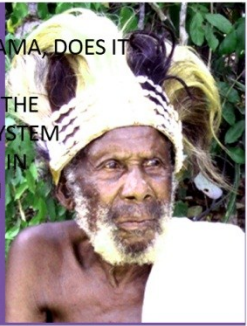


GLOBAL SOUTH

Development Magazine

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- KAYA FUNGO OF THE GIRIAMA, DOES IT STILL EXIST?
- WINNERS AND LOSERS IN THE GLOBAL AGRICULTURAL SYSTEM
- LAND: THE FINAL HURDLE IN BURUNDI'S LONG MARCH TOWARDS A PEACEFUL FUTURE



Farmers' Suicides in India



When the Middle East
Rose Up!

GLOBAL SOUTH

Development Magazine

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Barren Hills and the Himalayas, Nepal

Glacier melting, an outcome of climate change, has not only affected the beauty of the Himalayas, but also the livelihoods of more than a billion people who directly depend on the Himalayas for survival.

Photo: Manoj Kr. Bhusal/Global South Development Magazine



UGANDA: ART reduces HIV transmission in discordant couples - study

NAIROBI, 17 March 2011 - Antiretroviral treatment significantly reduces the risk of HIV transmission between married couples where one partner is infected and the other is not, according to a recent study in Uganda.

The retrospective study, published in the official Journal of the International AIDS Society in February, followed 250 HIV-discordant couples in the central Ugandan district of Rakai between 2004 and 2009. During the study period, 32 HIV-positive partners started ART.

"About 48 percent of HIV-infected married individuals in Uganda have HIV-negative partners"

"We found that after starting ART, there were no HIV transmissions among the couples we studied," said Steven Reynolds, a professor at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and lead author of the study.

The research - part of a larger community cohort study of individuals in Rakai that has been ongoing since 1994 - found that the viral load of HIV-infected people dropped noticeably following initiation on ART.

The results are consistent with a seven-country study published in *The Lancet* in 2010, which found that ART use by the infected person was accompanied by a 92 percent reduction in risk of HIV transmission to their partner.

According to Reynolds, the findings can help inform HIV programming for married couples. "The findings highlight the need to put discordant couples - a priority area for policy-makers - on treatment as soon as they qualify," he said.

The study found that after ART initiation, consistent condom use increased from 14.3 percent before ART use to 53.7 percent; Reynolds said this increase could also partially explain the reduction in HIV transmission. However, there was no significant difference in the number of sexual partners; between 8 and 15 percent of study participants reported having extra-marital sex.

"Scaling up counselling, testing and treating among married couples means the HIV-positive partners in these relationships are identified earlier and programmes are able to intervene to prevent the negative partner becoming infected," he said.

Most new HIV infections in Uganda occur among people in long-term relationships, while an estimated 48 percent of HIV-infected married individuals have HIV-negative partners.

The government has recently focused more attention on HIV prevention among married partners; several ongoing campaigns promote the idea of sexual fidelity. However, these campaigns have faced criticism for failing to address the root causes of infidelity and for their limited reach - most are



"The government has recently focused more attention on HIV prevention among married partners; several ongoing campaigns promote the idea of sexual fidelity."

carried out in large urban centres and are not translated into local languages. (PlusNews)

DRC: New rules for miners



Photo: David Hecht/IRIN

Big business... But little of the hundreds of millions of dollars generated annually by DRC's mineral sector ends up in state coffers (file photo)

KINSHASA, March 2011 - Various stakeholders in the Democratic Republic of Congo's mining sector have signed a code of conduct designed to reduce fraud and increase transparency in an industry that has played a key role in the armed violence that has ravaged the east of the country for years, but there is still concern about illegal mining and the military's role.

The adoption of the code coincides with the lifting of a mining ban slapped on the eastern provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu and Maniema by President Joseph Kabila in a purported effort to rid the industry of the "mafia-like networks" that run much of it. It also comes before stringent legislation against the importation of conflict minerals due to be introduced by the US in April.

About 1.7 million people are displaced in DRC, mostly because of conflicts involving domestic and foreign armed groups in the east, a region rich in minerals such as gold, coltan, lithium, cassiterite and wolframite. Armed groups, including the DRC national army (FARDC), are heavily implicated in the industry.

"Shortly after President Kabila's [ban], we started taking measures aimed at ending the massive fraud that is rampant in eastern Congo's mining trade. We have deployed agents to trace minerals from digging areas to export locations and to label and certify them, so we can allow the mining trade to resume," Minister of Mines Martin Kabwelulu said at the end of a four-day seminar on the new code of conduct.

The seminar brought together national and regional government

officials, representatives of artisanal miners, mineral buyers and traders, as well as civil society groups, all of whom signed up to the code.

Key measures include:

- All artisanal miners and mineral traders must obtain permits from provincial governments;
- Miners must sell only to authorized buyers. Such buyers must operate premises of solid construction;
- Selling within sites of exploitation is prohibited;
- Miners can work only in authorized areas;
- Minerals must be traded for domestic or foreign currency and must not be bartered;
- Traders must disclose their accounts to provincial mining officials and provide full contact details of their customers;
- A prohibition on the employment of children in mines; and
- Civil society groups will sensitize local populations about the new measures.

"Many trading posts closed after President Kabila banned the minerals trade in eastern DR Congo, so we have been waiting for this moment. We reached a point where our lives became harsh and we no longer had any other source of income," Bagalwa Basimine, a representative of a group of minerals merchants in South-Kivu province, told IRIN on the sidelines of the seminar.

DRC officials say the nature of the industry as was deprived the country of millions that could have been spent on development projects: whereas the provincial governments in North Kivu, South Kivu and Maniema earn on average US\$100,000 a year, minerals smuggled to Rwanda and Burundi, they claim, earn those countries between \$5 million and \$10 million a year in tax revenue, according to South Kivu Governor Marcellin Cismambo.

"With these new regulations, people involved in mining will have to work with local authorities," said Paluku Kahongya, governor of North-Kivu Province. He added that anyone found to have links with armed groups would be excluded from the mining sector.

"If in a given area there is no health centre, they will have to work together to sponsor one; if there is no water supply, they have to fund one; if there is no school, they will sponsor the construction of schools since children living in areas where they dig for minerals have the right to attend school," he said. Both governors and traders are to invest in social development projects under the new rules.

Policing the military

Many are sceptical that the new regulations will successfully control armed groups and stop illegal mining. While the regulations have provided a list of requirements for different actors involved, they exclude a number of important groups mentioned in a report on illegal mining and armed groups submitted to the UN Security Council in November 2010.

"The code represents everyone who is supposed to be in the mining sector," Gregory Mthemba-Salter, a consultant for the report, told IRIN. "The people left out are people who are in the mining sector and shouldn't be. Obviously that's the armed groups and the FARDC. The Group of Experts has identified criminal networks in the FARDC and their illegal involvement in mining as one of the major threats to security in the affected provinces."

According to the report, this involvement extends to illegal taxation at mining sites, protection racketeering and coercive control and looting of mining areas.

The involvement of the army in mining, particularly those integrated into the military from rebel groups, has been a source of concern for some time. In September 2010, Kabila said he would move several battalions from the Kivu provinces, where soldiers are involved in mining, to other parts of the country.

Kabwelulu said additional measures had been put in place to prevent soldiers from mining. "The role of the army and other security services is to protect the country and pacify it in a post-war state. The army, police and security services have already been notified of the new regulations. Any soldier caught trading minerals is breaking the law and this means he should be punished."

But Annie Dunnebacke of Global Witness claims little has been done by the government to dislodge the military from the mines and that elements in the military tightened their grip on the mineral trade while the ban was in place. "Members of the national army make tens of millions of dollars per year through extortion at mine sites and along mineral transportation routes. Competition over control of the region's mineral wealth has become an incentive for all warring parties to keep on fighting," she told IRIN. Witnesses and human rights groups said government soldiers were sending young men into mines to dig up minerals for them shortly after the ban was introduced.

Mthemba-Salter said the situation could be improved if more stringent measures were put in place for soldiers caught mining. "The FARDC could commit to providing security at mine sites, but not being involved in any mining activities. Now an indication of seriousness in this regard might be for the military justice system to make some headway in their prosecutions of soldiers who have been caught doing this." (IRIN News)

Female victims of domestic violence in Kenya express outrage

By Alphonse Gari/Global South Development Magazine

March 2011, Kenya

Female victims of domestic violence in Kenya have expressed outrage over the increasing cases of abuse in the households claiming it has contributed to trauma amongst them.

The majority from Malindi in the coastal parts of Kenya live single lives claiming that men usually oppressed them and exposed to brutality before dumping them with heavy burdens of rearing children and make ends meet.

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"Narrating their ordeals during a special Valentine ceremony for over 50 oppressed ladies organized by Women Against Domestic Violence in Kenya (WOPADOVI), the women said men had turned to be inhuman beings who just used them as objects which usually led to break ups and sufferings"

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Narrating their ordeals during a special Valentine ceremony for over 50 oppressed ladies organized by Women Against Domestic Violence in Kenya (WOPADOVI) the women said men had turned to be inhuman beings who just used them as objects which usually led to

break ups and sufferings.

Mrs. Christine Ndeto said she divorced her husband seven years ago for allegedly coming late from her work place.



Photo: Alphonse Gari/GSDM

A participant with her rose flower during a Valentine dinner for victims of domestic violence at the Kitsapu Cottages in Gede malindi, Kenya.

She said the husband beat her senselessly and broke six teeth in the middle of the night and was lucky to escape to the Watamu police station.

“One day I came home late because we had been assigned to take stock of goods at the supermarket where I work, however my husband attacked me accusing me of engaging in external sexual affairs,” she said at the Kitsapu cottages in Gede.

Mrs. Ndetu said her husband, a mason, was a perpetual drunkard and was always violent to her despite the fact that they shared all the income she got.

The victim said currently she is caring for her nine year old boy now in class five alone and is well off being alone than the problems that were being caused by the man.

“Violence is rampant in our households, men should stop it because women are part of them and God given,” she said.

On the other hand, Mrs. Paris Sirya’s husband dumped her with six children after taking a loan of Sh 600,000 from the Kenya Women Finance Trust.

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“One day I came home late because we had been assigned to take stock of goods at the supermarket where I work, however my husband attacked me accusing me of engaging in external sexual affairs”

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“We had invested heavily to buy tuk tuks, motorbikes and cows, but he changed after our wealth began to grow and started using the money alone with other women, he then sold the tuk tuks, motorbikes secretly and fled” she said.

Mrs. Sirya said life became unbearable as she could not afford to pay the loans forcing her to escape constantly until fellow women offered to help her after narrating her woes.

The founder of the organization, Mrs. Caroline Gikunda, said that women were constantly victims of domestic violence because of lack of awareness.

“We intend to begin an awareness programme for all the women particularly in the rural areas who were highly affected but feared to bring to light,” she said.

Ms Gikunda said the cases of domestic violence had become rampant all over the world and had led to many family break ups; despite the fact that they are the pillars of the nation adding that it was their duty as women to protect one another.

“Today is an important day as the world is celebrating St. Valentine’s day, we saw it was good to organize dinner for the victims so as to share love, experiences and get views from professionals,” she said.

“The organization was geared towards seeking justice for the victims of domestic violence both men and women, create employment opportunities and counseling those who were affected,” she added.

Each of the women in attendance was given a flower, and was offered a ‘Valentine’ dinner.

The women participants also received counseling from a medical practitioner and two local assistant chiefs.



Photo: Alphonse Gari/GSDM

Argentina's Farming Crisis

Cristina vs. El Campo

By **VICTORIA PEEL YATES**

Correspondent, Argentina

Since 2008, Cristina Fernández's government has been at loggerheads with Argentina's farmers, known by the national press as *el campo*, over export taxes imposed by the government of Fernández's late husband and predecessor, Nestor Kirchner, in 2006. Farmers claim that these taxes keep domestic food prices artificially low and are stopping them from taking advantage of high global demand. In 2008, a series of strikes saw supermarket shelves empty across the country and contributed to pushing global food prices to record highs.

Despite several rounds of talks between government ministers and *campo* leaders, no agreement has yet been reached, resulting in an ongoing stalemate. In January of this year, farmers across the country held a 7-day strike to highlight the issue, the ninth since the crisis began. This was, however, mainly symbolic as this year's harvest has not yet begun.

It is clear that Argentina's small and medium farming industry is in crisis, although big agribusiness is booming. Many people point the blame at Kirchner, whose economic reforms impacted most significantly on the farming community in Argentina, as well as Fernández, who has continued in the same economic vein. Indeed, it is one of these very reforms, the imposition of export taxes, that has caused the farmers' crisis. It is, however, important to remember that it was also these reforms that rescued the Argentinean economy from the 1998-2002 economic crisis.

Kirchner was widely regarded as part of the 'new wave' of Latin American leaders, alongside Venezuela's Chavez, Bolivia's Morales, and Brazil's Lula, and is famed for his defiance of the IMF in the face of drastic financial restructuring that was to reshape the future of the country. The crisis plunged many Argentineans into poverty, and the government's debts reach an astonishing \$178 billion. Rather than accepting the IMF's recommended reforms, which many economists now acknowledge would have exacerbated the crisis, Kirchner created his own progressive recipe for economic success using a blend of ingredients taken from both Classical and Keynesian economic theory. Rather than privatising, he extended the state's control over the economy, and unleashed an economic boom.

By embracing a different set of macro-economic policies he was able to turn around Argentina's fortunes, making him an extremely popular leader; however, some reforms have met with heavy criticism from the farming sector. The brunt of their discontent has been borne by Fernández's government, which had already taken power by the time of the first strike in 2008. These policies were progressive in the context of a country

"despite the fact that the economy took off and has continued to grow year on year since 2002, the benefits of these reforms have not been enjoyed by the small and medium-sized farming community"

despite the fact that the economy took off and has continued to grow year on year since 2002, the benefits of these reforms have not been enjoyed by the small and medium-sized farming community.

The Kirchners' policies have been criticised for favouring big multinational and Argentinean corporations, although there was arguably little option to do otherwise, given that the economy was (and still is) dominated by big capital. Big capital agricultural investment in Argentina is thriving despite the imposition of heavy taxes on this sector, through which Kirchner was able to tap into an important source of revenue for the heavily indebted government. The small and medium-sized farmers, however, are being squeezed by both a government that keeps commodity prices artificially low, giving them unfair prices at market, and the greed of the all-consuming agribusiness industry.

It is clearly a Catch-22 situation, and the future of the farming industry in Argentina remains uncertain. Without the economic reforms, Argentina would not have had such a miraculous recovery from the crisis, but it is these very reforms that are also causing small farmers to lose their livelihoods. The

economy is still suffering from high inflation, despite price control mechanisms such as export taxes, which could be an indicator of the unsustainability of such an economic strategy. However, if the government can manage to control inflation, cut down the weight of foreign capital and place more emphasis on expanding regional commerce (beyond Brazil), it may be possible to salvage the small and medium-farming industry and resolve the dispute with *el campo*. This is a key issue for Fernández, who is expected to seek re-election later this year, and will surely want to find a resolution to a conflict which has dogged her throughout almost her entire presidency. (Victoria is Global South Development Magazine's country correspondent for Argentina and can be reached at victoriapeelyates@gmail.com)



Farmers' Suicides in India



"The number of farmers who have committed suicide in India since 1997 stands at a staggering 200,000. Close to two-thirds of these suicides have occurred in five states"

"while suicides are on the rise the number of farmers are declining"

By **ROXANNE IRANI**
DR. P.V. RAVICHANDIRAN
SANDEEP SRIVASTAVA

India is one of the most fertile lands where agriculture has been practiced for millennia. Almost two thirds of the country is involved in agricultural practices and live in rural area. In such a wholesome land, with its people believing in spirituality and where resilience and resurgence have been the characteristics of the '*kisan*' (meaning farmer) since time immemorial why are Indian farmers committing suicide on a scale of such magnitude?

In the current scenario farmers and landless agricultural workers are fighting for survival and the increase in suicides is a symptom of this losing battle. Farming was once a practice that was in tune with the needs of the Earth. Farmers protected the biodiversity, soil and water conditions and in turn the Earth gave them bountiful produce. However, now farming is only tied to global corporations and their infinite greed and the Earth itself is left behind. Financial growth has become the norm of judging a country's progress and the modern technology associated with such disconnected growth owe the Earth. But the corporations and economies are not paying the price for disrupting the natural world; it is the farmers who are paying with their lives. The Earth has been generous to us in providing food for generations but this delinking of her interests to take account of corporate greed has led to the destruction of small time farmers.

The number of farmers who have committed suicide in India since 1997 stands at a staggering 200,000. Close to two-thirds of these suicides have occurred in five states (India has 28 states and seven union territories). The Big 5 – Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh– account for just about a third of the country's population but two-thirds of farmers' suicides. And while

suicides are on the rise the number of farmers are declining. As many as 8 million people have quit farming and converted their land for non-agricultural purposes between the 1991 and 2001 censuses.



Roxanne, Ravi and Sandeep

STATISTICS: RELIABLE SOURCE OR GROSS UNDERESTIMATION?

Suicide data in India pertaining to farmers' suicides tend to be a gross underestimation of the actual numbers. Many cases of farmer suicides are not registered as such and are attributed to accidental death. Suicide data in India are collated by the National Crime Records

Bureau (NCRB), a wing of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. The data collected itself is not altered but because different states have different definitions of farmers, the suicides may not be linked to farmers' suicides. For example women who traditionally do not hold land in their name are not considered to be farmers and suicides by women are not counted as farmers suicides. Similarly, landless labourers are not considered farmers. The social stigma related to suicide leads some families to register the death as accidental and not suicide and this has also led to an underestimation of the numbers.

The state of Maharashtra is home to the Mumbai Stock Exchange, some of the most powerful multi-national organisations and has headquarters of many national and international companies. Mumbai the capital of this state is home to 21 of India 51 billionaires and over a fourth of the country's 100,000 millionaires. It is also the state that has the largest number of farmer suicides. There have been 40,666 suicides since 1995 here which have received little or no media

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“The main factors that transformed a once positive farming economy into a negative one were the rising costs of production and the falling prices of farm commodities.

“Farmers' suicides are the result of deep or ever increasing agrarian crisis emanating from the capitalist development in agriculture”

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these can be seen as a failure to protect the lives and livelihoods of the peasantry that depends wholly on agriculture for its survival. The factors responsible are rooted in policies of trade liberalization and corporate globalization.

attention. The media has made people immune to chronic problems that plague the country such as farmers' suicides (which can be improved with consumer participation) by under reporting and misinterpreting these issues. At the same time sensational news has been over reported so as to shift people's horror to terrorist activities and cricket matches.

ROOT CAUSES: REASONS FOR LIFE PAYMENTS

Almost 200,000 farmers have ended their lives since 1997 which was the first year in which farmers' suicides emerged in the media and in social work. Farmers started taking their lives on a large scale and the root cause of this was found to be a very rapid increase in indebtedness. Debt is a reflection of an economy that is fighting a losing battle with global limits of demand and supply and one that is in favour of larger corporations and in turn larger profits in the hands of a few. The main factors that transformed a once positive farming economy into a negative one were the rising costs of production and the falling prices of farm commodities. Both of

Farmers' suicides are the result of deep or ever increasing agrarian crisis emanating from the capitalist development in agriculture. There are several debates over suicide. The first debate attempts to locate the reasons for it in multiple issues, such as the frequent floods, manipulation of prices by traders, supply of spurious pesticides and seeds, decline in prices of agricultural products, increase in the cost of agricultural inputs, successive drought in recent years, and of course, the neglect of farmers by the state government. In other debates, reason for suicide are ecological, economic, and social, each inter-linked with the other. The ecological crisis is the result of intense use of hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides which led to the erosion of soil fertility and increasing susceptibility to pests and diseases. In addition to this the heavy indebtedness has led to the economic crisis.

In another argument, suicide is caused by the negative growth of agrarian economy. Another debate attempts to locate the reasons for the suicide in adapting the World Bank model of agriculture or what is called McKinsey Model of development that created space for industry-driven agriculture which ultimately translated into agri-business development including Information technology and biotechnology. This model of development has not only exacerbated the crisis, but also ruined millions of rural livelihoods, at the same time leading to an environmental catastrophe. The increasing indebtedness or the debt trap has also been suggested as a reason for suicides. As a corollary, one more discourse attempts to locate suicide in the wrong policies pursued by the central as well as the state governments over the past two decades, even while there is hardly any substantial investment in agriculture.

Large corporations were allowed into India's once flourishing agrarian economy and they virtually led it to its collapse. Companies like Monsanto, Syngenta and Cargill are now dominating factors in Indian agriculture, and that's primarily because of the World Bank's structural adjustment policies. This opening up of the seed sector to global corporations has led to a large increase in the cost of production because farmers now have to purchase seeds year after year instead of saving part of their production like they used to do before. These seeds are not only expensive in their own right but also increase the expenditures of the farming processes as they require pesticides and fertilizers as well as irrigation.

With these giant seed companies slowly changing the face of agriculture by replacing the existing hybrids with their expensive seeds, which are not as sturdy or resilient as their traditional counterparts, the farmers are paying more for seed than they ever dreamed they would. The local varieties were squeezed out using state support as these companies flouted profit margins much higher than previously attributed to agriculture. Profit margins which have not materialised in terms of farm profits, only as profits to those corporations from which farmers continue to purchase seeds. In 1991 one kilogram of local seed cost as little as 7 or 9 rupees in the Vidarbha region (today this region is one of the worst affected by farmer's suicides). But by 2003 a bag of hybrid seed cost about Rs. 350 for only 450 g.

The green Revolution which was seen as a miracle of surplus food allowed other global capitalists to enter into the domain of agriculture through the means of seeds, fertilisers and thus creating a space for autonomous categories to enter into the market. It did not check autonomous categories due to the "fear of losing distinct social identity" when the market was becoming volatile and the crisis was sharpening.





last resort.

In the first decade of neoliberal economic reforms the number of peasant households in debt doubled from 26 percent to 48.6 percent (the National Sample Survey data) and we are well aware that those who have taken their lives were deep in debt. In the worst affected states these percentages are much higher and a direct co-relation can be seen between the number of deaths and the number of households in debt. For example, 82% of all farm households in Andhra Pradesh were in debt in 2001-02. Another striking similarity amongst households that were victims of suicide are that these are farmers growing mainly cash crops such as cotton, coffee, groundnut, pepper and vanilla. Suicides amongst those farmers growing food crops were much lower. The mantra of 'export led growth' led to a new world philosophy which forced many farmers to move from food crops grown for local consumption to cash crops sold in the international markets. The subsidies on crops in other countries caused a fall in the prices for these commodities leading to a fall in any profit for the farmers. For millions of farmers in India this meant bigger loans, higher debt and being locked into the highly volatile global market.

The number of farmers' suicides in the five years – 1997-2001 – was 78,737 (or 15,747 a year on average). The same figure for the five years 2002-06 was 87,567 (or 17,513 a year on average). That is, in the next five years after 2001, one farmer took his or her life every 30 minutes on average. This has since then increased even further and continues to rise even when governments in the various states are making promises to pull the farmers out of debt. It is not irrational to assume that thousands of farmers in India have committed suicide because their dignity was violated.

Climate change and economic policies are adversely affecting the right to food sovereignty of millions of people. They both take away a basic human right – the right to adequate food. There are two immediate concerns in the context of the possible consequences of global warming and changing weather patterns. The first is the increasing number of natural disasters. The second is the issue of food sovereignty. Food sovereignty indicates the ability and power of a country or community to control and manage its own sources and modes of food production. Food sovereignty involves the right of people and the community over land, water and forests which would enable them to control the sources and means of production. There is a decrease in food production in many countries, particularly among small and marginal farmers. This has to do with both the changing weather pattern and the takeover of agriculture by corporate monopolies and rich countries.

It appears that we are seeing a repetition of colonial 'sins' when we look at the way food is produced and distributed today. Millions of hectares of land have been taken over by rich companies and rich countries at the cost of small and

Instead, the global capital tried to trap the social categories through the methods of new seed technology such as Golden Rice or Bt.Cotton. The 'loss of identity' emanated from the fact that new autonomous categories who derived their identity through leasing in land or market, began to view the crisis engulfing their own identity. To retain their distinct identity as "Market Oriented Autonomous Farmer" (MOAF), suicide became the

"The ecological crisis is the result of intense use of hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides which led to the erosion of soil fertility and increasing susceptibility to pests and diseases"

"Companies like Monsanto, Syngenta and Cargill are now dominating factors in Indian agriculture, and that's primarily because of the World Bank's structural adjustment policies. This opening up of the seed sector to global corporations has led to a large increase in the cost of production because farmers now have to purchase seeds year after year instead of saving part of their production like they used to do before"

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"similarity amongst households that were victims of suicide are that these are farmers growing mainly cash crops such as cotton, coffee, groundnut, pepper and vanilla. Suicides amongst those farmers growing food crops were much lower"

"Climate change and economic policies are adversely affecting the right to food sovereignty of millions of people"



village, Mydhukur mandal Kadapa district had committed suicide as he was losing revenue heavily from his farming ventures and was in deep debt. He has a younger brother Narayan Reddy and two sisters Kondamma (28) and Venkatamma (26). He

was the head of his family. His mother died in an accident while carrying the harvested products from their farmland when she was hit by a passing tractor some two months ago and his father died two years ago. He had celebrated sisters' weddings anticipating good return from the crops in 2 acres of tomato and 4 acres *Thur dal* (a kind of pulse). He borrowed 7-8 lakhs from moneylenders and neighbors. The tomato perished due to heavy unseasonal rains. The *Thur dal* crop dried out due to pest attacks and he could not collect even a single piece of grain. These tragedies and unprofitable farm work led him to the decision of hanging himself. His family members were fearful to disclose the fact that his death was a suicide. This links to many social pressures on families of suicide victims in rural India. Apart from a house, the family has no other assets and is completely dependent on the

government sponsored employment guarantee

program. In this close knit community, their neighbors can provide only moral support since most of them are having the same kind of life situations. Narayan Reddy, the younger brother, the next responsible person of the family says, "My brother has gone but the reason for his going (the loans and other financial burdens) has not gone anywhere, but shifted to my shoulders. It has already been three months, nobody came in to save us. In addition, I really do not know what to do."

70 year old farmer of the Wadar caste took poison and ended his own life. He is survived by his wife and two sons aged 30 and 25, 2 daughter in-laws aged 30 and 20; a grandson aged 11 and a married daughter. He had four sons, but lost two of them; one of illness in 2000 which is reported as TB by the family and infected with HIV and the second son committed suicide in 2001 reportedly because of crop failure. He owned 2.5 acres of land. He had also taken 5 acres land on lease. He took two crop loans in 2004 from relatives of amounts Rs. 90,000 and Rs. 7,000 respectively at interest rates of 25% per annum but these were not repaid due to crop failure for last 5 years. The bank had stopped giving loans to farmers in this village because there were too many defaulters. There was also an amount of Rs. 1,765 owed to a local Krishi Kendra (Farmers' centre) which had been borrowed at 25% seasonal interest. He had spent Rs. 40,000 on the treatment of his son who died of HIV/TB and out of this Rs. 10,000 was contributed by the villagers. Another sum of Rs. 4,000 was spent on treating a boil on the eye of the elder son in 2005. The younger son is always ill with asthma. They also bought a tape deck for Rs.1000 in 2004 by borrowing the money. The money which the deceased had borrowed was spent not on agriculture but on illness and the grief of losing two sons in such traumatic fashion might have added to his financial distress.

marginal farmers and food sovereignty of small communities, mostly in the developing world. The adverse effects of climate change on ecosystems has also affected sovereignty over food production. Agricultural practices and policies cannot adapt as quickly as the climate is changing. The consequences have been visible in the forms of unprecedented natural disasters as well.

On the other hand, lack of water, natural disasters and non-viability of small and medium farming has intensified migration from rural to urban areas. Whereas, the urban poor across the globe seem to be environmental, economic and social refugees. It has been argued that the urban-centric, energy-intensive economic growth model induces rural to urban migration, which has reached unprecedented levels, and further accentuates the high carbon-emitting economic growth model. This, on the one hand, affects food production and the viability of sustainable agriculture in rural areas, and on the other hand, increases human density in urban areas to unprecedented levels, with consequent pressure on environmental resources, demand for water and resultant pollution.

CASE STUDIES: STORIES OF DESPAIR

"We cannot lead a respectable life; we should be allowed to die in (a) respectable way," was a collective plea that had reached President of India, Mrs. Pratibha Patil in June, 2009 through a signed suicide pact by 5000 farmers.

From 2003, the national average of farmer suicide remains roughly one at every thirty minutes. A 35 year old farmer Lakkala Chinna Peraiyagari Balakonda Reddy of Lakkavaripalli

Mrs. Chayamma, wife of Nallola Kondaiah. Families are left virtually with no support when their bread-winners pass away. Photo Dr PV Ravichandiran/Global South Development Magazine



A 53 year old farmer Akki Thirumala Konda Reddy of Akkavaripalle, Village Lasapadu Mandal Kadapa district killed himself on 21st January 2011. In his attempt to repay the loan he had taken out for his daughter's marriage (an expensive affair even for rural Indians where the entire cost of the marriage falls on the bride's father) he started cultivating Thur dhal and KP onion (a

genetically modified onion). The pulse crop failed and pests attacked the KP onion crop leading to enormous losses and leading him to suicide. He has been survived by a wife, 2 sons and 2 daughters who are incapable of getting the family out of the position that caused him to commit suicide. Social customs in rural India are very important and even families that cannot feed themselves on a daily basis will take loans in order to have a grand affair for their daughter's weddings. These are expected by both the groom's family as well as villagers and many people are falling prey to moneylenders' hiked interest rates because banks and other formal institutions are refusing to see marriages as cause for loans. KP Onion (Krishna Rayapuram Variety of onion) is a potential export product giving minimum of profit to farmers in the region. Targeting reduction of onion price in local market, the Government of India had controlled onion export from the country. That had affected KP onion farmers as KP onion does not have a local market. After intensive advocacy, a conditional exclusion is obtained for KP onion to export with a prescribed minimum price. As the buyers are not ready to purchase onion in the minimum quoted price, marketing of KP onion has stilled remained as an issue.

Prasada Reddy, the son of the deceased says, "KP onion has taken away my father, whereas many others are in the same position, at least ask our government to rescue the remaining."

SOLUTIONS: FAIR TRADE, ORGANIC FARMING AND OTHER BUZZ WORDS OF 2010

In all the described cases the underplaying current is debt and farming loss. Most of the initiatives of the state remain in favor of globalization and neglect responsibility of state to protect the welfare of people. State projections made for the next decade indicate that the growth rate needs to be doubled in the next fifteen years when compared to the past 15 years. The food security projections indicate that the food requirement would be in the order of 270 million tons in merely 2 decades in comparison to current food production levels which is 199 million tones. While the required growth rate poses a great challenge for the nation, the ground situation does not give any hope of moving anywhere near the project growth rate, Unless the existing situation is significantly altered for definite better, the country may face serious food insecurity.

Agriculture which has been the life and predominant livelihood of small and marginal farmers who this article is about have been in situations that are worsening year by year. These suicides are just alarms, and under toned ones at that. Afraid of

postmortems, life insurance claims and dignity issues, the rural community is hesitating to reveal these deaths as suicides and therefore many suicides are reported as heart attacks and other natural deaths.

India is a land of small and marginal farmers. About 650 million

"We cannot lead a respectable life; we should be allowed to die in (a) respectable way," was a collective plea that had reached President of India, Mrs. Pratibha Patil in June, 2009 through a signed suicide pact by 5000 farmers.

Most of the initiatives of the state remain in favor of globalization and neglect responsibility of state to protect the welfare of people

Social customs in rural India are very important and even families that cannot feed themselves on a daily basis will take loans in order to have a grand affair for their

daughter's wedding. small and marginal farmers ensure the food security of the nation. In addition, their land ensures the livelihood security of 65% of people. On 26th March 2007, while addressing the Confederation of Indian Industry, Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh stated, "As I said recently in Parliament, we have to recognize that in a country like ours, where the average size of landholding is small, there are limitations to what you can do to improve agricultural productivity." (Pioneer, 27/03/07). The prime minister of India is attempting to justify the state's stand, however the ground reality is different. As Ms. Vandana Shiva rightly puts it, small farms with diversified organic agricultural practices have proved to be more productive than an industrial farm which consumes ten times more energy but a comparatively lesser yield. Most of this energy is polluting the atmosphere and destabilizing the climate.



Monoculture, promoting genetically modified seeds and industrial cultivation in the name of green revolutionary agriculture had changed the mentality of people, negatively influenced the land fertility and productivity, and increased the external dependency. While industrial farming temporarily supported the state to address food security issues, it also simultaneously created a long-term negative impact in the lives of farmers. The real pillars of food security of the nation, the small marginal farmers now face a negative agricultural economy where farming is not profitable for them. The situation complemented by failure and erratic monsoon and natural calamities, import competition of heavily subsidized farming products from the rest of the world together with influence of institutional and non institutional lending system have resulted in this level of farmer suicides.

Food sovereignty of nations and people can only be realized by strengthening sustainable agriculture and protecting the right of small and marginal farmers to live in dignity.



Governments must protect this without compromising the climate and environment. The struggles for justice and human rights have to be at every level. A person's right to food is non-negotiable. The adverse impact of climate change and corporatization of agriculture

Narayan Reddy, the younger brother of Lakkala Chinna Peraiyagari Balakonda Reddy along with Mr. Pol Konda Reddy- Farmers' Federation, Mydhukur mandal, Kadapa district. Photo Dr PV Ravichandiran/Global South Development Magazine

undermines our right to food. We need to ask hard questions about the nature of consumption and the nature of the economic growth model. Climate change is an issue of justice, as is food rights. A call to act for justice -- ecological, economic and social -- should precede the technical negotiations on climate change.

The suicide economy of our globalized neoliberal economy is suicidal not only to the farmers and peasants that require the food to survive but also suicidal to us and the world we live in. We are currently destroying our natural capital of seed, biodiversity, soil and water: everything on which our world depends. This economy and its consequences are not inevitable and we are not helpless in its dominance over us. As consumers the greatest power is in our hands and we can shape the economy into one that is just and fair for all. The transition can be fostered through a shift to organic, open pollinated seed varieties that can be saved and a shift from chemical to organic farming. We must not go down the path of corporate dictated agricultural practices but should fall back on the traditions that have sustained India's agrarian economy for generations. Fair trade and organic farming have to become more than just buzz words and we have to be to incorporate them into our weekly shopping habits.

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Winners and Losers in the Global Agricultural System



Current events and issues within the global agricultural and food systems can be usefully thought of in the American Historian Michael Shermer's view of the structure and flow of events and their shaping of history. He applies and adapts Chaos Theory to bring explanatory power to the outcomes of history. He argues that a set of initial conditions interplay with contingencies and necessities to produce a historical outcome, which, regardless of chaotic appearance, is closely tied to the initial conditions. Order can come from the chaos and contingent events can throw order back into chaos. Let's look at it from the perspective of food and agriculture, who the winners and losers are of the current regime, and what is likely to happen next.

By IOULIA FENTON

Regional Editor, Latin America

THE INITIAL CONDITIONS

After the settling of great wheat producing areas of the world by European migrants during the late nineteenth century to supply wheat to a growing European working class (including American plains, Canadian prairies, Argentine pampas and large areas of Australia), certain conditions for agricultural production were set, largely during chaotic interwar and post second world war periods by US domestic-agricultural and US international-food-aid policies. American Agriculture was suffering a crisis of overproduction due to falling demand after the First World War causing excessively low prices that could not sustain farmers' lives. During the 1930s Great Depression Roosevelt administration's New Deal for Agriculture was designed to limit production and raise prices, which had its successes, but subsequent policies of the 1950s sided with corporate interests, which led to the loss of many small and medium sized farmers and renewed over-production. In the international sphere, the food aid regime under the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Europe opened new markets for US agricultural products. Non-European markets also expanded via food aid to newly decolonized African, and militarily and strategically important (previously food self-sufficient) Latin American markets. Agricultural overproduction, agricultural capital's need for new markets, expansion of the modernization of agriculture, and consolidation and power of agro-food giants thus set the initial conditions of the current world agricultural system.

AGRICULTURAL POLICY AND THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE REGIME

Contingencies along the way manifest in subsequent policies adopted by individual countries, and more recently bi and multi-lateral policies adopted as part of the international trade regime¹, favouring large-scale producers and driving for efficiency through free trade. These have exacerbated the inadequacies, and hence necessities, of our times created by the initial conditions of the world agricultural system:

environmental unsustainability, agricultural unviability, loss of biological diversity, social inequity and livelihood destruction.

In his various highly accessible writings, Ha-Joon Chang², a Korean-born development economist at Oxford University, gives great systematic demonstrations of the range of government policies adopted specifically in agriculture by the now developed countries between late nineteenth and mid twentieth century and by transition economies since mid-twentieth century, which were tools of the successful development of their respective agricultural sectors, which in turn helped fuel their industrialization and wider development. These concerns included:

1. state involvement in issues of land ownership and distribution to promote equity and prevent concentration of much in the hands of a few, which is increasingly seen now;
2. state funding of research and development and the dissemination of gained knowledge to all producers, instead of the current corporate controlled knowledge systems and their increasing drive to bring adaptations of biotechnology industries under intellectual property protection rights;
3. state-controlled, low interest, affordable credit to smooth out peaks and troughs during the agricultural production cycle, instead of inputs (seeds, fertilizer, pesticides) afforded to farmers on credit by dominant agro-food players like Monsanto to farmers that ties them into a cycle of debt, dependence and land degradation; or worse alternatives of predatory informal credit lenders that take their pound of flesh by calling in high-interest debts at the worst possible times of vulnerability.
4. help with physical inputs such as subsidized or state-funded irrigation, transport, fertilizers and seeds, instead of dependence on corporate agricultural 'packages' of branded seeds genetically modified to work best with branded pesticides and branded fertilizers, and engineered to be sterile (to ensure the need for annual purchase of seed) developed by agro-food giants

¹ Readers interested in the origin of the current international food and agriculture regime should consult, among others, the writings of Harriett Friedmann.

² See Chang's 2009 article entitled "Rethinking public policy in agriculture: lessons from history, distant and recent", *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36(3), 477-515.

5. and ensuring farm income stability through state-managed price stabilization measures, insurances and trade protection, rather than increased liberalization of agricultural trade pushed for under successive WTO negotiation rounds in the interest of 'efficiency'

In a classic paternalistic scenario of '*do as we say, not as we did*', under the mounting pressure to liberalise trade in agriculture through WTO negotiations, most of these tools are increasingly denied to policy makers in developing countries as they are seen as interrupting the flow of trade and favouring domestic products over foreign ones. Interestingly, prior to the Uruguay round of GATT (1986-1994) and formation of the WTO (1995), agriculture, intellectual property, trade related investment and services were all considered spheres of national sovereignty unsuitable for international *laissez-faire*. Agriculture was brought into the negotiations on mainstream assertions that agriculture is self-regulating, thus can achieve stability on its own; that competition creates wealth for all; that world prices should be the fair guiding prices for all producers globally (despite only 10% of globally produced food actually being traded in international markets); and that increasing export production is the engine of economic development. All of these assumptions have been successfully debunked on both the theoretical level and on evidence of actual negative consequences of agricultural liberalization on developing countries in general, and small and medium sized farmers globally, in particular.

CHAOS OR ORDER IN THE WORLD AGRICULTURAL SYSTEM?

"As the [historical] sequence gradually develops and the pathways slowly become more worn, out of chaos comes order" (Michael Shermer, 1995:71).

The system is not as chaotic as it may appear to be when looked at solely through the recent and previous crises of world food prices. In fact, the pathways of winners and losers have been worn for some time. The capitalist agricultural and food system is settling into an order of agro-food capitals dominating the restructuring of regional production and global consumption by controlling relative wages and prices. This seemingly benefits the western consumer through low prices, but by virtue of being low, they do not reflect the true social and environmental cost of a production process negatively affecting millions of people in developing countries and eroding our collective natural heritage. The real winners of, what some call, the current 'world market of surpluses' are transnational, predominantly Western, agro-food giants who are able to benefit from persistent domestic state subsidies at home (however disguised to avoid WTO sanctions); liberalized markets abroad; and take advantage of economies of scale to put downward price pressure on producers. These outcomes are closely tied to the initial conditions set out above, with US and large transnational agro-businesses still dominating global production, trade and aid of food

IS THERE AN ALTERNATIVE?

The extremities of the cycles of debt, dependency and desperation created by the current status quo are amply demonstrated in this issue of GSDM by the growing instances of farmer suicides across the globe. The destruction of livelihoods of millions of people is but one of the necessities created by the contingencies of national and international policy making. So what is the alternative to the current order of the system? In short, the sustenance of life – food - should be produced and distributed with wellbeing, human rights, sustainability and equity in mind, and not simply profit driven.

As Peter Rosset's book title goes "*Food is Different!*" In this regards, the world agricultural system should be restructured (probably by the state) as a socialist rather than a capitalist project, as is put forward by a number of academics such as Harriett Friedmann and social movements such as Via Campesina. However, states' power to do so is limited by the domination of capital in the domestic and international space and the systematic dismantling of available agricultural policy tools by the international trade regime.

"Contingencies (small grains of sand) construct necessities (large piles of sand), which grow to a point of criticality such that one more contingency can trigger a sudden and chaotic change ... Change in historical sequences from ordered to chaotic is rare, sudden... and tends to occur at points where previously well-established necessities have been challenged by others so that a contingency may push the sequence in one direction or the other" Michael Shermer, 1995:71

Contingencies of incremental policy decisions that have structured the current system are creating and reproducing the necessities of environmental destruction, food insecurity and disappearance of sustainable livelihoods of millions of farmers around the globe. The policy decisions and structure of the system are increasingly being challenged in the academic, social and media spheres. The Doha round of WTO negotiations, which began all the way back in 2001, is stalling largely because the demands of liberalization of agricultural/food trade of countries are proving too hefty. "*Enough is enough*" seems to be the undertone whisper in the negotiating rooms.

In addition, around the world, support for civil society movements closely tied to issues of food and agriculture, and to the perceived siding of states with global capital over domestic farmers is snowballing. Whilst, more so than ever before, the general public and consumers in the West are aware of the issues facing us as a species (the necessities of our time) such as the need for environmental sustainability, agricultural viability and social equitability. Just one more contingency in the national or international policy making sphere for the benefit of global agro-capital, at the expense of all else, may well be the straw that breaks the camel's back and sets the historical sequence in another direction - the socialist agricultural project. But then again, maybe not.

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"The real winners of the current 'world market of surpluses' are transnational, predominantly Western, agro-food giants who are able to benefit from persistent domestic state subsidies at home; liberalized markets abroad; and take advantage of economies of scale to put downward price pressure on producers"

"the sustenance of life – food - should be produced and distributed with wellbeing, human rights, sustainability and equity in mind, and not simply profit driven"

Kaya Fungo of the Giriama

Does it still exist?

By Alphonse Gari



Photo: Alphonse Gari/GSDM

The vehicles moved slowly in the bumpy, rocky and narrow road leading to the sacred Kaya Fungo in Kaloleni district, the home to the Giriama sub tribe of the Mijikenda community where they initially settled after moving from the hostile Galla community in the North eastern parts of Kenya. The area is situated in a remote part of the Kaloleni district of the Coastal region in Kenya where the Kaya (home) lies with its rich history of the ancient Giriama community.

Elders are in a mission to visit the ancient Kaya Fungo which is the native for the Giriama community with a view to begin a process of uniting the members who initially used to stay together in harmony. They once lived there inside the Kaya in unity and were so keen in conserving the environment and preserving their cultural heritage. However, late locals residing near the Kaya had turned to destruction of the forests while some of the artifacts were taken away and sold abroad.



It is due to the fear of extinction that the elders came up together to begin a way forward of reviving the Kayas and begin promoting cultural tourism which will benefit the entire community. It would also help to enlighten the upcoming and future generation on the importance of preserving culture as many had turned to western culture and ditched their own.

As per the traditions the elders conducted traditional prayers in vernacular; "Taireni, Taireni za Mulungu, alombwaye ni ani ..." (Bless the lord hollowed be thy name) ni Mulungu. Then stood the convener of the meeting, a prominent lawyer and the secretary of Malindi District Cultural Association (MADCA), a local CBO, Mr. Joseph Mwarandu. Mr Mwarandu who has been actively working for cultural revitalization said that he had come there with the same purpose- to help revive the endangered Mijikenda culture.

Mr Mwarandu says the rich history of the Mijikenda needs to be properly recorded and its artifacts stored properly for the younger and future generations to learn. "We want to aggressively revive our culture, those unique cultural activities that had been abandoned out so that people can learn and understand our traditions," added.

Non-Mijikendas are restricted in the Kaya. Only elders who have attained a certain rank can go there. In addition, taking pictures in the Kaya is prohibited while some areas are out of bounds. The elders who are currently managing the Kaya say

"The culture and the Giriama heritage are beginning to fade away while some important artifacts have been stolen and sold abroad by unsuspecting people"

"The Kaya was usually used to pray for rains, now people are cultivating crops"

"The elders now have plans to visit the national museum where the recovered artifacts were stored and secure their rights with a view to manage them. More than 260 artifacts were recovered from Italy and France. Out of 260 artifacts, 60 have already been identified"

one cannot just enter easily as it is a sacred place where rituals of the community are conducted and only locals can access the area.

If you are a non Mijikenda or *Mkwavi* in the native language you are not allowed to go into the Kaya. In that case, something bad will happen to you. What you can do is just wait outside and you will be briefed later.

"All of you including my fellow Kaya elders must enter into a straight line one after the other in an orderly way," says Kithi. The culture and the Giriama heritage are beginning to fade away while some important artifacts have been stolen and sold abroad by unsuspecting people. The urge to speak with one voice was among the issues that were to be discussed.



Photo: Alphonse Gari/GSDM

Fundi Mramba of the kaya Fungo who is currently the acting leader of the Kaya

The Kaya elders from Galana in Malindi, Godoma in Ganze and Weruni in Kaloleni districts converged at the Kaya to begin a campaign of uniting the Giriama, to agree where they will preserve their traditional statutes, to promote their culture and protect their heritage.

I learn that the current Kaya Fungo chairman Mzee Fundi Mramba who took over after the famous Simba Wanje's death is ailing and could not take us to the Kaya.

Mramba took over the vocal Simba Wanje who died a few years ago after an illness. The path is clean, well-kept and very *cool*. Only the whistling of birds and chattering of monkeys can be heard. The leading elder breaks a tree branch and the others follow suit.

"Each one must break a branch on his or her left using the left hand. This is the tradition. The branch is kept at the main entrance as a symbol of recognition and respect to the Kaya," says Gideon Makanda, a messenger in the Kaya.

He also says that the drop point also sends a message to the ancestors to recognize that there are visitors entering the Kaya. "Initially visitors used to appease the elders with food but due to the economic situation and poverty levels, people are allowed to drop the tree branches but strictly cut with the left hand and from the left side of the path," he says.

We reach the second point and come across a traditional tomb where the first Kaya elder was buried and is the main gate where, the elders say, the first Kaya elder was buried a long time ago. No one is allowed to clean the area. Only one of the Kaya elders has the mandate to do so, who, surprisingly, does not talk to anyone passing by during his job. A few yards away, you can see ancient plant species with traditional pots that elders used to pray for rains to come.

There is also an area with shrines and pots where the elders used to check when the rainy season is about to come. Pots were placed under a tree and if the elders found water inside, that would be a sign of rain which would usually occur a few days after conducting prayers.

The Kaya, which is among more than 10 others created in the 16th century but abandoned by the 1940s, is rich in history of cultural information and the life of the native women.

It also contains all the clans of the Giriama, and one central area that serve as a traditional parliament or '*Moroni*' in the local dialect under a big old tree. Then there is another area called *Mbare* (Shrine) where elders pray for rain. Only those who are impotent are allowed to conduct the rituals.

The Kaya home is a wide open area with trees that have shades surrounded all over with each clan ranging from Mwabaya Mwaro, Akiza, Mwangowa, Mwakombe, Mwakiringi amongst the other 15 having their traditional homes. The head of the family has his home and initially each clan elder used to stay in the Kaya permanently. However, since the locals began moving away from their traditions, mainly due to economic factors they also began moving out of the Kaya, and that has contributed to the deterioration of the cultural practices.

Mwarandu says the culture and traditions practiced by the fore grandfathers were getting lost which was a threat to the future generation. "It's a big problem that cannot be solved by the people of Kaya Galana alone. We need all Kayas to come together to be sensitized on the importance of preserving their culture," says Mwarandu.

He further says that the tomb of Fungo, who started the Kaya tradition, was disappearing and the elders were not preserving it well. "It's important for the history of the Mijikenda to be preserved and written. Today we have begun a long journey for uniting the Mijikenda since the Kayas are greatly divided. One thing that will unite us is culture," adds Mwarandu.

Initially, he said, elders used to converge at the Kayas to discuss issues affecting them but the trend has stopped as people have adopted and admired foreign culture and traditions. "Mipoho, the Giriama prophet predicted there would be a white man who would come to take their land and it came to pass. The Kaya was usually used to pray for rains, now people are cultivating crops."

The unity of the Mijikenda, he adds, would also enable them to fight for their intellectual rights in the traditional arts like bags and the artifacts which were stolen sometimes back by foreigners to be brought and stored in one area that would act as a tourist attraction site. "There must be legal rights for people to be sued. They steal our artifacts. If we unite, they shall not access them and we shall be more intellectual."

The elders now have plans to visit the national museum where the recovered artifacts were stored and secure their rights with a view to manage them. More than 260 artifacts were recovered from Italy and France. Out of 260 artifacts, 60 have already been identified. The rest are expected to be identified by the elders. All the elders unanimously agreed that the artifacts would be stored at Kaya Fungo which would also act as the main Kaya of all Kayas.

Mr Mwarandu hopes that the business of the artifacts will end and cultural tourism will be introduced where foreigners will require to respect the culture of Mijikenda. It would also be the beginning of a new era of reviving the Mijikenda culture.

"A very good idea, indeed, as it seems to be the only solution to the lost generation which disregard their own culture and believe more in foreign cultures," says Mwarandu.

(Alphonse Gari is Global South Development Magazine's country correspondent for Kenya and can be reached at gari-83@live.com)



Egyptian protesters in London, Photo: Catriona Knapman

The Egyptian Dream of Freedom

A personal account of the Egyptian Revolution

By Fady Salah

We were an authoritarian country; we were ruled mainly by the police. We had minimal societal freedom and no political freedom. We would pay bribes just to get our work done. We would pay the police officers in the street, in order to avoid unjustified traffic tickets. We would pay the employers in the public institutions, for them to work on our needs. We would give a lot and receive little in return. That's how we lived for the past 30 years. This unbearable situation was made even worse by the high rate of unemployment and the increasing gap between the upper class citizens and the lower class. This gap has increased to the extent that the middle class has nearly vanished. Leading up to the elections there were two key events which furthered dissatisfaction. One was the killing of Khaled Saeed, who was beaten to death by two police officers only for refusing to be searched without a warrant; and the other being the elections of both houses of the Egyptian parliament (Shura council - People's Assembly), which took place on the 1st of June 2010 and the 28th of November 2010 respectively which led to massive disappointment in Egypt.

Despite of everything that stood against us, we have started to achieve "The Egyptian Dream." The revolution that started in the historic day of the 25th of January 2011...

The Revolution: A Day by Day Account

January 25th: Hundreds of thousands of people dreaming of a better future and aiming to end the dictatorship of Mubarak came out onto the streets and chanted the slogans of freedom and human dignity. The police thought that these demonstrations were like the past ones organized by Kefaya and the 6 April Movements. These groups had lead previous demonstrations starting in 2004. They called for acts of civil disobedience in 2008 and in 2010 demonstrated over the killing of Khaled Saeed. The police thought that the January 25th demonstrations would also eventually fade out, but they didn't.

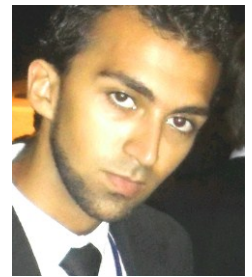
January 26th: The police increased its forces and detained more than 500 people in an attempt to end the demonstrations.

January 27th: The police controlled the demonstrations, so people left the streets and decided to come back again the next day. In Suez, there were many bloody clashes and many people were killed and detained.

January 28th: Known as "The Friday of Anger," 1.8 million¹ of people came into the streets

calling for the removal of the regime in Egypt. The police retreated and the army took its place, and the former President, Mubarak, declared a curfew.

The police opened many jails and released the prisoners; some suggest using a tactic which aimed to spread fear in the streets. Many robberies took place. The main headquarters of the National Democratic Party and many police stations were burnt and destroyed on that day. The then President, Mubarak, made a speech in which he blamed all of Egypt's



"The police opened many jails and released the prisoners; some suggest using a tactic which aimed to spread fear in the streets"

"The police had opened the jails because they wanted to make the people fear the consequences of the protests and go home, but the people stayed and continued their fight for freedom"

problems on his cabinet of ministers. He announced that he would remove the cabinet and would announce a new one the next day. This day was the real beginning of the fall of the regime in Egypt.

January 29th: By this day, the army was in control of many key places in Egypt. The army announced that they would not attack the protesters as long as they are protesting peacefully. People claimed they would stay in Tahrir Square in an open protest until the regime was removed. Many people also stayed in the streets to protect their homes from the prisoners that were out in the streets. The police had opened the jails because they wanted to make the people fear the consequences of the protests and go home, but the people stayed and continued their fight for freedom. The former President, Mubarak,

¹ <http://www.elwatanaz.com/watanarabi/516.html>

assigned General Omar Suleiman; the former Director of the General Intelligence Directorate as the Vice-President of Egypt.

January 30th: The protesters remained in Tahrir Square peacefully, while others stayed around their homes forming neighbourhood groups to protect their homes.

January 31: The protesters in Tahrir Square called for more people to join the demonstrations the next day to confirm that most of the people of Egypt want the removal of the regime and that the people would not accept Omar Suleiman as a Vice-President.

February 1st: 2 million² citizens came to the streets to support the cause of the revolution and demand the removal of the regime. The former President, Mubarak, made a speech where he said that he would not run in the next presidential elections. In response to the speech, many Egyptians changed their point of view, feeling that the objectives of the protests had been obtained, while others felt that his words could not be trusted.

February 2nd: Thousands of people came to the streets to support Mubarak. "Gangs" went to Tahrir with camels and horses to expel the protesters from the square but the protesters fought bravely and the gangs were kicked out of Tahrir Square. The government used the national T.V. to support Mubarak and to spread rumors about the protesters, but this tactic was widely considered to have not had the intended impact.

February 3rd: The clashes continued between the "Pro-Mubarak" groups and the "Anti-Mubarak" groups. These clashes changed the view of many supporters of Mubarak to be "Anti-Mubarak." The Army controlled the situation and eventually succeeded in separating the two groups to end the bloody clashes. February 4th: This day is known as "The Friday of Departure" when more than a million³ protesters came to the streets to support the demands of the revolution.

February 5th: The government decided to let the protesters remain in Tahrir Square, while it tried to resume ordinary life in the streets, hoping that people would get tired of protesting and go home, but this tactic didn't work. The pipeline that transfers natural gas from Egypt to Jordan and Israel in Sinai was attacked by an unknown group.

February 6th: The protesters named this week "The Week of Resistance" and called for more people to join their demonstrations the following Tuesday and Thursday. The protesters enchanted a memorial prayer for the souls of the martyrs.

² http://www.ashorooq.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13420&Itemid=24

³ <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=606958&issueno=11757>

February 7th: The protests continued, demonstrations took place in many places around the world supporting the Egyptian revolution.

February 8th: A new demonstration took place of more than one million⁴ people. The government released some of the political prisoners and more people kept arriving in Tahrir Square.

February 9th: More people joined the protests in Tahrir Square.

February 10th: Many demonstrations took place all across Egypt. Many rumors spread that Mubarak is leaving his post, but Mubarak made a speech in which he stated that he would stay until the end of his term. He delegated his powers to the vice President Omar Suleiman. This provoked massive disappointment and people started to move towards the presidential palace in the evening.

February 11th: Tahrir Square was a site where an estimated 20 million people⁵ came onto the streets of Egypt and thousands of people protested in front of the presidential palace. Mubarak left to Sharm Elshiekh. Omar Suleiman announced the resignation of Mubarak and handed authority over to the army. Millions of people celebrated in the streets of Egypt.

Where do we go from here?

In the upcoming days, people need stability and security. The police is nearly absent from the streets. Nearly 5000 prisoners are still at large and that means that our personal security is in danger. We require the establishment of a police force that should follow new policies and a framework that respects humans' rights, dignity and freedom. The economy is also suffering, as one million tourists have left Egypt.⁶ Tourism is an important source of income in Egypt as 2.5 million people work in the tourism

sector. Moreover, the ongoing strikes of many work groups will result in more problems. But in the mean time, we need stability in order to improve the quality of life through social, economical and political development of Egypt!

Many fear that radical groups are aiming to steal the revolution of the people in order to benefit their needs. It will be a disaster if we remove one dictator and replace him with another. We had a dream, and we are moving towards its achievement. I hope we can continue what we began, reach greater goals for benefit of the people, and not to lose in what we have shed so much blood for. May the Egyptian Dream live through the efforts of the people!

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⁴ <http://dostor.org/politics/egypt/11/february/8/36030>

⁵ <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/46705> and <http://www.adennewsagency.com/index.php?page=articles&id=1963>

⁶ <http://www.almotamar.net/news/88454.htm> and http://www.masrawy.com/news/egypt/politics/2011/February/4/tourism_egypt.aspx



Protesters in London demand for a free and democratic Egypt , Photo: Catriona Knapman

Demanding development

Echoes from the Middle East and North Africa uprisings

By Catriona Knapman

It is a daunting task to sit down and write about the recent events in the Middle East and North Africa. Perhaps for the record, we can begin with a tally. Since the beginning of the year two dictators have been overthrown by popular revolution (Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia); fifteen MENA countries organised protests or uprisings¹; countless unsubstantial promises have been made (for improved government organisation, for an end to corruption); numerous legal and justice issues have been raised (demand by Tunisia for extradition of Ben Ali for crimes committed during protests; promise by Abdelaziz Bouteflika to end rule by emergency in Algeria; Morocco's promise of Constitutional rights protection); states have shown violent repression of citizens (such as Libya and Bahrain's current armed repression of protestors); a myriad of demands have been shouted by protestors (affordable food, jobs, end to repressive legal regimes, access to justice, economic reform, political reform, ousting of dictators, kings and other unelected leaders, end to corruption, reform of ruler's powers, democracy). For three months the Middle East and North Africa has shouted out for rights of all types, civil and political as well as economic and social. Their cries have resonated across the globe.

One particularly interesting aspect of these revolutions is the calls for developmental needs taking the form of a demand for rights: the right for jobs; the right for affordable food; the right for adequate housing. The man holding a loaf of bread instead of a fist or a banner in the Tunisian protests is a clear visual image of this claim.² Indeed, Prof. Stephen Chang comments that these demands underlie all the protests

¹ Region in Turmoil, 22 February 2011, <http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/spotlight/2011/02/2011222121213770475.html> Syria and Kuwait can be included too as protests of a smaller scale were organised in both countries, see <http://nupoliticalreview.com/nupr/?p=276> and <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/03/2011311141047609595.html>

² For a link to this image see the following article: http://en.news.maktoob.com/20090000541504/Tunisian_leader_says_violent_protest_unacceptable/Article.html



across the region.³ He notes most particularly that these countries have very young populations and that the economic problems lead many to worry about their future opportunities.⁴

Economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights, provided for in International Human Rights laws are often not the focus for human rights mobilisation. Many argue that such rights are not justifiable, nor can they be enforced against the state. (However, these arguments are now being challenged in some jurisdictions such as South Africa and India, also see for example the FAO study on the right to

³ SOAS Radio Podcast, *Prof Stephen Chang on the recent events in the Middle East and North Africa*, 07 March 2011 : <https://www.soasalumni.org/Page.aspx?pid=380&link=SOAS%20Radio%20broadcast%20-%20Prof.%20Stephen%20Chan%20on%20Egypt%20and%20Libya>

⁴ Ibid.

“For three months the Middle East and North Africa has shouted out for rights of all types, civil and political as well as economic and social. Their cries have resonated across the globe”

“One particularly interesting aspect of these revolutions is the calls for developmental needs taking the form of a demand for rights: the right for jobs; the right for affordable food; the right for adequate housing”

food⁵). The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) provides for states to realise these rights progressively. While this is a realistic approach, it also giving many states an easy justification as to why their citizens do not have access to these basic necessities.

The people of the Middle East and North Africa in the past few months have shouted louder than this legal debate. The protestors have demonstrated, through their actions, the importance of the right to claim access to basic human needs. As such they force the international community to recognise that such rights have been violated across the MENA region. The provision of services by the state or development agencies is not sufficient. People want and need to be actively involved and able to enforce rights



“The image of judges in Tunisia standing with the crowds¹ are a superb example of the role that courts could play in upholding citizen’s rights against abusive states”

The Egyptians and Tunisians and all those protesting across the region have shown that rights demands are not about a bit of paper, they are about enforcing, demanding, being heard.



relating to their national and their individual development.

To look further at the issue of food, the MENA region is largely dependent on imports for food supplies. Rising prices on the international market has had a knock on affect at a local level. This, coupled with an increase in unemployment,⁶ caused many people to suffer shortages, unable to afford basic food supplies at the prices offered. Looking at a recent study on food vulnerability by Nomura study we can see that there are four Middle East countries in the top six of the Food Vulnerability Index, (Morocco, Algeria, Lebanon and Egypt)⁷. It seems to have been this sudden rise in food prices, rather than a long term shortage in food availability which caused many people to encounter difficulties. This is key in ESC rights arguments. Indeed, far from progressively improving the access to food, as required by International Human Rights requirements, the Middle Eastern and North African authorities failed to even maintain the status quo.

⁵ *The Right to Food and Access to Justice: Examples at the National, Regional and International Levels*, Christophe Golay, Food and agriculture organization of the United Nations, 2009, http://www.fao.org/righttofood/publi09/justiciability_en.pdf

⁶ UNDP, 2010, *Decent work*, Table 12: http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2010_EN_Table12_reprint.pdf

⁷ *The Coming surge in food prices*, Nomura Global Economics and Strategy, September 2010, Fig. 27, p26

Economic and social rights demands need to be understood as basic tools for the poor to demand justice in the face of attacks on their most fundamental needs. The image of judges in Tunisia standing with the crowds⁸ are a superb example of the role that courts could play in upholding citizen’s rights against abusive states. Cases, such as post-apartheid South Africa have shown that these rights and other similar forms of civic participation can have an impact in changing the political and developmental landscape.⁹ New constitutions in Egypt and Tunisia need to be sure to cover the full spectrum of fundamental human rights and to continue to mobilise citizens to actively push for the desired changes in their countries. The Egyptians and Tunisians and all those protesting across the region have shown that rights demands are not about a bit of paper, they are about enforcing, demanding, being heard. This is a fine example for the rest of the world, where too often powerful institutions stifle the voices of those who are asking for recognition of their basic needs.

Although the issue of development rights was an important aspect of the revolution, we must not forget that this was not a revolution of one social class or one group. Ahdaf Soueif, speaking at SOAS about her experience in the Egyptian revolution, described scenes of many rich Egyptians parking their Mercedes to join with the population of in square.¹⁰ Indeed, the most pressing and urgent demands across the region are the end of autocratic rule.

Yet, ultimately all these demands, be they about food or democratic process, are about the right to participate in national governance a meaningful way. This participation took many forms during the revolutions itself: peaceful protests in Egypt and Morocco; violent clashes in Libya and Bahrian, collecting litter in Tahir Square, discussing with strangers about the ideal organisation of the post-revolution state¹¹. This diverse participation is a celebration of the rich experience and bravery of the people of the region.

Furthermore, the diverse demands of these protestors are a celebration of development in all its senses. The delicate interconnectedness of these issues only goes to reinforce the importance of citizens having the opportunity to express themselves on all aspects which affect their lives. Each individual has something to contribute to society and the recent revolutions show us that rights are as much personal as they are national or international. As the protests continue, as regimes make concessions, as people who were silenced talk freely, as each dictator steps down; the citizens of the MENA region are claiming their rights, not as legal documents but as a personal reality.

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https://www.menas.co.uk/libya_focus/news/article/1392/January_issue_Table_of_contents/

⁹ For example: *Government of the Republic of South Africa and others v Grootboom and others* 2001 (1) SA 46 (cc); *Minister of Health and Others v Treatment Action Campaign and Others* (2002) 5 SA 721 (CC)

¹⁰ SOAS Palestine Society & The Egyptian Students Association at the University of London, “*Marching towards Tahrir: Revolutionary momentum from Sidi Bouzid to Benghazi*” Conversation and analysis with Ahdaf Soueif and Gilbert Achcar, Chaired by Nadje Al-Ali, (SOAS), 28/02/2011

¹¹ Ibid

Reasoning in Black and Red: An analysis of recent events in Iraq

By N. Al-Iraqi

This article concerns a land where reason has become black and red. The youth are disorientated, and the elderly are powerless.

Poverty is on the rise and sectarian violence is impulsive.

All this happens, watched by an indifferent world. The coalition government is weak. In the case of Iraq this has resulted in producing a fragile state, in which warring factions compete with each other for individual economic benefit from a common pool of resources. A stable Iraq would mean less influence and less of the oil revenues being directed their way. The story of the oil goes even further. With yearly Crude Oil revenues nearing \$50 billion, the government hardly needs to listen to the population, answer their demands or attend to people's basic needs. This is because the government's income is independent of what people do in the economy, which alone, could be argued, is where the fault line lies.

A brief closer look at Iraq's recent history could reveal many factors that contributed to the 16th of Feb demonstrations that were easily overlooked by the government. It is no secret that every government that replaced the British-backed Monarchy since 1958 was the product of a coup d'état, most often lead by the competing factions within The Ba'ath Party. All in all, these powers whenever in charge popularized their governments by delivering – at least in the early stages – some basic promises while ensuring their control over all political powers.

Keeping that in mind, when General Abdul Karim Qasim overthrew the Monarchist government, contrary to his orders, some soldiers and some of the general public took it upon themselves to attack the symbols of the government. So, toppling governments in Iraq, unlike other countries in the region, is seen as a practical and

possible solution to problems. This went on during the Iron rule of the last dictator (Saddam Hussein), where in 1991 more than 14 of Iraq's 18 cities fell to the hands of rebels. This was 12 years after Saddam came to power. What is more startling is that in an earlier event in 1983, the circumstances of which are unclear, there was an attempt on Saddam's life, which became known as the Al-Dujail Incident and which eventually cost Saddam his life when he was tried for mass murder.

So Iraq does have a history of standing up to injustice even though usually in the most confrontational ways. While at the moment, there is no clear sign of a single organizer, there are youth groups, political forces and most notably unions. The significance of the unions should be highlighted, as they suffered oppression under Saddam, and still tolerate major hurdles in terms of the promised attainment of freedom. The Oil Workers Union has been at the heart of protests, from as early as May 2003, and up until July 2010 their main leaders faced charges in court for "dissent". With no formal Labour Law after 7 years of the new political system this struggle will continue.

The majority of Iraq's cities, particularly Baghdad, still suffer from severe electricity shortages; extremely rundown sewage systems; terrible security situations; very high unemployment amongst the youth and absence of visible accountability. If we are to correlate the events in Iraq with the Tunisian Revolution time line; the 16th of February marks the start of revolution in Iraq. On that day protesters in the province of Wasit stormed the building of the government headquarters, setting it ablaze.

This was followed by an organized national "Day of Anger" on the 25th of February, where in Basra the governor was forced to resign. In the North, the Kurdish cities organised demonstrations too, defying the false assumption of great divisions in Iraq, indeed, illustrating that such assumptions are inaccurate.

The demonstrators protested the week after in what was dubbed "The Day of Regret", referring to regrets for having voted for the current government. The government had given people greater hopes after gaining greater control on the security situation and giving the people a breathing space. However, the incumbent Prime Minister still asked for 100 days to sort out the country's affairs, in spite of having been in charge himself the previous term. In sum, many are sceptical and many others are hopeful. What is very clear is that there is a clearer vision of what the protestors expect and want, and tackling corruption so far appears to be item number one on a very long list.

“With yearly Crude Oil revenues nearing \$50 billion, the government hardly needs to listen to the population, answer their demands or attend to people's basic needs”

“toppling governments in Iraq, unlike other countries in the region, is seen as a practical and possible solution to problems”

HIV doesn't exist?

You must be crazy!

By **ALIZA AMLANI**

Special Correspondent, Global Health



“When I first heard that South African President Mbeki was denying the existence of AIDS I scoffed at the idea: ‘how could a disease that was so well documented and researched possibly not exist?’ It was clearly a conspiracy theory based on no facts...or so I thought”

‘House of Numbers’ trails a Rolling Stone magazine reporter, who was briefed to debunk AIDS denial claims of South African President Thabo Mbeki. Soon after he began his quest to show the world how crazy Mbeki’s ideas were, he was faced with a great amount of uncertainty surrounding the epidemic. Contrary to what he had envisioned, the theories and evidence behind AIDS are not called into question by cynical sceptics, but by reputed individuals including reporters, scientists, doctors and experts who have held senior posts at, among others, the WHO (World Health Organisation), a UN agency and a leading health authority around the globe. The uncertainties expressed come from a number of issues including difficulties in defining AIDS; controversies around inconsistent diagnosis practices that yield inconclusive results; and the claim that some of the symptoms seen in many AIDS sufferers around the globe may well be attributed to other causes; whilst some symptoms and deaths may be caused by the very drugs patients are prescribed for treatment. It is these issues that are the focus of the film.

DEFINITION

AIDS stands for Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome and is used as an umbrella term to describe many different afflictions that range from weight loss to cancer. The broad nature of the term means that the meaning of the term is, in fact, far from unanimously agreed and universally applied, but can instead be defined differently depending on geographic location or point in time. A journalist focusing on HIV/AIDS

proclaims to the camera, ‘when talking about AIDS I don’t know what we are talking about anymore, AIDS is one thing in Greenwich village and a very different thing in Kampala Uganda.’ The film discovers that there are in fact at least 12 different AIDS definitions worldwide, illustrating the uncertainty behind what the term actually stands for.

(MIS)DIAGNOSIS

The difficulty with AIDS is not simply its definition, but its diagnosis. The film takes us to South Africa, a country with one of the highest incidences of AIDS, where we are surprised to discover that you can be tested for HIV in train stations, shopping malls and on street corners. As HIV testing is so readily available, the test is done quickly and results are available 15 minutes later using what is called a rapid test. Two problems arise with this. Firstly, as the test administrator admits in the film, the test is not 100% accurate. Secondly, subsequent interviews with doctors in Germany and England reveal that such a rapid test, in their respective countries, would never be used on its own to confirm

(Aliza Amlani gives a summary of a 2009 HIV/AIDS focused documentary film titled ‘House of numbers,’ by Martin W Leung. Critically acclaimed, the film is the winner of 13 international awards and is now available to watch online at www.houseofnumbers.com)



“The film discovers that there are in fact at least 12 different AIDS definitions worldwide, illustrating the uncertainty behind what the term actually stands for”

“some symptoms and deaths may be caused by the very drugs patients are prescribed for treatment. It is these issues that are the focus of the film”

were not conclusive having been diagnosed HIV positive in the US. They persisted with further testing which showed inconclusive, indeterminate or even negative results. Clearly the diagnosis of infection by HIV is not as sure fire as we would hope it to be.

SYMPTOMS

The fact that HIV/AIDS is hugely prevalent and repeated over and over again in reputable newspapers, television programmes, online media and endless fundraising drives of charities and NGOs, mean that surely it must be true! However, James Chin, MD, former chief of global HIV surveillance for the WHO from 1987 to 1992, says himself, ‘if you knew how sausages are cooked you wouldn’t eat them, if you knew how HIV/AIDS numbers were cooked up you would be very cautious how they were used.’

In 1993 the WHO relaxed its diagnosis guidelines: instead of only allowing diagnosis through rigorous patient testing, doctors were allowed to make conclusions through mere observation of symptoms, some of which include fatigue, weight loss and fever. In the documentary, Dr Christian Fiala points out that these afflictions can pertain to any number of other diseases, including general health defects associated with poverty and malnutrition. However, in areas where AIDS was being highly featured in the media and drawn attention to by NGOs and multilateral development organisations making it highly present in the social consciousness, the rates of AIDS afflicted individuals within the population

HIV status but would be used in conjunction with a confirmatory test. In developing countries, the gains in time efficiency of the rapid test are taking away from its accuracy and could be a reason why the incidence of this disease is so high in parts of the world where rapid tests are used, namely the most deprived parts.

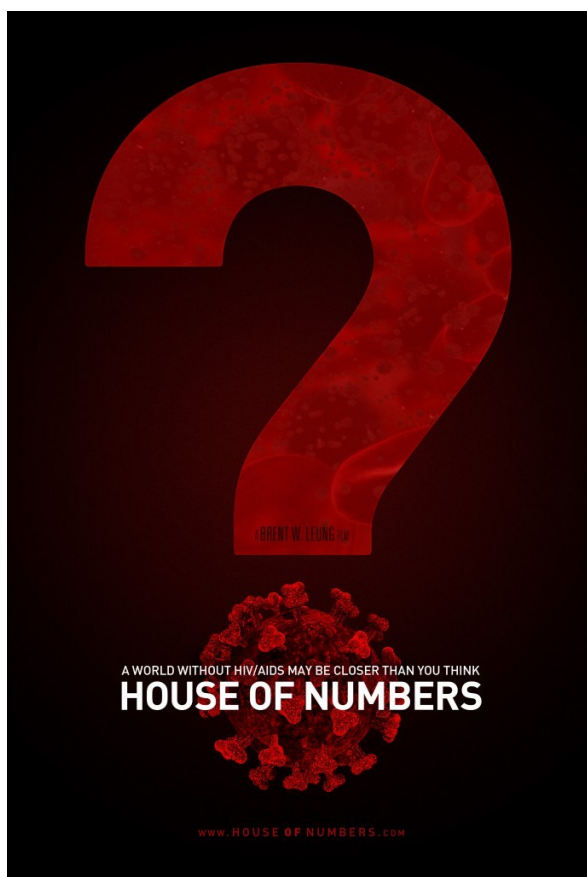
Misdiagnosis is not limited to developing countries. The documentary features two women who read the fine print stating that the tests

increased, since any of a list of symptoms led to a positive diagnosis.

TREATMENT AND DEATHS

So what about the huge numbers who die as a result of a positive diagnosis? Well, some argue that at least a proportion of these are in fact caused by the very drugs that are prescribed to treat HIV/AIDS. The report documents the demise of people who were put on AZT, a drug formerly used to treat AIDS. One eminent scientist, Peter Duesberg, describes this drug as ‘*AIDS by prescription*’, a drug that weakens and kills you. Parents of a young girl in the United States tell the camera of the prognosis they were delivered by a medical professional that their adopted daughter from Romania would not live to see her second birthday as she was infected with HIV. Although she seemed healthy, the parents followed the medical advice and put her on AZT. She soon began to lose her appetite and be plagued by excruciating pain leaving her in a desperate screaming state. Having observed the change since being medicated, her parents took her off the drugs and, at the time the documentary was filmed, she had grown into a beautiful young woman aged 19.

Another woman claimed that out of a group of eleven in treatment only she and two friends survived. They were the only ones who refused the drugs. These stories bring into the realm of possibility the probability that there are additional causes of death amongst AIDS diagnosed patients than the disease itself.



SO WHAT?

Could it be that the fatigue and weight loss seen in AIDS patients in poverty stricken societies is due to malnutrition and poor sanitation? Do we really know how many people are afflicted and can we trust the tests and the statistics? Is it possible that some medications have a terrible effect on the patients and could be called ‘*AIDS by prescription*’? Putting preconceptions aside, what is the actual evidence? Whatever the uncomfortable truths, all I know is that it is worth asking the questions and ‘House of Numbers’ does just that.

(Aliza Amlani is Global South Development Magazine’s Special Correspondent for global health issues and can be reached at alizaamlani1@gmail.com)

Land: the final hurdle in Burundi's long march towards a peaceful future

By **JAMES BELGRAVE**
GSDM Correspondent, Burundi

Located in the heart of sub-Saharan Africa, nestled between Rwanda, Tanzania and the DRC, on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, Burundi has experienced more than its fair share of horrors. Although the Rwandan genocide is very well known, the conflict that has plagued Burundi for over 30 years resulting in over half a million ethnic-based killings is less well known, but has been no less devastating.

Burundi is currently experiencing relative stability following the Arusha Peace Agreements of 2002 and the subsequent 'free and fair' democratic elections of 2005 and 2010, which have brought a restoration of comparative security throughout most of the country. Yet this fragile peace could be shattered by the unbridled population growth, which is leading to an increase in social conflicts, mostly linked to land.



Burundi is one of the most densely populated nations in Africa. Between 1993 and 2008 the population increased by around 30% with further growth projected from 8.5 million in 2010 to a staggering 13 million by 2015. Most of this is down to natural growth, however UNHCR estimates that between 2002 and 2009 well over half a million refugees returned to Burundi from exile in neighbouring countries, and the total number of returnees, internally displaced peoples (IDPs) and dispersed peoples currently represents around one sixth of the total population.

Burundi is also one of the world's poorest nations, with the lowest per capita net income level in sub Saharan Africa (105 USD), and around 70% of the population living below the poverty line. Agriculture is the driving force of the economy, providing much needed revenue for over 90% of the workforce.

Most rural households depend on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods, yet the fragmented parcels of land often suffer from erosion, degradation and subsequent limited agricultural productivity. Land also plays a central role in Burundian society, with the 'Itongo', or family property symbolising an expression of cultural, family and ethnic identity.



It is hence unsurprising that land has become one of the major drivers of social conflict: a great majority of court hearings are related to land. Many of the more than half a million recently returned refugees often return to land which has been occupied by other households or by State infrastructures. The two most significant waves of displacement occurred at the height of the two crises in Burundi: one in 1972 and the other in 1993. Particularly problematic is that the outdated 1986 land code in Burundi does not recognise the claim of owners

"Land has become one of the major drivers of social conflict: a great majority of court hearings are related to land. Many of the more than half a million recently returned refugees often return to land which has been occupied by other households or by State infrastructures"

who have not occupied their land for more than 30 years; thus the more than 300 000 returnees who left in 1972 have no legal claim to the lands they return to.

The multiple management structures for land disputes as well as the coexistence of modern and customary law in Burundi has created overlap of jurisdictions and interventions relating to land conflict. The state's limited administrative, judicial and legislative capacity has difficulty coping with this added burden. Land deeds are generally customary so there is very little legal documentation backing up claims to land ownership. Many are not aware of their rights or of the law, let alone have the money for a lawyer. Corruption has been one of Burundi's most obstinate problems since the end of the crisis, deterring many people from settling conflicts through institutional routes.

All these factors combine to create a time bomb, and if grievances are manipulated for political purposes, the country could see a return to ethnic based conflict. People take the law into their own hands to settle conflicts over land, and, in a country lacking effective conflict resolution mechanisms, where a hand grenade costs the same as a bottle of beer, this can and does often result in targeted violence which would shock even the most hardened veteran.



UNDP estimates that around 50% of countries coming out of violent conflict fall back into that state within five years of peace. Peace has come slowly since the Arusha peace agreements, and given that land disputes are a major source of insecurity, one wonders how long the stability can last.

In the 2007 – 2008 period around 5.8% of all armed violence was land related, and with no secondary or tertiary sectors capable of absorbing landless people there is no option but to tackle the problem head on now before it is too late. There is a need to pay special attention to the land issue in Burundi given that development, peace and stability all hinge on it. Land currently exists as a source of insecurity and hinders the fight against poverty- an aim we can all surely to agree on.

In response to this escalating problem, in 2006 the government set up the national land commission (CNTB- *Commission Nationale des Terres et Autres Biens*) to tackle the problem. Since then more than 20,000 disputes have been registered with over 13,000 cases resolved, but the CNTB does not have the capacity to tackle the problem fully due to the sheer scale of conflicts over land. It does, however, ease the courts and looks to resolve the conflicts in an amiable way.

Several organisations, among them UNICEF, UNDP, FAO and UNHCR are working on *Villagisation* programmes which attempt to mitigate against these land issues by providing returnees with land to cultivate on, as well as basic infrastructures and services. They play a central role in the tackling of the acute vulnerability experienced by some groups with respect to land, most especially women, orphans, refugees and IDPs.

The final solution, however, needs to come from the

government. The definition of a transparent and equitable national land policy, taking into account gender imbalances, and with the participation of all stakeholders is a prerequisite for the definitive resolution of the land issue and the assuring of a sustainable and peaceful future for Burundi.

Given the important link that exists between land and conflict in the Great Lakes region, perhaps policy makers would do well to look at the successes experienced in Rwanda to address land issues, which have been drivers of conflict in the region over the last 30 years.

(Photo: James Belgrave, James Belgrave is Global South Development Magazine's Country Correspondent for Burundi and can be reached at jamesb@ids.ac.uk)

“Land deeds are generally customary so there is very little legal documentation backing up claims to land ownership. Many are not aware of their rights or of the law, let alone have the money for a lawyer”

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“There is a need to pay special attention to the land issue in Burundi given that development, peace and stability all hinge on it”

Ticking Time Against the “Economy” Jargon

By Sudip Joshi

If one would have to ask a novice from academia or an expert with sets of elite know-how in the development sector and/or may be other compatriot in the economy domain about the fundamentals of development- they certainly will give you a variety of answers. Not only reconciling their diversity of opinions will come uneasy but also the strong dichotomy of how the sectors see each other on different conjunctions will appall anyone of us. On the contrary, one particular word will be embedded or are embedded to any of these, the word: “economic growth”.

Let us do some flashbacks. The reasons that lead to both of the brutal and inhuman world wars were derived from the bedrock principles of expropriating natural resources beyond a country’s own territory. Many schools of thoughts still can argue that it was more about the annexation and expansion of the empires and solidifying the power of nations, however, others can still contend that the reason appears as simple as can be- to foster economic growth based on resources tapped elsewhere.

And, when the unethical and inhuman colonies were derailed in the post world war epic, the “economic growth” was imparted globally to refract the development of nations. The rise of country’s GDP and GNP became the ultimate measures of country’s development. Nevertheless, even when the economic targets seem to be achieved in Europe, it was realized that the situation of poverty and the living standards of people did not alter as foreseen. At that time, the failure of development focused on economic growth was realized. At the same time, scholar Dudley Seers, for the first time, mentioned that economic growth is necessary but not sufficient condition of development as there is no guarantee of trickle down of fruits of development. Among others, Nobel laureates, Amartya Sen and Thomas Schultz, also advocated that the underdevelopment even during economic growth was shocking and that poverty was not just an object. Eventually in 1980s the World Bank included the quality of life including better education, health, nutrition, low poverty, clean environment, more opportunity, individual freedom and rich culture as the components of development. However, the realities of such changed parameters are hardly sensed on the ground.

Of all things popular during the last few years, the world has concentrated and adoring swiftly the fast growing economic

growth of India and China. Though the transformations of development were realized in the global avenue, the digits of economic growth are what matters at the most. And embarrassingly enough, the GDP growth rate seems to dominate the development arena for a while to go. I would not mean to undermine the potential and exemplary achievements of contemporary world, for instance India, but still I would rather prefer to acknowledge and shed light on the fact that India is still the remarked democratic country where 70 percentage of its population lives below the poverty line. Caste segregations and marginalization of a distinct part of populace is still persistent, and violent regional conflicts with what seem to be legitimate demands continue. In India and also in China, the large and almost majority of stakes in economy belong to a privileged minority.

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Moving furthest East, in countries like Italy, formed by consolidating power between two regions- south and north- the grievances accounting for unequal distribution of income, grave human living conditions fall on the deaf ears. For, people in the South, opening eyes to such examples might come as a surprise but the inequality of economic distribution between regions and group of population holds true for many other EU countries where sentiments for self-determination have

tolled highest ever than before. Often, economic growth or also democracy (“free world” as referred in the West) in a country has been characterized by unequal distribution of income, unequal universal access to basic rights and freedom and also assets/resources by its own people. In addition, the public policies have been hegemonic representing clan of corporatists (national and international) or ethnic groups or families or ideologies. The fact is also that the economic growth has been achieved even during such course of time.

But, as displayed by the ongoing political upswing in the Middle East now or dating back to the political uprising in the Southern Peninsula of America in the 90s, “economic growth” as a modality can never justify the development of a country and not even a growing democracy.

The time is no better than now, and the place is no better than every nooks and crannies of the globe today to buy the concept of development economics to traditional economic modality. The machines of defining ‘economic jargon’ will have to implement the concepts of “development and economics” that not only deals with the process of efficient allocation of scarce resources, automatic price adjustment, equilibrium and all, but also with universal social, cultural and political participation of the people. The agreed principles of “development, economy or even democracy” will go challenged until and unless they respectfully emphasize broad-based inclusive participation and ownership by people of any country. And, real day- to-day translation of the agreed components of development- naming the quality of life including better education, health, nutrition, low poverty, clean environment, more opportunity, individual freedom and rich culture- if only is subscribed by all countries, we no longer will live to see the harassment by the digits of “economic growth”, we no longer will have to witness our fellow human beings self immolating themselves like in the contemporary Arab world. (*Sudip can be reached at sudip.joshi@silcreation.org*)



Diary of a Humanitarian Worker

By Nikola Jovanovic

Text & Photos

Today, and in the days to come, the impact of natural and human-made disasters is ever increasing, and this is not only in numbers and volume, but also in its complexity.

Floods are often followed by landslides due to unplanned deforestation. The number of deaths and severely injured has increased as houses are built next to dams due to overpopulation. Global warming brings heavy rainfalls which correlates to more and frequent floods, and having in mind that the current irrigation systems are not able to manage excess water. Volcanoes are reawakened, earthquakes are much stronger and more common; and the number of victims, refugees, or people without basic needs for survival has experienced an increase of approximately 200% in the last 10 years. The nature is fighting back for everything that we have done to her.

Due to these circumstances, my work in the Red Cross and in the disaster response department becomes more important, responsible and needed on daily basis almost. This chapter in my diary is dedicated to one of the most beautiful countries where I have met some of the warmest and friendliest people.

Let me bring you to Kenya!

Two years ago, I participated in a massive relief operation in Tana River district; an agricultural area about 400km south from Mombasa where people's lives depended on fruit growing and animal husbandry. In the beginning of 2009, this area, inhabited approximately by 40.000 people was faced with heavy floods that had destroyed almost 1500 households. A few weeks later, they were struck by El Nino¹ followed by strong wind and monsoon rains. Not long after the withdrawal of water, the high temperatures brought them a harsh and

long-lasting draught. The final number of the most affected households had risen to 3.600 with around 36.000 people being affected in 16 villages. Global warming and climate change took their death toll.

International Federation of Red Cross launched an emergency appeal and attempted to provide for the immediate needs of the people in those villages. Not only had the necessary items arrive but the logistic, relief and assessment teams were also deployed. In a short period of time, four assessment teams were established with the main goal to organize and assess villages, to estimate the exact number of people who required support, and to classify the most urgent items needed for successful relief. My team was number four: Delta FACTⁱⁱⁱ team.

In the team, the team leader was from the UK, deputy from the USA and other team mates coming from countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Jamaica, Benin, and including myself, from Serbia. Working in a multicultural team was nothing new to me. Actually, I find it to be as one of my favorite parts in field operations. The staff members who come from different parts of the world and the diversity of experiences, extensive knowledge and amazing ideas form the essence of the Red Cross movement. They bring the fieldwork to its highest level.

After a two-day briefing, we became familiar with the cultural heritage and identity of the inhabitants in the villages where we were about to operate. The team was ready to go. We were assigned

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to manage two villages and had four days to complete a detailed assessment of the needs of the vulnerable people.

Europeans who come to Africa may tend to believe that they know much about this continent. After only a few of weeks of their stay, some may think that they know everything. But it is not like that. Actually, it's not even close.

Indeed, those beautiful landscapes, warm people with specific but magnificent culture make a profound impact upon you. Wanted or not, you must love it. The contrasting colors of the Baobab trees and the red soil, the villages with small houses and straw roofs, with many kids running all around you; smiling and hoping to receive attention, make Africa unique and your work priceless.

I remember the words of my team leader; an experienced old man who had been in the field for more than 30 years, "Wherever you go, no matter how hard a disaster has struck, you always find happy children." That was true! During a break in the field, I spotted a group of children who were playing football with an improvised ball of papaya peel. I asked them about their favorite football players and they looked at me very strangely. I repeated my question once again and one of the goalkeepers told me: "What do you mean who is my favorite player? I am!" Then I realized that they probably never had the opportunity to see how this game looks like in Europe or South America, and they had no clue of who David Beckham is even, or any other football superstar. But, it was not important for them; they had their own game, their own heroes, and they were most likely happy in their play. Hmm, isn't that supposed to be the essence of this game?

Moving on to the third day, it was a heavy rainy one. It was raining throughout the night and morning so our travel from the compound to the village was challenging. We were in our Toyota and slowly set off to our destination that was about 15km far from the base camp. The soil in this part of Africa was mostly like clay, and despite having a good car and an experienced driver, we were stuck in the mud and attempted to get out unsuccessfully.

After fifteen minutes, I saw a person with a donkey passing by. He raised his arm and greeted us with the famous "Jumbo" word that meant "Hello" in Swahili. He was singing some old Kenyan song, had a piece of grass in his mouth, was holding the donkey with a load of wood on its back, and was slowly heading towards the market for selling his goods. He stopped for a moment and we exchanged a few words. He lived in the neighboring village where the flood had destroyed most of the houses and the bridge that used to connect two sides of the river. On one side, there were the farms and part of the households; and on the other, there was the school and the church.

And then I asked him: "OK, if you don't have a bridge, then how do you take your kids to school?"



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"Wherever you go, no matter how hard a disaster has struck, you always find happy children"

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"We swim with them on our back," he responded.

"But Tana River is full of crocodiles!"

"Well yes, but this is a risk of life, you know," he responded smilingly and with perfect white teeth.

Risk of life, I thought... Yes it is more than that!

After the four long days and nights, we were ready to make an action plan: How to distribute all the emergency items to the villages and how to make reciprocity, and where and when the items would be distributed. Together with us, we had a field clinic from Norway and a water- and sanitation team from Austria who had joined us in this operation – everyone in their respective field of expertise.

The weather was great, we started our trucks and in no time, the emergency items such as mosquito nets, blankets, jerry cans, tarpaulins and basic food items were distributed in the field.

The beneficiaries knew everything. They stayed in two lines, with prepared documents (at least those who had any), bags and wagons. Everybody was there: village elders, hunters, children, women, sorcerers, and other villagers. They were staying together in the queue and everybody knew their place; there was no pushing, tension or any form of restlessness. This informed me that it was not their first humanitarian distribution, and this was not the first time those people had lost everything and needed to start from beginning.

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Natural disasters force those people to start all over again and almost every year. Every year, there are more and more situations like these when the lives of those people are put on the edge, but this is not only in Africa; it is everywhere. A while ago, I saw some terrible images of natural disasters in Japan, New Zealand, and Pakistan. I asked myself so many times: Isn't it already too much? Do we really need to go to wars after all these natural disasters? Haven't floods, earthquakes and Tsunamis taken enough lives and added enough human suffering?

During my flight from the field to Nairobi where I was to head back to Serbia, I was tired, exhausted and wishful of dreaming in a cozy bed; but I looked down through the window and thought there is still too much job to be done, so many people to help. Once again, I found the strength to get back to the field and realize that I have the best job in the world. (Nikola works for Red Cross of Serbia)



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¹ El Nino, Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Ni%C3%B1o-Southern_Oscillation

ⁱⁱ FACT team – Field Assessment and Coordination Team



Photo: Lingson Adam/GSDM

Small holder farmers in many parts of Tanzania, who could otherwise be healthier, remain not fairly rewarded for their hard work due to poor or lacking storage and processing facility, and reliable markets for their produce. Pictured is a bumper harvest of bananas/plantain at Migombani village in Monduli district council, Arusha northern Tanzania uncertainly waiting for buyers. This makes them very powerless in bargaining.

Happy Anniversary- GSDM!



Global South Development Magazine has grown up and become a year old. We believe, along with its age, the magazine has also become more mature and has learned a lot. We also believe that it has been able to make a little difference to the way how we think of and understand different development patterns and practices.

As the editor of the magazine, I think I am not the right person to judge and testify the magazine's success. Independent development practitioners can do that job. But, still I believe it is worth sharing some of the lessons that we learned during this course of time.

When we decided to launch a free and volunteer oriented development magazine, many people were skeptical. We were just three people in the editorial board and we didn't know who is going to write for us.

Anyway, the magazine was launched and we managed to get quite many contributions as well. Slowly and gradually we got more confidence, more contributors and new members in the editorial team. Today, when the magazine is just celebrating its first anniversary, we have more than 30 members in our global editorial team who make contribution from different corners of the globe. No need to mention they are all passionate, dedicated, skilled and

experienced in their respective fields. And this proves that our preliminary assumption was right: people do contribute without receiving a penny, if you ask them to contribute for a cause, for a rational reason.

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“based on our experience voluntarism still works today and contrary to popular belief people are not just selfish and paranoid. We have also learned that promoting volunteerism is like promoting an artistic endeavor or inspiring people to be creative and spontaneous. And it needs a lot of patience, hard work, passion, and an unflinching commitment”

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Still today GSDM is run by volunteers. And volunteers, by definition, donate time, knowledge, expertise, contacts, ideas and even money to causes they believe in. GSDM volunteers do all that and more. That's because we are united for a cause and believe in the idea of creating a better, safer and a just world.

I am not saying these things just to make some show-off statements about the success of GSDM, but to let our readers know that, based on our experience voluntarism still works today and contrary to popular belief people are not just selfish and

paranoid. We have also learned that promoting volunteerism is like promoting an artistic endeavor or inspiring people to be creative and spontaneous. And it needs a lot of patience, hard work, passion, and an unflinching commitment. On this occasion, GSDM team wants to thank our readers and subscribers all over the world for their support and encouragement, and finally, our deepest appreciation and gratitude go towards our regional editors, special correspondents and country correspondents, the solid pillars of our global editorial team as well as of Global South Development Magazine.

(The Editor can be reached at manoj.bhusal@silcreation.org)





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