February 2017

A Roundtable Discussion was held on 'Older Persons and Accommodation'. The speakers were Mr Syd Eckley, Committee Member SAHRC on Challenges Facing Older Persons; Dr Sebastiana Kalula, Director of the Albertina and Walter Sisulu Institute of Ageing in Africa at the University of Cape Town and Mr Gavin Weir, the Housing Manager of Neighbourhood Old Age Homes (NOAH). "The SA Human Rights Commission recognises that older persons constitute a vulnerable group with unique and differing needs and that they therefore deserve focused attention in order to address and resolve the rights violations currently being experienced by older persons". The lack of accommodation for older persons seriously undermines their well-being and compromises their rights to dignity and equality.

Distributed Publications

Briefing Papers:

- 424 World Day of Migrants and Refugees
- 426 The Morality of Land Reform
- 427 The National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy
- 428 Older Persons and Accommodation

Digests:

- Refugees, Migrants & Displaced Persons 11
- Refugees, Migrants & Displaced Persons 12
- Refugees, Migrants & Displaced Persons 13
- Refugees, Migrants & Displaced Persons 14
- Refugees, Migrants & Displaced Persons 15

Environmental Digests:

- Environment Digest 3 – Energy

Responses:

- The 2017 Budget: A House Divided
- The first Thousand Days and the Abortion Law
- The Centre Holds

Submissions:

- Draft Hate Crimes Hate Speech Bill
- Preliminary Report on the Commercialisation of Religion and of the People's Belief Systems
- Draft on the National Adaptation Strategy
- Implementation of the Rome Statute
- Integrated Energy Plan



Fr Peter-John in Nairobi, Kenya, 22 February 2017

Fr Peter-John attended the weekly Mass for Catholic MPs in Nairobi on 22nd February. Frs Pierli and Caramazza who minister to the Catholic MPs Spiritual Support Initiative [CAMPSSI] attended. Fr Peter-John preached at the Mass and afterwards spent time talking to the MPs and shared different models of engagement with some of them.



Fr Peter-John, Fr Pierli and Fr Caramazza, with Catholic MPs



Fr Peter-John with Hon Cecilia C Ngetich



Associate Professor Gina Ziervogel addresses the audience

Draft National Adaption Strategy, 24 February 2017

Guest speaker, Associate Professor Gina Ziervogel, an Adaptation and Vulnerability Specialist from the Department of Environmental and Geographical Science at the University of Cape presented to a crowd representing different stakeholders.

South Africa's current draft National Adaptation Strategy (NAS) is intended to be the cornerstone for climate change adaptation in the country and to reflect a unified, coherent, cross-sectoral, economy-wide approach to climate change adaptation. It signals priority areas for adaptation response, both to provide guidance to adaptation efforts around the country and to be a point of resource to inform resource allocation to climate change adaptation.

The aim of the discussion was to stimulate and contribute to public discourse on the strategy in a manner that will empower participants to make submissions regarding the National Adaptation Strategy on 28 February 2017. Participants felt empowered to make submissions on the draft legislation.



CPLO Researchers, Kenny Pasensie (Far left, standing) and Fr Matsepane Morare SJ (Far right, standing) and PACSA Director (third left, standing), with members of the Appropriations Committee in Parliament.

Unpacking the Budget: What are the options for the poor?

9 March 2017

The CPLO and Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action (PACSA) co-hosted a roundtable discussion on Unpacking the 2017 Budget. Mr Mervyn Abrahams, Director of PACSA, and KPMG Economist, Mr Christie Viljoen addressed the discussion, which was attended by 45 people. Both Mr Abrahams and Mr Viljoen argued that the 2017 Budget was seemingly geared towards the poor – social spending took the biggest slice of the Budget. However, Mr Abrahams further argued that the increases in grants are below headline inflation which means that households would be worse off in 2017 than in 2016. Similarly, the Child Support Grant of R380 (an increase of R20) is far below the food poverty line – it is simply not enough to meet the nutritional requirements of a child aged between 10 – 13 years. The discussion focussed on how and what government can do differently to build an economy from below. The roundtable was the first in a series of similar themed ones to explore ways to stimulate an economy that responds to the real context and crises of the poor.



Mr Christie Viljoen addresses the audience



Alternative Forms of Land Ownership, 15 March 2017

A roundtable was held on the question of Land, in particular, alternative forms of land ownership. Speakers included: Mr Boyce Tom, a researcher at the Trust for Community Outreach and Education, Rev Nelis Janse van Rensburg, the Moderator of the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church and Mr Jacques Pheiffer, the Director of Land Reform in the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform. The attendance at the roundtable was very good, with over 50 people attending and engaging the issue at a deep level. What became clear was that there was no shortage of ideas about different ways of dealing with land ownership, but it also became very clear that each solution had its own challenges and carried with it certain historical burdens.

For instance, the idea of share equity schemes sound like a very good way of including farm workers and others into rural ownership of farming land, until one finds that the reality means ownership does not radically change but the other share partners are silent partners often with very little say about how the farm is actually run and how much of the profits they are entitled to.

The continued contributions to our roundtable discussions by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (RDLR) is always appreciated, and is of great help since it has provided direct access by many people to the very people developing and implementing government policy, meaning everyone is better informed.

The attendance of the Dutch Reformed Church's senior leadership has also opened up new avenues for greater collaboration on land issues within the faith community, a very welcome development.



L-R: Rev Nelis Janse van Rensburg, Mr Jacques Pheiffer, Mr Boyce Tom, and Fr Peter-John Pearson



Fr Peter-John introduces Prof Jan Jans to the audience



The audience listens to Prof Jans presentation on Amoris Laetitia

Public Lecture: Amoris Laetitia, 22 March 2017

Prof Jan Jans addressed a public meeting attended by over 80 people at the Pinelands Parish. He outlined the background to various issues in **Amoris Laetitia** and the methodology of Pope Francis in opening pastoral possibilities for nurturing family life and for discernment in difficult cases as to assist people sacramentally. He also addressed the contested 'dubia' brought by a group of cardinals and the difficulties associated with them conceptually.

Ethics of Populism in Europe, 22 March 2017

The topic of Political Populism was examined at a CPLO seminar on Wednesday 22nd March. The main speaker was Prof Jan Jans of the University of Tilburg in the Netherlands, a regular visitor to Cape Town and a long-time associate of CPLO. The respondent was Dr Anthony Egan SJ, of the Jesuit Institute in Johannesburg.

Prof Jans sketched the rise of populist political parties in Europe, especially in the Netherlands, Germany and France, and noted the victory of Donald Trump in last years' American elections, as well as the Brexit referendum in the UK. Populism can be defined as "a way of perceiving the political world that sets a morally pure and fully united people against elites who are deemed corrupt or in some other way morally inferior." The appeal is thus to a mythical concept of "the people" who are in a battle against the political elite, and against all sorts of other "enemies" – those who differ by race, religion, culture, etc.

Dr Egan noted that populist politics is very much present in South Africa, not least in the way President Zuma has set himself up as the champion of ordinary people against a perceived economic and social elite. It was important, though, to distinguish between populism as a considered political agenda, with a coherent policy dimension, and adherence to populist ideas and propaganda simply as an electoral strategy, a way of gaining power.



L-R: Prof Jan Jans, Dr Anthony Egan, and Fr Peter-John



Bavarian Parliamentary Delegation, 24 March 2017

A delegation of members of the Bavarian State Legislature from Germany visited the office on 24 March. The visit was organized by the Hanns Seidel Foundation, which supports CPLO's Democracy and Governance project. CPLO Director, Fr Peter-John Pearson, and Research Co-ordinator, Adv Mike Pothier, gave a short presentation on CPLO's work and on South Africa's legislative process, following which the visitors had a number of questions. These focused mainly on public participation in the development of legislation, and on the role of civil society organizations – including the faith community – in developing better laws and policies.



Fr Peter-John and Adv Mike Pothier with the delegation of the Bavarian State Legislature



Meeting with Ambassador Jean-Christophe Peaucelle, 31 March 2017

Fr Peter-John Pearson met with Ambassador Jean-Christophe Peaucelle, who serves as the Special Counsellor to the French Government on religious affairs. He has a special interest in the role of religion on policy development and the impact of religion on peace issues. He has served as ambassador to Middle Eastern countries and has a strong background in religious affairs and practices.

(left) Fr Peter-John and Ambassador Jean-Christophe Peaucelle

