

GLOBAL SOUTH



Vol. 2 Issue 1 WINTER 2012

Development Magazine

Putting the pieces back together again—
current troubles & the role of development aid in

**CONTINUOUS CRISIS
MISMANAGEMENT
IN THAILAND**

**Will Khan Academy
Revolutionize
Global Education?**

**Get Monsanto Out of Nepal
Exclusive Interview**

Rebuilding

Failed

States

With stories from
Afghanistan, Pakistan,
Iraq, Somalia,
Guatemala and Haiti

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Welcome

Rape, homelessness and cholera still plague Haiti, two years after its devastating earthquake. In the Horn of Africa, ongoing unrest ravages in Somalia, whilst Burundi hovers on the brink of slipping back to Civil War. Tens of thousands of US troops have left Afghanistan, and South Sudan, the newest country in the world, is finding itself on shaky ground as unrest threatens its nation building efforts before they even truly began. All these countries have something in common: they are considered failed or fragile states.

2012 is earmarked by aid giving agencies around the world for closer attention to many such projects. The British Parliament, for instance, announced early in the year that its aid arm, the Department for International Development (DFID), is increasing its focus on fragile nations and will spend 30% of Official Development Assistance (ODA) - approximately 3.5 billion - in these states by 2015.

Yet, the world has practiced the art of nation state building for, depending on who is counting, two to three centuries and, still, forty or so nations representing over 1 billion people are deemed failures. Solutions are not easy and even where some consensus does exist, geopolitical interests and lack of political will interfere with progress.

The January 2012 issue of GSDM, thus, takes a closer look at the expert opinions framing the failing state debate. Hassan Mahmud reports from Somalia on the frictions that are rising with its neighbor Kenya, Khalid Hussain reports on current Afghanistan-Pakistan tensions and Emily Lynch takes a look at the already forgotten Haiti. Meanwhile, Scott Ruddick, correspondent on development aid and conflict states, tackles the cover story to discover the role that aid can play in the nation building process. From Guatemala, Robin Smith reveals what happens when state security apparatus fails and Aparna Patankar makes a compelling case as to why education can constitute a significant route from failure to success. Finally, in her biting article on Cancer and Condescension, Aliza Amlani points at the gross inadequacy of discussion around the longer term health effects of the war in Iraq.

The drive that donors want to see happen in fragile nations is one towards democracy. Democracy is also the crying call of the War on Terror, the global Occupy Movement and the chants of the demonstrators of the Arab Spring. In this issue, Middle East and North Africa Correspondent Catriona Knapman discusses the buds of democracy sprouting up in the region.

Flying across the world, Deanna Morris writes on the inadequacies of state action in the worst floods that Thailand has had to endure for decades and Gareth Mace critically assesses the ongoing land issues in Cambodia. Critically, the responsibility of the individual in ending corruption in India is assessed by Dr.P.V.Ravichandiran, Editor in Chief Manoj Bhusal interviews Sabin Ninglekhu Limbu, the leader of the anti-Monsanto movement in Nepal and Carolyn Look colours the article by kicking off our new, regular Country Focus column. Meanwhile, newly appointed Creative Director Benjamin James brings you a deeply touching, positive photographic look at Nebaj, a Guatemalan town that suffered some of the worst atrocities of its 36 year long Civil War, but which is now, inspiringly, holding its own. Finally, in January we launch the new GSDM Blog with contributions on failed states, democracy, education and Central Asia's energy efficiency. Happy Reading and we wish you a great start to 2012.



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Front Cover Photo: Aid being delivered by plane flies over the Afghanistan Mountains
Photo from: Teseum /Flickr.com

Back Cover Photo: A local woman in Nebaj Guatemala sits in the center of town
Photo by: Benjamin James www.emptyspacestudio.com

Dear Editor,

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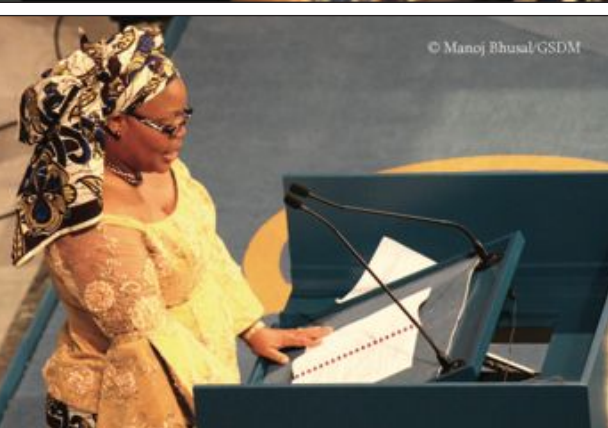
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I liked your editorial about Apple and the developing world. I share your thoughts. I believe the death of Steve Jobs-an icon is what resonates in the developing world than what the gadgets and applications did for the ordinary citizen in developing countries of Africa. I previously worked with a multicultural youth organisation and while I saved money to go to Bestbuy and buy a Toshiba, my American friends were busy selling their old laptops on EBay and saving money to walk to the Apple Store on New York's 5th Avenue and buy one of the latest suave Macbooks. For me, I saw it as a culture. As much as I admired the capabilities of a Macbook, I knew it was beyond my means to buy one but I could still carry out a lot of my work on a 'normal' more affordable laptop installed with Windows operating System and Microsoft Office and a couple of other Desktop publishing software.

While my ideas about Aid in Africa may be different. I lean largely towards Dambisa Moyo's ideas and to a very less extent William Easterly's bitter passions against Aid. That is a topic of discussion for another day. I feel the Apple technology is just not part of our culture in Africa. What we need is handy, practical and affordable options that will enable us compete and close the digital gap in the fast moving world. More and more professionals back here are thumbing their tasks and prefer a more affordable Samsung tablet or a Blackberry to an expensive iPad or an iPhone.

The Windows logo is more recognizable by an average African youth in the village than the Job's bitten apple. Still, what Microsoft needs is to develop ways to create a culture where people in the developing world will be proud of 'owning' affordable Software legally. Microsoft created an avenue for Software piracy in Africa. I am not intending to blame Gates for the pirated software but what Microsoft needs is to allow users to purchase Windows and MS Office at affordable prices online-using Mobile Phone technology. We do not use credit cards in Africa. It is not our culture and neither is it safe beyond the system's security fine prints. Many people in developing countries where Software piracy is at its highest grades would ditch illegitimate applications for affordable legal software that have higher capabilities and are easily accessible. This will in turn build business for Microsoft at the local levels as well. We do not love fakes, we just do with them when we can't afford the best!
Irene, Kenya





Energy efficiency in Russia & Central Asia- is it time to Concerve?

Meerim Shakirova

Several developing country issues, particularly those concerned with the environment, such as population growth, the greenhouse effect, ecological degradation and natural resource exhaustion, tend to only appear as problems after the fact. When left to languish, they accumulate, creating conditions in the system that cannot be repaired. Prevention is usually cheaper than cure and even, if a firm diagnosis is not yet available, paying now for prevention is a wise precaution. It is precisely because these time-delayed problems are difficult to handle in the future that they need to be addressed as policy issues now. A starting point is surely the definition of a clear energy policy with a long term perspective.

FULL ARTICLE AND MORE [ONLINE](#)

NGO in Focus: African Initiatives: Empowering Tanzania's

Christine Whinney

Girls for the Future In Tanzania, there is a large disparity between boys' and girls' school enrollment and performance. This is due to a preference for educating boys and a serious issue of the sexual violence that girls suffer when living in inappropriate village accommodation whilst attending secondary school. These disparities are especially prevalent in northern Tanzania, which are predominantly pastoralist areas, still very much rooted in a patriarchal society. A June 2011 Education Stakeholders' Report found that in Ngorongoro district, northern Tanzania only 44% of girls attended primary school; well below the national average of 95%.

FULL ARTICLE AND MORE [ONLINE](#)

India & Pakistan Relations: Implications for Afghanistan

By Khalid Hussain

Pakistan and India has been locked in mutual enmity from the very day both got independence from their English colonizers in 1947. Both countries have fought three formal wars and many informal military skirmishes mostly won by India. Yet the realities of globalization and the criticality of trade for development has seen peace talks between Pakistan and India going on and off for the last fifteen years.

FULL ARTICLE AND MORE [ONLINE](#)

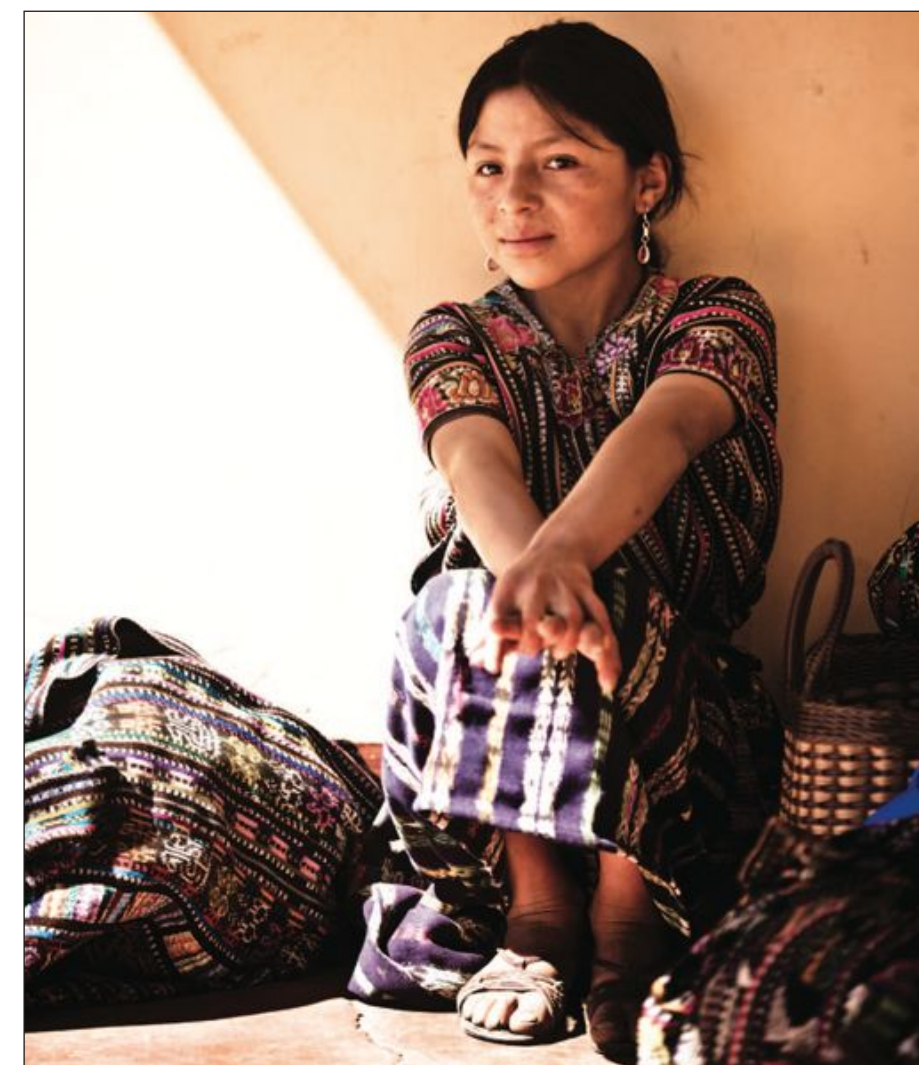


Photo credit: Benjamin James www.emptyspacestudio.com

Thank You!

2012 is an exciting year for GSDM. Since its inception, the magazine has grown to over forty correspondents, reporting from all corners of our planet. Yet, what makes it all worth it, is you! We would like to take this opportunity to humbly thank you, our dedicated readers, for your support and look forward to interacting with you more actively. If you have any thoughts, opinions or downright disagreements with any of our stories, sources or sections, please write to us at globalsouth@silrceation.org and we will post your discussion on our new GSDM blog: <http://globalsouthdevelopment.wordpress.org> and do our best to include your comments in the Letters to the Editor segment the following issue.

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The 2011 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to three women activists from the developing world. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman jointly received the prize for their 'non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work'.

Philippines Emergency – few could escape the news of the treacherous floods that have claimed the lives of over 1,000 and displaced a further estimated almost 170,000 citizens of the Philippines, as reported by the Guardian. Typhoon Washi began its devastation on the 17th December and the World Food Program estimates a total of 7 million have been affected. Humanitarian agencies have begun aid appeals and deployed assistance on the ground.

To Seed or Not to Seed – Genetically Modified seed debates are rampant in Nepal, reported the New York Times. Proponents of hybrid seed technology point to the destitution of farmers and the food insecurity facing this South Asian country. Widespread opposition, however, has mounted and culminated in protests, especially in the capital Kathmandu. Protesters fear corporate take over and dependency and gather in thousands shouting ‘Don’t let Monsanto occupy Nepal’. See GSDM’s April 2011 issue for a debate on how GM seeds affect farmers in India and page [44-45](#) of this issue for a GSDM interview with Sabin Ninglekhu Limbu, a leader in the anti-Monsanto movement in Nepal.

Food Security Centre Stage – India’s cabinet has passed the New Food Security Bill aiming to tackle its status of having the world’s largest population of hungry and malnourished through subsidies and increased grain production. Although a laudable aim, the Bill is not without its critics and was publically rebuked by Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalalithaa in The Economic Times of India. Commentators from India’s Business Standard, also point to severe obstacles that will need to be overcome if the Bill is to have a chance of success.

Food Shortages in a Failing State – In Mauritania, long seen as in risk of a collapse or crisis by the US government, the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) reported that “the combined effects of poor harvests and lower pastures resulting from erratic rainfall, drought, and rising food prices, has severely reduced the availability of food for tens of thousands of Mauritanians, in particular the poorest households”. Having doubled between July and November 2011, food shortages in Mauritania are predicted to affect an incredible 1.2 million people in January 2012, if rapid action is not taken to mitigate the situation.



Photo credit: Jörg Dietze/ Flickr.com

Death of a Despot– December also marked the sudden death of North Korea’s leader Kim Jong Il, who died at the age of 69 on Monday 19th with power passing to his son Kim Jong Un. The news caused Asian markets to slump, but a quick recovery is predicted. However, although “by itself, North Korea’s backward economy is too puny to matter”, reported the Orlando Sentinel on 20th December, “if North Korea’s food shortages and other economic problems worsen and if the new leader has trouble consolidating power, more political and military instability could be in the offing. And that could upset the regional economy.”

Political Islam on the Rise – The 2011 Arab Spring throughout the Middle East ushered in a wave of new democratic elections throughout the region. Surprisingly, as the Economist reported, it is radical political Islamist parties that are winning the hearts of voters. Egypt is the latest in this trend, with the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice party taking most votes. When all of Egypt’s Islamist parties are put together, they have won some two thirds of the seats.

Enough is Enough – Russia’s corrupt and rigged election process designed to reinstall Putin to power backfired as the electorate said ‘enough is enough’. In a rare moment of awakening, according to CBS News, thousands gathered in Moscow, St Petersburg and 50 other cities to demand a ‘Russia without Putin’. Will this usher in a Russian Spring and help build more democratic systems in the country?

No More Aid – Britain has stopped funding to a number of UN aid agencies it has found inefficient in a review earlier in the year, reported the BBC. UN Habitat, the UN International Strategy and the International Labour Organisation have all seen their funding stopped. The Food and Agriculture Organisation and UNESCO are among others set for the chop unless they can improve performance by 2013.

Backing Progress – President Obama has instructed US officials to consider the state of gay rights and freedoms in nations seeking development aid from America. As the Guardian reported, Obama has openly condemned the talks of making homosexuality punishable by death in countries like Uganda.

SOMALIA: Aid ban, insecurity “could lead to more deaths”

December 2011 - Officials are warning of an escalation in the humanitarian crisis in Somalia if the ban imposed by Al-Shabab insurgents, on 16 aid agencies is not reversed.

“If the current situation continues, many more people will die,” a civil society source told IRIN on 8 December.

“A combination of factors is colluding to make matters worse for the displaced and drought victims: we have had an upsurge in explosions, which have killed over 40 people in the last two weeks; and the ban on 16 aid agencies and the Kenyan forces’ entry into southern Somalia are making the delivery of aid very, very difficult.” The civil society source said Al-Shabab seemed to be under pressure and was using the population to blackmail the government and international community.

“They are basically using the suffering of the people as a weapon. They are trying to make it costly to go after them.”

In November, Al-Shabab banned 16 aid organizations, including several UN agencies, from operating in areas under its control, accusing them of “illicit activities and misconduct”. Al-Shabab controls most of southern Somalia.

Humanitarian activities in the parts of the country left by the banned aid agencies have been reduced to “almost nothing”, the civil society source said, adding that critical services such as food, water, health and nutrition had been suspended.

The Kenyan Defence Force (KDF) entered southern Somalia in October to try to neutralize Al-Shabab, hampering humanitarian access to some parts of the region, most of which was drought-stricken. In addition, Mogadishu has been hit by a series of bombings and explosions suspected to be the work of Al-Shabab.

The UN has reclassified the regions of Bay, Bakool and Lower Shabelle in southern Somalia from “famine/humanitarian catastrophe” to “humanitarian emergency”, with 250,000 out of the previous 750,000 Somalis “still at risk of starvation”.

Abdullahi Shirwa, head of Somalia’s National Disaster Management Agency, told IRIN: “We are looking for ways to find other aid groups not banned who can take on the work of helping the population.”

He said the Kenyan incursion, the insecurity and ban on aid agencies had “made people’s lives even more difficult”.

Shirwa said he was getting reports from border towns in the south that food prices had gone “through the roof, making them unaffordable and unavailable to the population”.

He added: “We are asking both Muslim and non-Muslim agencies who can go there to do so. We are also going to ask the agencies that have been forced out to turn over whatever they have to those who can reach the needy.”

Sowing fear

Abdisamad Mohamud Hassan, the Minister of the Interior and National Security, told IRIN that Al-Shabab was using the recent flurry of explosions “to create fear among the populations. They [explosions] did not cause so much damage but were meant to discourage people from returning to the city.”

He said security forces had undermined Al-Shabab’s attempts to carry out major operations “so they are now resorting to a bomb here and a bomb there”, adding: “they are desperate and will do anything to get breathing room”.

The agencies banned by Al-Shabab are: Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, World Health Organization, UN Children’s Fund, UN Population Fund, UN Office for Project Services, Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit, Norwegian Refugee Council, Danish Refugee Council, Concern, Norwegian Church Aid, Cooperazione Internazionale, Swedish African Welfare Alliance, German Agency For Technical Cooperation, Action Contre la Faim, Solidarity and Saacid. (Source IRIN)

Winners and losers in the Durban climate deal

By Tim Gore

In the early hours of Sunday morning, governments meeting at the UN climate change conference in Durban, South Africa, set a path towards a new legally binding agreement for all countries to cut emissions. But the deal struck does little to meet the needs of poor people fighting climate change right now, and risks blurring important distinctions between

the responsibilities to act of developed and developing countries.

The Durban Platform

In a significant political breakthrough, governments in Durban turned the page decisively away from voluntary pledges of action, and towards legal commitments. The Kyoto Protocol will continue as the foundation of global efforts to fight climate change, albeit without Japan, Russia and Canada, and negotiations will be launched to conclude in a wider legal agreement for all countries by 2015, to enter into force from 2020.

But we need to act much sooner than that. Global emissions continue to rise at record speed, and the science of climate change tells us we must bring them to a peak within the next five years to have a chance at avoiding catastrophic levels of warming, and the droughts and floods that will be unleashed. The provisions in the Durban deal for action on emissions within this time period are vague. The risk of a ten-year timeout in doing more than what was pledged two years ago in Copenhagen is far too high.

Many developing countries are concerned that the terms of that new agreement will see new pressure on them to act in the same vein as developed countries. The impassioned appeals of India and others to keep fairness at the heart of the new regime are not reflected in the text of the final agreement, which makes no distinction between the fair shares of the effort needed by large and small historic and per capita polluters, or between the richest countries and those where millions of people still live in poverty and hunger.

Legal progress at the expense of action The progress in Durban on the legal form of a future agreement came at the expense of the ambition of action in the near-term and equity in the long-term.



Thai Flooding: Continuous Crisis Mismanagement

by Deanna Morris

Photo credit: Sakhorn38/FreeDigitalPhotos.net

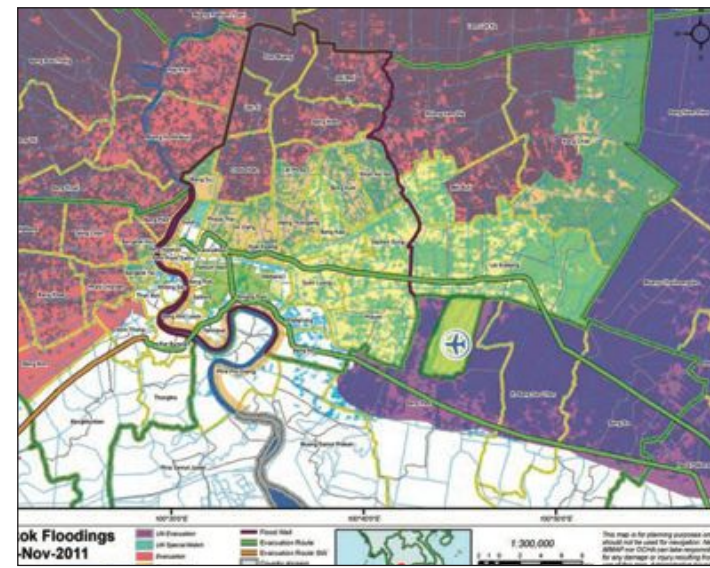


Photo credit: Phonsawat / FreeDigitalPhotos.net

Although flood waters are receding in some areas, it is projected that flooding may continue into the next month. The severity of these floods has virtually effected every sector of the country resulting in the closing of industrial and government offices, United Nations offices, Don Muang Airport, schools and small businesses, effecting agricultural producers and consumers, and impacting Bangkok's booming tourist industry. The repercussions have extended beyond Thailand's own borders. Major manufacturing plants located in Thailand, including those of Coca-Cola, Honda, Western Digital, Toshiba, Nestle and Oishi, have shut down production. Given the country's regionally and globally integrated production networks, stoppages in productions have been felt globally, particularly in Japan and Laos, who are major commodity importers of Thai goods. Some plants have even threatened to relocate their operations elsewhere if significant flood prevention actions are not taken.

Despite the significant agricultural losses in Thai rice production, this market hole can easily be filled by other rice producing countries in the region; therefore international consumers have little to worry about from a food security standpoint. Agricultural producers, however, have experienced significant losses. In addition to rice, sugar cane, maize and cassava are also major agricultural products that have been affected. The most disproportionately affected population of people impacted by this flooding is rural producers who depend on harvests for not only income but also to ensure household food security. Flood and/or weather insurance in these areas is rare, allowing no recourse for farmers who experience loss as a result of flooding.



The Thai government has only set aside 3.3 million USD for cleanup activities and is currently offering flood affected Bangkok victims just 5000 baht (approximately 160 USD) in flood damage compensation. No information is available on rural flood compensation packages to serve those worst affected by the disaster.

This has been a great lesson learned for the Thai Government both from a political standpoint (i.e. future elections and approval rating) and also from a disaster preparedness perspective. Better flood preparation, coordinating dam water reserves, pump distribution/ placement and general increases in disaster preparedness coordination are imperative areas that the Thai Government must focus on in order to prevent future flooding and mitigate the economically crippling threat of massive industrial relocation. From a development perspective, government and international aid organizations should consider increasing widespread relief efforts from Bangkok to rural flood areas that have seen massive displacement. We can only hope that in the case of Thailand, government and international aid organizations are able to focus their efforts on moderating livelihood losses and improving future flood prevention mechanisms.

Map Source: Thailand: Bangkok Floodings November 12, 2011. iM-MAP. Retrieved from <http://www.immap.org/files/maps/485.jpg>.
Photo Source: Shermaine Ho, United Nations Integrated Regional Information Network

In 2009 and 2010 Thailand was in the grips of two terrible monsoon seasons that precipitated disastrous floods, leading to widespread damage in rural areas and devastation of its rice crops. Yet, that was nothing compared to what the country is experiencing now. With little respite for recovery, Thailand, the land of smiles, is in the midst of its worse flooding in 50 years. The relentless rising waters have been unforgiving, affecting two of the country's largest cities, with flood waters raging from the Northern city of Chiang Mai to the county's bustling capital of Bangkok, about 750 km south.

'It looked as if I was flying over an ocean,' commented one local air traveller on her flight between the two cities. Gasps of amazement vibrated through the plane as the passengers looked down over the ancient city, Ayutthaya, now resembling the mythical sunken city of Atlantis. With rivers running where roads once were, flooding to this extent in the inner urban areas of Bangkok is unprecedented. According to the Bangkok Post (3rd November, 2011), the floods have claimed the lives of over 500 people and are "affecting more than 3 million households from 63 provinces, displacing tens of thousands of people from their homes." The floods have spread across both urban and rural areas and are forcing many people from low-lying areas to relocate their families and vehicles to higher ground. As a result, many elevated roads have been transformed into over-crammed parking lots resembling vehicular refugee camps, with some displaced citizens making these highways into their new, hopefully temporary, homes.

Flooding in Thailand is not an unanticipated occurrence given its furious monsoon season. What is surprising, however, is that despite annual increases in flood severity over the past decade, the government has once again been caught off guard. Its slow actions and limited disaster preparedness procedures have failed to mitigate the flooding damage, attracting widespread criticism.

An ongoing critique of the state maintains that although floods typically affect the rural areas, these regions and their citizens are notoriously overlooked or outright forgotten in disaster readiness policies. The lack of coordination of recent years' mitigation efforts to create dams and canals that will help divert and detain flood

waters away from productive agricultural land and rural settlements has done little to contain the continuous onslaught of powerful floods.

"The 2011 Thai floods have claimed the lives of over 500 and affected over 3 million more."

In the cities, flood prevention has been mismanaged on a variety of administrative levels ranging from local government authorities and the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority and Flood Relief Operations Command (FROC) to the recently elected Prime Minister, Yingluck Shinawatra. For example, in order to prevent future droughts during the upcoming dry season, the government mistakenly kept more water in the dams than necessary, thus contributing to flooding during this season's monsoons. Also, with the newly elected government coming to power this past July, the inexperience of officials and lack of coordination of metropolitan Bangkok with surrounding provinces further compounded the problem. Meanwhile, FROC's denial of the Bangkok Governor Sukhumbhand Paribatra's request for more water pumps has also come under fire, sparking protests that resulted in the brief blockage of a major highway.

The Law of the Land- Cambodia's Collective **DILEMMA**

by Gareth Mace

“Not for Sale. Do not support the thief” cries the graffiti daubed across a corrugated fence surrounding a small plot of land in downtown Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital. This slogan is a vivid indication of the contention and rebellion that land rights inspire in the historically troubled Kingdom of Cambodia. On any given day, one barely has to look beyond the front page of the two major English-speaking newspapers in the country, The Phnom Penh Post and The Cambodia Daily, to understand the scale and severity of the problem.

This is not an insignificant issue: in 2008, a Government spokesman estimated that 420,000 people had been affected by land conflicts – 3% of the populace. While the Land and Housing Working Group estimates that since 1990 around 11% of Phnom Penh's population have been evicted from their land. Importantly, it is women who are increasingly bearing a disproportionate share of the burden since, as heads of households or unofficial community leaders, they play a central role in these disputes.



Photo credit: WaterandFood/flickr.com

So what created such a desperate situation for so many Cambodians? Since the abolishment of private ownership under the Khmer Rouge, the party that oversaw genocide and radical agricultural reform in the 1970s, various legislative acts have attempted to successfully re-establish such tenures in the country. The 2001 Land Law being especially significant in this mission. One element in particular has had radical consequences for the landscape of the country. Through the facilitation of ‘Economic Land Concessions’ – land grants of up to 10,000 hectares to social and economic investors – the Cambodian government sought to encourage large-scale agricultural and industrial economic development.

As observers we must question whether this legislation was bold leadership to promote growth and jobs in a country crying out for a territorial shake-up, or, in fact, something less than productive for its social well-being. Job creation, infrastructure and ensuring sustainable resources are the watchwords of the Cambodian government in this matter – admirable aims that few would quibble with. Indeed, with sugar trade boosted as a result of preferential access to EU markets (under the “Everything but Arms” treaty) and growing world demand for rubber influencing policymakers to promote its production, opportunities for expansion are undeniably abound. As a result, thousands of jobs have been created and economic growth was recorded at 6% in 2010.

Yet the opportunities for some can be the greatest fear of many others. Communities can often have very different visions and hopes for their surroundings for the future. These may well be motivated by anthropocentric perspectives – in the knowledge that their livelihoods are at stake. Or they may encompass ecocentric beliefs, through the desire to see horizons remain unsullied by the spectre of big business.

Ideally, the Forestry Law of 2002, unfolding simultaneously with the Land Law, would have been a credible and efficient piece of legislation in advocating for the diverse needs and desires of citizens. The advent of Community Forestry (CF) – enabling communities to legally manage forests traditionally in their possession – granted rural people the right to look after ‘their’ land as they saw fit; a laudable achievement.

The Land Law also seemingly recognised the rights of long-term landowners, as anyone who could prove they owned land for 5 years before its enactment was enabled to claim ownership of it. In addition, safeguards installed into the Land Law through sub-decree 146 (enacted December 2005) also bore a semblance of social justice. Two requirements in particular: the need for social and environmental impact assessments and public consultations to be carried out, respectively, display the hallmarks of democracy – so why have these not worked in practice?

Sadly, as with countless examples worldwide, the institutions have often failed to deliver for the majority. Sanctions for ELCs violating rules and/or trampling on Community Forestry claims have been all too often cursory or non-existent. Competing claims can be missed or handled poorly due to poor communication between ministries, while poor landowners may even find their rights and entitlements ignored or even untenable in the face of violent intimidation. The ‘spoils of land’ appear to flow inexorably to the privileged few with the means to reap the rewards of profiteering; while local communities lose access to land and are rarely sufficiently compensated for the destruction of their livelihoods.

Amongst such a sobering backdrop can be found positive tails of collective action that show a spirit akin to the Occupy movements of recent months, one also in need of cultivating and strengthening if it is to have any significant impact. The villagers of the Kbal Damrei commune in the north-eastern Kratie Province displayed such community solidarity in their conflict with a rubber company, that was

“In 2008 420,000 people, 3% of the populace, had been affected by land conflicts”



Photo credit: Jonathan Burr/flickr.com

staking claim to land that had already been subjected to a community forest application by its residents. Unaware of a successful ELC application from the company, let alone the insufficient consultation and impact assessments that had taken place, the people were awoken from their sleep when clearing work began. The response from the people was heartening with the staging of mass protests giving them an unprecedented voice in the matter. Temporarily this halted the company's work and enabled the community to secure information they had previously lacked or been denied.

Nevertheless, the endgame was not one of victory in the face of adversity for the community. Perhaps inevitably, it was the vested interests that won out when military police were hired to protect the company as it resumed clearing work. Unsurprisingly, this show of strength resulted in 4 of the 5 villages agreeing to apply for Community Forestry anew – on land not subject to the ELC. With the case still unresolved, it seems likely that the remaining village, lying inside the disputed space, will be added to the list of evictees.

Such events are familiar in much of the country, and distressingly there have been times when consequences have been far graver than mere eviction for purveyors of collective action. On the 4th July 2007, the leader of the Community Forestry Management Committee in Sre Kor Commune, and active protester, Mr Seng Sarom was murdered – gunned down in his home by unknown assailants. This shocking

act is demonstrative of how high the stakes can be for those seeking to protect community interests and how far those chasing profits will go.

Through the lens of the ‘We are the 99%’ discourse, the struggle for fairness and representation in land tenure could be seen simply as government and private enterprise control of natural resources over the weak and powerless masses – uninformed, disenfranchised and disregarded. Access to vital information is all too often limited and observance of the rule of law insufficient. This results in increasingly desperate contexts for citizens, the likes of which can be seen in a variety of settings the world over.

For Cambodia, the issue of land tenure refuses to go away, etched into the daily lives of so many already struggling to get by. Collective action is an imperfect and oft-dangerous means of standing up to injustice, but it is often the only option. To encourage its development is a complex path, fraught with risk and anguish – but when was anything worth fighting for supposed to be easy?

Photos from Jonathan Burr, Water and Food, & Flickr.com



KENYA INVADES SOMALIA: WILL PEACE PREVAIL THIS TIME?

By Hassan Mohamud

Photo credit: Air Force Sgt. Samara Scott/ Flickr.com

Historically Kenya has been a peaceful country, an “island of peace” as Kenyans like to boast. With the exception of a failed coup attempt in 1982 and a brief period of post-election instability in December 2007, Kenya has largely remained free from the curse that has struck several other African countries.

In the past, its neighbors have involved in military expeditions, campaigns or coups. Tanzania’s invasion of Uganda in 1979 to oust notorious Idi Amin regime, for example, was welcomed as a noble act, but at the same time it was an act of aggression against a sovereign state. In the mean time, in his bid to bring all the Somali speaking people under a common border of a “Greater Somalia”, Mohamed Siad Barre, a military general who had assumed power after a bloodless coup, declared war on Ethiopia in 1978. Recently, Uganda and Rwanda have been active militarily inside the Congo, whilst the alleged bombing of Northern Uganda by Sudan in 1998, as well as the 2000 Eritrea -Ethiopia war, sum up the region’s tumultuous past.

Not that Kenya has been left unprovoked in its existence as an independent nation. Idi Amin, the Ugandan dictator, publically declared his intention to occupy western Kenya and Siad Barre revealed his plans to annex the Northern Frontier District (NFD) in Kenya’s North Eastern Province to become part of Somalia. Both issues angered Kenyans, but both matters were settled without much fuss. As one prominent Ugandan journalist working for the east African magazine noted: “by invading Somalia, Kenya has become a true great-lakes nation.”

Kenyan soldiers climb into a truck as they prepare to advance near Liboi in Somalia, on October 18, 2011, near Kenya’s border town with Somalia. Kenyan jets struck in Somalia on October 18 in a bid to rid the border area of Islamist rebels blamed for a spate of abductions, including that of a French woman who died in captivity (Getty Images)

Kenya, on its part, has never harbored expansionist ambitions and has generally been at ease with its neighbors. It is home to a sizeable population of Kenyan Somalis and has, therefore, preferred to keep at a safe distance from the problems in Somalia. However, the country has not settled for being a mere passive observer; Kenya has been very active in trying to bring peace in the region. The Naivasha Accord, for example, gave birth to South Sudan, the youngest nation in the world today. And where was it drawn up? Kenya. It should also not be left unmentioned that the Kenya military is one of the most active in peace keeping efforts around the world.

Nevertheless, it is out of its laid-back nature that the ability of Kenya’s armed forces has been questioned and criticized by its neighbors, who, in the bid to rouse negative connotations, have labeled it a “career military”. Further criticism comes from noting that Kenyans themselves have never seen much of its military. National holidays constituting notable exceptions, where the army showcases its hardware and personnel.

The decision to invade Somalia two months ago was seen as a bold and necessary move by the Kenyan government. The military campaign named operation “Linda Inchi”, Swahili

Photo credit: CCF4980/ Flickr.com



“By invading Somalia, Kenya has become a true great-lakes nation.”

for ‘safeguarding our country’, came after a series of kidnappings of foreign aid workers and tourists inside Kenya. The crimes allegedly carried out by the Al-Shabaab militia, an Islamist organization that until recently controlled most part of Southern Somalia and the capital Mogadishu. In response to the accusation and to the crossing of Kenyan troops over the border, Al-Shabaab vehemently denied its involvement, claiming instead that the Kenyan government’s claims of kidnappings are but a thin veil for its underlying ambitions to occupy Somalia and extend its sphere of influence.

On September 16, two thousand Kenyan troops entered Somalia. The aim: go in, wipe out the Al-Shabaab, create a buffer zone and get out, a tactic reminiscent of 2006 Ethiopian invasion that ousted the Islamic Courts Union.

The military campaign has stirred up mixed emotions among ordinary Somalis. Somali business community inside Kenya, for example, has suffered greatly from the past few months’ unrest. The once bustling Eastleigh suburb in Nairobi, home to a franchise of Somali owned businesses ranging from shopping malls, manufacturing industries, import-export business and service industries, almost came to a standstill.

Also, due to their unique physical attributes, ethnic Somalis are different from other tribes in Kenya and, lately, they have been racially targeted. Unwarranted arrests of Somalis and search of their homes have also become prevalent. Although to avoid accusations of maltreatment, Kenyan government officials have been quick to remind Kenyans that Somalis are one of the 42 tribes of Kenya as enshrined in the constitution, and are thus treated equally.

Across the border the feeling is different; the war against the Al-Shabaab has been reported to have amassed great support from the people inside Somalia. Scenes of jubilant Somalis flocking the beaches of Mogadishu after the Al-Shabaab lost control of the city spoke volumes of the freedom Somalis yearned for. Al-Shabaab has been left to rue for their mistake of not letting aid flow to the people during this year’s famine which has turned the people against them.

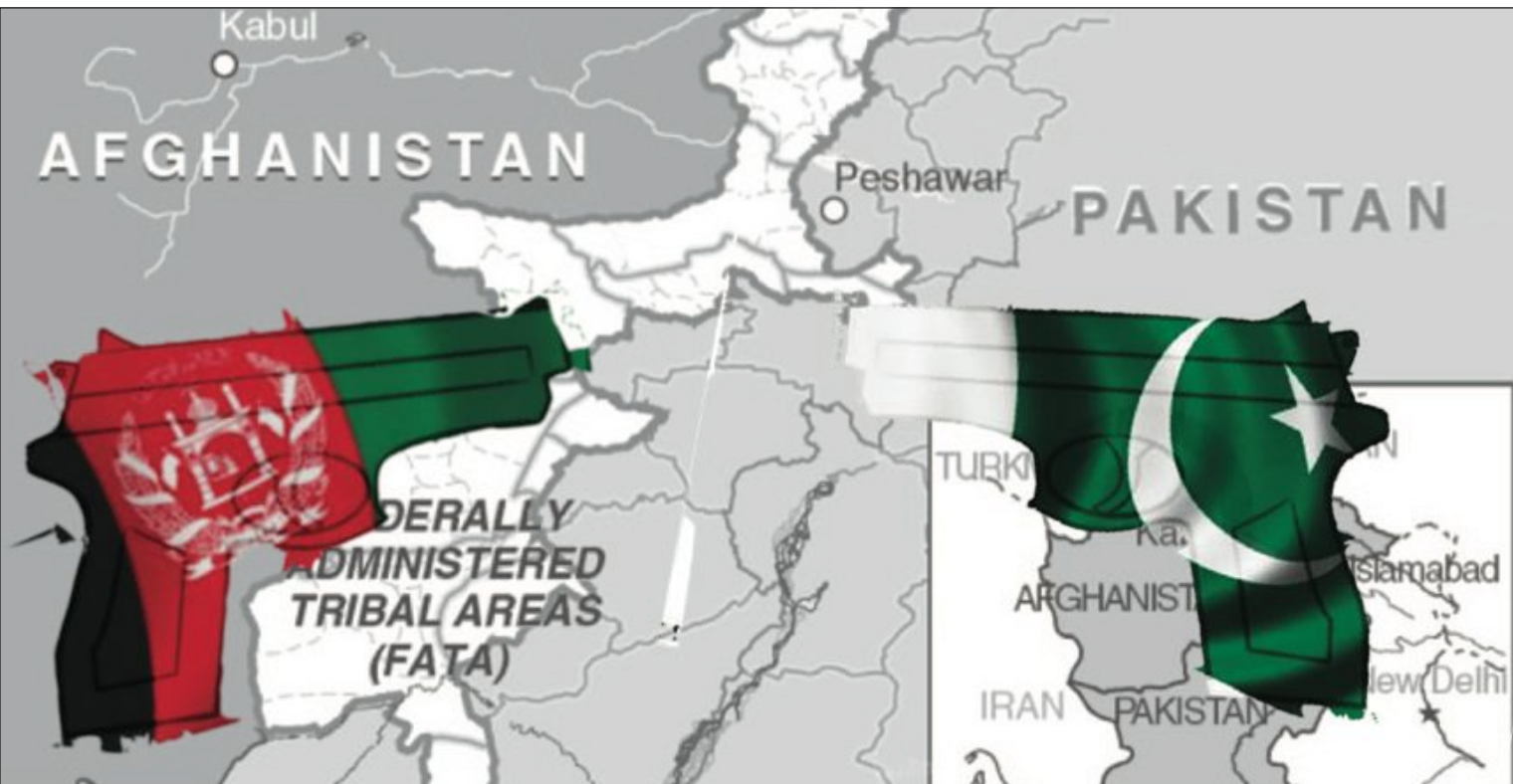
Somalis are not blood thirsty people, but they have a different modus operandi to the rest of the world, as the East African Magazine recently explained: “Somalia does not need a powerful state: this would perpetuate the war.” The author, Richard Dowden, a British journalist on African affairs, further wrote that the situation in Somalia is a complex one and that by creating an effective central government with external help will only bring more hatred and bloodshed among the many different clans that populate the area. Western style governments will never suit Somalia, as, traditionally, it has been ruled by clan of elders known as Gurti. Creating a central government, therefore, would mean elevating one clan above the rest, something Somalis will rise against. Thus, Dowden argues, in a country where every man has his sultan, it would be a mistake to make a peaceful Hargeisa pay homage to the battle-prone Mogadishu.

What the Kenyan invasion means to Somalia’s internal politics is not of immediate importance for the Kenyan government. The jury is still out on whether the invasion will constitute a triumph, but, from the look of things, success seems to be a long shot.



Failing Threatens to Spill Over: War in Afghanistan & Pakistan's Mexican Standoff

By Khalid Hussain



Pakistan is in a complex situation. The whole region of south Asia is directly or indirectly involved and affected by the war in Afghanistan. Yet, it is not regionally focused, but a greater complexity is obtained in the international contexts as China and Russia are now actively involved in US-Pakistan relations. This and Pakistan's traditional enmity with India raises the specter of a nuclear holocaust in south Asia. Pakistan's military support to the monarchs in Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) and their past and present patronage to the Jihadists in Afghanistan also brings in to bear all the recent political developments in the Middle East.

Pakistani generals stand accused of double crossing USA and NATO, but there is also evidence of deception being a universal game in Afghanistan and all seem to be involved from Saudi Arabia to Iran to India, and also China and Russia. Saudi Arabia and Iran are two antagonists in that region and both command direct respect from the military in Pakistan. The war in Afghanistan, therefore, is not only hot but simply remains too sensitive a security issue to offer any easy or early solutions.

The US is now clearly considered an enemy by the Pakistani military establishment, rather than as an ally, which was a scenario prior to the OBL (Osama Bin Laden) raid in May 2011 or the NATO attack on Pakistani military check posts last month. Some argue that there is open talk of the allies attacking Pakistan. This of course involves the scary nuclear arm piles that Pakistan and India hold, which complicate the security issue a lot more than Al-Qaida. Situating all this in the context of the ongoing global financial crisis brings us face to face with threats of a possible global war.

So it's unlikely that the political strife in Pakistan is all local in color or that the security implications lie only in the longer term. A

political scandal over an alleged memo leaked from the Pentagon in the US has drawn the president of Pakistan into an open spat with the country's military and judicial establishment. The armed forces have always been incapable of staying out of politics and are now actively seeking to get rid of President Zardari with help from the superior judiciary.

The generals are obviously unable to stage another coup d'état despite widespread corruption and lack of good governance in the country. Even *The Economist* (on Dec. 31, 2011) noted the Zardari "government has achieved pitifully little, while the ruling cabal has lined its pockets with gusto".

Nominally the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces President Zardari understands that if he tries to sack the Army Chief, General Ashfaq Kayani, then he may well get the coup he has always feared. The Army is unable to reconcile with the largest opposition party led by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif who understandably wants to force early elections without playing into the hands of the generals. He, of course does not have the parliamentary strength to impeach Mr Zardari. So the opposition has moved the action to the courts. But President Zardari enjoys constitutional immunity from prosecution. This is what some have described as a Mexican standoff in Pakistan.

The country has been between the devil and the deep sea since the May 02 American Navy SEAL's raid last year that found and killed Osama Bin Laden in the garrison town of Abbottabad. With the economy in dire straits and relations with the United States imploding catastrophically, the generals find Zardari guilty of going to Alexander's shepherd to seek a favor from Alexander!

At the heart of the political crisis is an alleged conspiracy in which

the government is accused of clandestinely plotting against its own armed forces; allegedly by making a "treacherous" offer to the United States in a mysterious memo. Reportedly, the anonymous memo was delivered in May to the Pentagon top brass. It offered to make changes in the command structure of the Pakistan's armed forces in return for American support to the civilian government. The scandal involves a Pakistani-American businessman Mansoor Ijaz and Pakistan's former ambassador to the United States of America Husain Haqqani. Haqqani denies the allegation but was fired from his job nonetheless.

Pakistan's 'activist' Supreme Court has taken up the case dubbed by the press as "Memogate". The government has asked the court to dismiss the "non-issue" but the Army has demanded that the judges investigate the matter fully. Zardari's prime minister, Yousaf Raza Gilani claimed last month that "conspiracies are being hatched here to pack up the elected government"; the army should not act as a "state within the state".

The Memogate is all about Pakistan's troubled relationship with America since it has been badly affected from body blows received in the past year. One tragic episode was a "friendly-fire" assault by American helicopters on a Pakistani border post with Afghanistan, in which two-dozen Pakistani soldiers were killed. Pakistan has since stopped all supplies to the US and NATO forces carried from Karachi by road. The country further asked America to vacate the Shamsie airbase in Baluchistan used by the CIA for Drone attacks on the Taliban in Pakistan's tribal areas. The country also decided to boycott the Bonn Conference undermining global efforts for peace in Afghanistan. A decade-long and very broad security relationship with America --still considered essential to producing



President Zardari

Photo credit: Wiki Commons



General Ashfaq Kayan

Photo credit: Wiki Commons

stability in Afghanistan by the Pentagon--has ended with very little to show for it.

Situated as it is, geographically in the middle of the theaters of impending conflicts --made further complex by the Pakistan Army's ambitions to territorial aggrandizement reflected in influencing the outcome of war in Afghanistan-- the inexhaustible resources of the country and its immense population burdened with the evil spirits of debt, terrorism and mismanagement, Pakistan seems to be placed in a unique and perilous position.

President Zardari has been borrowing 'madly' to stave off a total collapse that, experts consider, is inevitable. The British banker and Liberal politician Reginald McKenna once famously said, "it is no secret that who controls the credit of the nation directs the policy of Governments and hold in the hollow of their hands the destiny of the people". This is reflected in the American support to President Zardari and the military's rushing to the Middle Eastern kings, the Chinese government and the Russian oligarchs for support. The common interest in these global influences remains the war in Afghanistan where American and NATO forces remain embroiled in an unwinnable conflict threatening to spill over into other geographies.

The core crisis is the enigma of peace in Afghanistan that all agree is not possible without getting Pakistan fully on board for a final solution. The resolution of the political crisis in Pakistan will be a pre-requisite to efforts untying the complex knots of engagement in Afghanistan.

The Already Forgotten Haiti: Oh, The Lonesome Wind & Rain

by Emily Cavan Lynch



The hurricane season of 2011, contrary to all major weather predictions, did not devastate Haiti. One feels a certain responsibility for namesakes, and so when Hurricane Emily popped up on the news screens last August she started getting mental lectures from me immediately.

“Looks like Emily will bypass Haiti!” said a cheerful US weather reporter at the time, “All they’ll get are some heavy winds and rain. They really dodged a bullet here!”

But oh, the lonesome wind and rain; it is they who are the banshees of this half of Hispaniola.

When it rains in Port-au-Prince

The water flows from the highest hill (the upscale Petionville and its residential peaks) down to the paths of least resistance, the base of the city, pooling in the flatlands of Cite Soleil, Martissant and the port road, where the city’s poorest spread their markets and tin-roofed hovels.

The drainage canals also end here and so it is here that you will find solid rivers, packed ten or twelve feet deep with garbage and human waste, collecting at gravity’s end, so thickly stuffed that a child can walk across the top with no more consequence than setting the gelatinous substrate pulsing, and the river of waste rolling like the top of a Jello mold, not quite set.

What do we see in these “rivers?”

Styrofoam take-away containers, first and foremost. They are the lightest, so they rise to the top. They are also the dominant form of container used by all street vendors plying rice and beans and fried plantains with picklies.

Styrofoam is almost like Haiti’s national flower.

Without the rains to wash the trash out to sea I imagine that the city would quickly be covered to the rooftops with Styrofoam take-away containers;

Photo credit: UNICEF/ Flickr.com

they would cover the island like a McDonald’s ball pit and muffle any life that once deigned to cry from below.

But the slums are not the end of the water’s journey. After a half-hour’s rain storm, sludge-brown streams will flood the roads and inundate markets and houses at least a foot deep, often more. Roads turn into rivers, floating cars along up to their wheel hubs, threatening to extinguish headlights, and sucking those limping or fatally injured into their mire.

School children caught in the deluge navigate their way, thigh and waist deep, by the walls of store fronts. The unlucky ones – and these are frequent – stumble into one of the few open storm drains or other frequent holes in the pavement and fall to their armpits. More than one leg has been broken in this way.

Let it be understood: this doomsday picture is no anomaly. It rains, nightly, a third or more of the twelve months of the year in Port-au-Prince. More, with an active hurricane season. And each time – yes, each time – the rains flood the city and turn roads into rivers and rivers into torrents.

But such small things change the flow: a chunk of cement no bigger than a textbook, an outcrop of tree trunk, a wayward curb, a child’s foot placed just so: perpendicular, angled, contrary. Hurricane Emily mostly missed Haiti. But the usual rains of this season will not because they are part of the usual cycle of nature. And as it was with the earthquake, it will not be their nature killing people but the lack of appropriate accommodations, building codes and preparation that kill people.

Aren’t things better down there now?

More than half a million people are still living in tents in Haiti. Who wants to remember it? The earthquake was ages ago now. The world has moved on. Even I initially forgot to mention the earthquake in a profile about Haiti that I wrote a few months ago for



Photo credit: Kateryna Perus/Oxfam, Flickr.com



the New Internationalist. The editor was rather astonished. Who can claim to know something about Haiti and yet forget the earthquake?

“Well,” I said, with friends concurring, later that day, “someone who lives here.”

Because the earthquake of 2010, at this point, is no longer the problem. The problem is that there was never adequate infrastructure for the millions of people who live in Port-au-Prince, or elsewhere. The problem is that the government - even the new government - has not been able to provide its half of the social contract. The problem is that the haves live high up in the city, away from the mosquitoes and oppressive heat and flooding neighborhoods and land-sliding hillsides.

The problem is that even in Haiti no one wants to deal with those half a million people still living in tents. Or the the other half a million plus who have moved out to circumstances no better. At this point, most of the people who have the money, the land and the power, just want to “clean up.”

They, like the rest of the world, do not want to look at the unpleasant sights of the people and the tent camps that are the remaining measures of how it was not our billions of dollars of aid that failed Haitians in the year after the earthquake. But the fact that our systems - and here I am speaking not only of the system of governance in Haiti, but also of the system of international aid that cannot get around that governance, and also of the system of the production and dissemination of mass media that demands sensationalism and grows quickly weary of substance - have failed Haitians and are continuing to fail the other disenfranchised peoples of the world.

Hurricane Emily may have missed Haiti but the lack of adequate infrastructure, governance and continued international attention will not.

“Our systems of governance, of international aid and of the production and dissemination of mass media that demands sensationalism and grows quickly weary of substance have failed Haitians.”

Having been quiet for a while, 2012 has started promisingly for Haiti. In Washington, during the second week of January, Oxfam held a week long “Remembering Haiti” event. And online, DEVEX, the largest network of international development professional worldwide, is currently a running from page Haiti focused news, business, jobs and analysis sections.

While we are watching the weather channel, a lot of people are wading through puddles somewhere, and hoping someone out there is paying attention to more than just the latest swirl of “depression”, tropical or other. While we are breathing out our sighs of relief, let us join DEVEX and Oxfam and breath in a renewed commitment to true investment, true “clean up,” and true help for the people in Haiti and elsewhere.

LOS VIGILANTES:

When State Security Fails

By: Robin Smith

Vigilantes. Patrulleros. Los Encapuchados. Civic groups. By any name, civilian security groups are growing more common in Guatemala and their presence more controversial. To some Guatemalans, the vigilantes are their only hope in this failed security state where towns are increasingly targeted by gangs and drug traffickers who have relative immunity thanks to an untrained, understaffed and corrupt police force. Yet, for the targets of their violence, the night patrollers are no more than masked thugs. In my own two and a half years in Guatemala, I have struggled with conflicting feelings toward these groups as being both a necessary evil and an uncontrolled and dangerous element in a country on the verge of becoming a failed narco-state.

So who are the patrulleros? The men who walk the streets after 11pm are usually attempting to end home invasion, petty crime, and drug deals in their neighborhoods. These groups often form after major national disasters, such as Hurricane Stan in 2005 and Hurricane Agatha in 2010 when thieves take advantage of evacuated neighborhoods and over-burdened municipalities who are struggling with the effects of flooding, landslides and infrastructural failures. Civic groups form to help rebuild and protect devastated areas. But the reason that these groups continue might be that “normal” life in Guatemala is like a game of Russian roulette - danger underlies daily life and the next bus trip could very well be the bullet that ends it all.

Guatemala has the highest crime rate in Central America, the fallout of the 36-year civil war and genocide that ended in 1996. Cities are over-run with gangs who perpetrate bus hijackings and bombings, shootings, kidnapping, rape, and terrorist tactics involving dismembering of adolescents and infants. The US State Department reports that Guatemala averages 42 murders per week, yet the prosecution rate is between 2 and 3%. In addition, the Mexicans

drug cartel, the Zetas, have begun to infiltrate the northern highlands, which led to a massacre of farm workers in May 2011. And though the incoming President, ex-military General Otto Pérez Molina, has promised to rule with a “Mano Dura”, an iron fist, his political connections and actions during the civil war are highly suspect. The best he is offering is an ominous militant regime. So with statistics like this, who wouldn’t want to take crime policing and punishment into their own hands?

The first local vigilante action I became aware of in the province of Sololá in Guatemala’s Western Highlands was in December of 2009, when a public “chicken” bus was hijacked en route from Sololá city into the nearby tourist town of Panajachel. The driver was shot in the head and a passenger who tried to save the bus from plummeting off the mountain was also killed. When the three extortionists were finally apprehended, the townspeople gathered in front of the police building and demanded they be handed over to the public for punishment, as per the presumed rights under the **Maya Code**. When denied their demand, the mob rioted, burning police cars and the police station, until the thieves were

Maya Code

Traditional Maya village custom dictates that the villagers manage punishment for crimes, ranging from public humiliation to exile from the village and lynching. Many Maya identifying people still believe that this custom should be practiced rather than the current justice system, which appears to be ineffective though the issue is highly contested by other ethnic and social groups.

handed over and lynched in front of the municipal building.

Two weeks later, another lynching occurred in Panajachel. A man and three women were caught stealing at the town market. The police apprehended the women, but the male was caught by the villagers, brutally beaten, dragged behind a tuk-tuk (a rickshaw taxi), and set on fire in front of the police station. A drunken mob of Panajachel and Sololá residents called for the release of the other thieves, including a woman who said she was eight months pregnant. The entire event was being broadcast, play-by-play, on the radio as the rioters burned police vehicles. The police retaliated with tear gas and relocated the prisoners to a more secure location via helicopter.

It was the first lynching in Panajachel, and it scared many locals, but others insisted that it was necessary because otherwise the town would be bullied by gangs like the rest of Guatemala. Yet the extreme violence made me wonder: was this type of retaliation really necessary?

Five months later, in May of 2010, Guatemala was slammed with Hurricane Agatha. Flooding and mudslides left many people homeless and injured and 160 dead. More than 180 roads were destroyed and 161 bridges as well as water and electric infrastructure. As roads were impassible, it was difficult for towns to bring in food and other necessities. Though international aid money was coming in, the villages were not receiving any help, and the re-birth of the civic groups began.

At first I was impressed by the sense of community that was growing out of this disaster. However, as the weeks passed, the civic group wasn’t just asking neighbors for money to rebuild, but also for walkie-talkies, cell-phones, and nightsticks to carry during their nightly patrols. In September of 2010, 50 representatives of the neighborhoods received permission by the local government to form security groups consisting of a total of 1,200 members. The agreement stipulated that members would register with the municipality and the police would collaborate by responding to their calls, respecting their eye-witness testimony, and ensure prisoners were not released without processing through the court system. The groups did not have permission, though to shoot, kill, or severely injure anyone.

“For us, this way of life, the violence, the corruption, has always been there. We have never known anything else.”

All that began to change when some of the groups started wearing masks, supposedly for their own protection, earning them the name los encapuchados, meaning “the hooded”. Then a local strip club was burned to the ground and the owner was beaten and left for dead in the river by a large group of vigilantes. They claimed to have found illegal arms in the owner’s home, as well as many other stolen goods, and said he was a menace to society. Suddenly, “social cleansing” was the phrase being thrown around in the editorial columns of newspapers.

Rumors spread that new groups were forming in opposition to the original ones in a mini-vigilante war. Then the Evangelicals joined the act, supporting punishment of anyone doing anything “immoral”. A masked vigilante raped a young woman on her way home from a bar, an

incident that was captured on the security camera of a local hotel. A local man was beaten and forced to drink water from the sewer pipe. Two more men were followed and beaten for being out after 11 and for the “crime” of being intoxicated. Our “protection” began to look a lot like gangs.

Then, on October 8, 2011 23-year-old Luis Gilberto Tian Sente disappeared. As reported in the national news (The Prensa Libre 26 Oct. 2011 Edition, page 18), as well as by witnesses that night, Luis was with two of his friends walking home from the town yearly festival when 20 masked vigilantes captured him. Luis had been drinking, which may be a reason he caught the eye of the group, though the real reasons he was targeted are unclear. The mother of his two children posted flyers for information of his whereabouts, but the only trace of Luis were his bloody clothes found in one of the local soccer fields. Shortly after his disappearance, several journalists of the Panajachel community publicly accused three encapuchados, by name, of his murder in local and national newspapers, on the radio, and on the web. What the public did not know was that one journalist had access to a phone call that Luis made at the time of his capture and was able to identify, by name, four of the members of the registered civic group, including the President and Vice-President of the group. The journalists received death threats and left Panajachel for their own safety, but the two senior encapuchados were finally apprehended and imprisoned. The other two remain at large and the investigation does not appear to still be active. Currently a petition is being passed around for the release of the perpetrators as they have a lot of influence in the town.

So what to make of all of this? I met with local Guatemalans for their views on the vigilantes. The overwhelming consensus was that they are an improvement in town security, except for the encapuchados: It is generally agreed that the masks and anonymity afforded by them lead to an abuse of power. One Pana resident named Miguel said that he supported the vigilantes because people shouldn’t be out drinking and that the groups were just “cleaning up” the town. A former military member, and now bank security officer, said that the groups were the only reason his neighborhood is now safe from drug dealers who were plaguing the area and that his wife could now walk home alone at night.

The most interesting comments I received were from a local named Chico. When I asked him if the town was safer now or before these groups were formed, he said, “That is a question only a gringo (foreigner) would ask. For us, this way of life, the violence, the corruption, has always been there. We have never known anything else. To you, where you are from, maybe all of this looks different, but here this is normal. It is all the same.”

When commenting on the people who had to leave town for speaking out about alleged perpetrators of Luis’ disappearance, he said, “Why did they talk without proof? If I hear rumors, I don’t say them unless I have real evidence, video, pictures, something. They put themselves in danger by what they did. That can’t be blamed just on the vigilantes. Here, you don’t say anything unless you can prove it.” His words are eerily reminiscent of wartime in Guatemala.

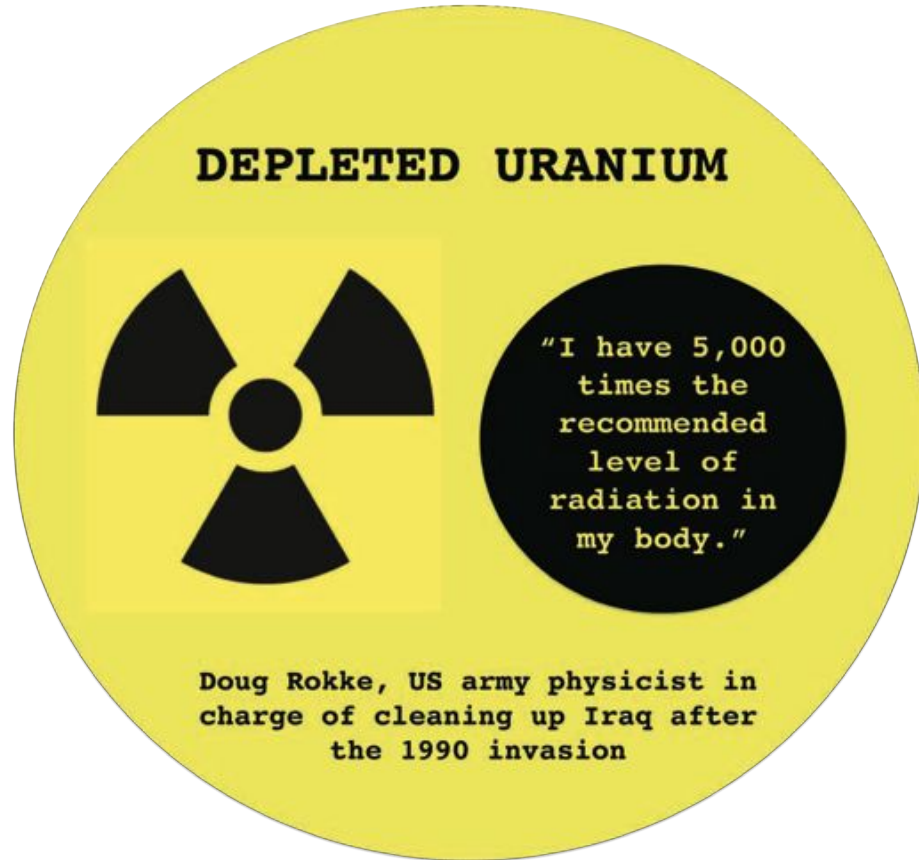
So, when there is no witness protection, the police can’t be trusted, and even the government has blood on its hands, is there an option besides civic action? Guatemala is on the brink of becoming another Columbia or Mexico, where military policing, guerrilla groups, and civilians have to battle it out for control. It is a battle without winners and where the average citizen is the one who suffers most. And I wonder, is there time for Guatemala to save itself?

Latest Update:

Recently, Panajachel has seen a drop in the number of civic groups. The municipality has said that patrolling members should not be masked, though there have been sightings of encapuchados still.

CANCER & IRAQ

By Aliza Amlani



As the Iraq War officially ends, the West proudly envisages a population of grateful, liberated Iraqis starting anew. In reality, an epidemic of epic proportions is brewing that is clandestinely slipping under the radar.

In December 2011, the world media focused its attention on the official end to the war in Iraq. "Now, the last four bases are closing and their personnel are going home for Christmas 2011", reported Al Jazeera. Yet nine years after the beginning of what many see as an illegal war, should we be feeling proud? Barack Obama's noble statement about bringing troops home for Christmas was followed by: "and the United States will continue to have an interest in an Iraq that is stable, secure and self-reliant." (Al Jazeera, October 2011). The war in Iraq has been documented by countless journalists from hundreds of different angles. The civilian point of view, the soldiers' plights, the economic, the social, the political, the effects on Iraq and the effects on the West, to name but a few. One issue that has been given only sparse attention is the health consequences of this War.

In 2000, John Pilger, a British journalist, made a documentary entitled "Paying the Price, Killing the Children of Iraq," in which he documented the health effects of UN security council sanctions on Iraq. The sanctions had been put in place following Iraq's war in Kuwait, an attempt to protect the human rights of Kuwaiti people by, it seems, violating those of Iraqi civilians. The effects of such sanctions were so dire that three UN Security Council officials resigned from their posts. Sanctions were obviously affecting Iraqi people's health due to a lack of drugs and health equipment being imported, however, what was even more devastating were the effects of sanctions that did not allow the clean up of weapons.

During the Gulf War, the British and the US had used weapons containing uranium. After its end sanctions were applied prohibiting the removal of such weapons, in effect allowing them to decay on Iraqi soil. Depleted uranium is part of the dust that blows everywhere in Southern Iraq and undoubtedly the cause of a surge in cancer cases in the country at the time. The incidence of cancer had already increased dramatically before the Invasion of Iraq in 2003, implying that figures following the invasion must be devastating.

In August 2002, Fallujah General Hospital saw the birth of 530 babies, of whom six were dead within the first seven days and only one birth defect was reported. In September 2009, however, Fallujah General Hospital had 170 new born babies, 24% of whom were dead within the first seven days, and a staggering 75% of the babies that died were classified as deformed. The issues that usually surround Iraq are questions about oil, weapons and the threat of terrorism, the issues that affect the West. But in Iraq itself the issue of an increased incidence of cancer is the more pressing one.

"Forget about oil, occupation, terrorism or even Al-Qaeda. The real hazard for Iraqis these days is cancer. Cancer is spreading like wildfire in Iraq. Thousands of infants are being born with deformities. Doctors say they are struggling to cope with the rise of cancer and birth defects, especially in cities subjected to heavy American and British bombardment." — Jalal Ghazi, for [New America Media](#). The link between this increased incidence and depleted uranium from weapons is definitive. At least 350 sites in Iraq have been contaminated with depleted uranium (DU) weapons during bombing. As a result "the nation is facing about 140,000 cases of cancer, with

7,000 to 8,000 new ones registered each year, reported the Guardian in 2007.

The mechanism by which this occurs is well established, as the Guardian continued: "the compounds (in Depleted Uranium) caused breaks in the chromosomes within cells and stopped them from growing and dividing healthily". The cancer rate in the province of Babil, south of Baghdad has risen from 500 diagnosed cases in 2004 to 9,082 in 2009 according to [Al Jazeera English](#). Dr Ahmad Hardan, who served as a special scientific adviser to the World Health Organization, the United Nations and the Iraqi Ministry of Health, says "Children with congenital anomalies are subjected to karyotyping and chromosomal studies with complete genetic backgrounding and clinical assessment. Family and obstetrical histories are taken too. These international studies have produced ample evidence to show that depleted uranium has disastrous consequences." Iraqi doctors say cancer cases increased after both the 1991 war and the 2003 invasion. Abdulhaq Al-Ani, author of "Uranium in Iraq" told [Al Jazeera English](#) that the incubation period for depleted uranium is five to six years, which is consistent with the spike in cancer rates in 1996-1997 and 2008-2009.

Not only are such stories underreported and under-documented, they are out right refuted by people who know better, a wretched attempt to cover up a devastating truth. 'Scientists have pointed to health statistics in Iraq, where the weapons were used in the 1991 and 2003 wars...But a senior UN scientist said research showing how depleted uranium could cause cancer was withheld,' (BBC news report, 2006). He has told the BBC that studies showing that DU was carcinogenic were suppressed from a seminal World Health Organisation report. 'In November, the Ministry of Defence was forced to counteract claims that apparent increases in cancers and birth defects among Iraqis in southern Iraq were due to DU in weapons,' (Randerson, The Guardian, 2007).



Photo credit: Adam Jones/ Flickr.com

I would not be surprised if some people will say the outcome serves as a means to an end. After all Madeleine Allbright (former US secretary of state) is quoted in Pilger's documentary as claiming that the death of half a million Iraqi children was worth it following the Gulf War as it was in the interests of security. Perhaps numerous lives lost or ruined to cancer will also be deemed "worth it" by some observers as the war has been instigated in the name of controlling the use of Weapons of Mass Destruction, one of the West's more prominent calls to arms. Ironic, then, that Depleted Uranium itself is considered such a weapon as the Global Research reported in March 2010: 'Depleted uranium (DU) weaponry meets the definition of [a] weapon of mass destruction in two out of three categories under U.S. Federal Code Title 50 Chapter 40 Section 2302.' I suppose this last revelation is the final rationale behind the title of this article 'Cancer and Condescension.' The condescending notion that we have done the Iraqi people a favour through this invasion, the condescension that uranium doesn't have a link with cancer and the condescension that a weapon of mass destruction should be used in order to curtail the use of ones that were never ever found.

Photo credit: David Rothscum



It doesn't end there. My outrage at the lack of reporting on this matter was curtailed briefly when I searched for "Iraq and Cancer" online to find several pages of hits. However, when I trawled through them hoping for some acknowledgement of the plight of young Iraqi children, I was met with endless articles on how the radiation was affecting American and British soldiers. "With the DoD's denial that cancer is a 'war wound,' many soldiers are left inflicted with the life threatening illness, uncertain of their military careers and fearful of their own mortality," (The Huffington Post, 2011).

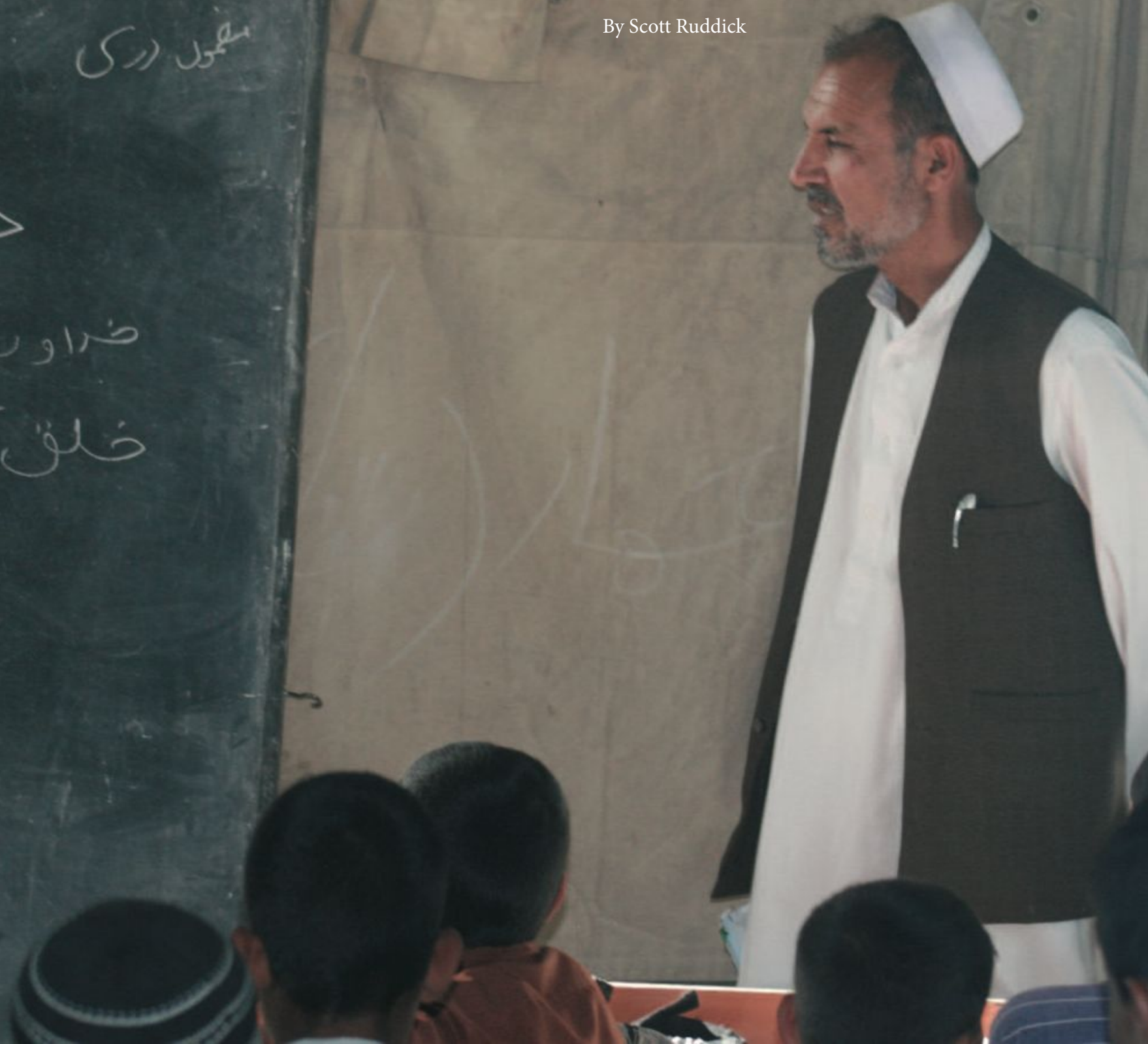
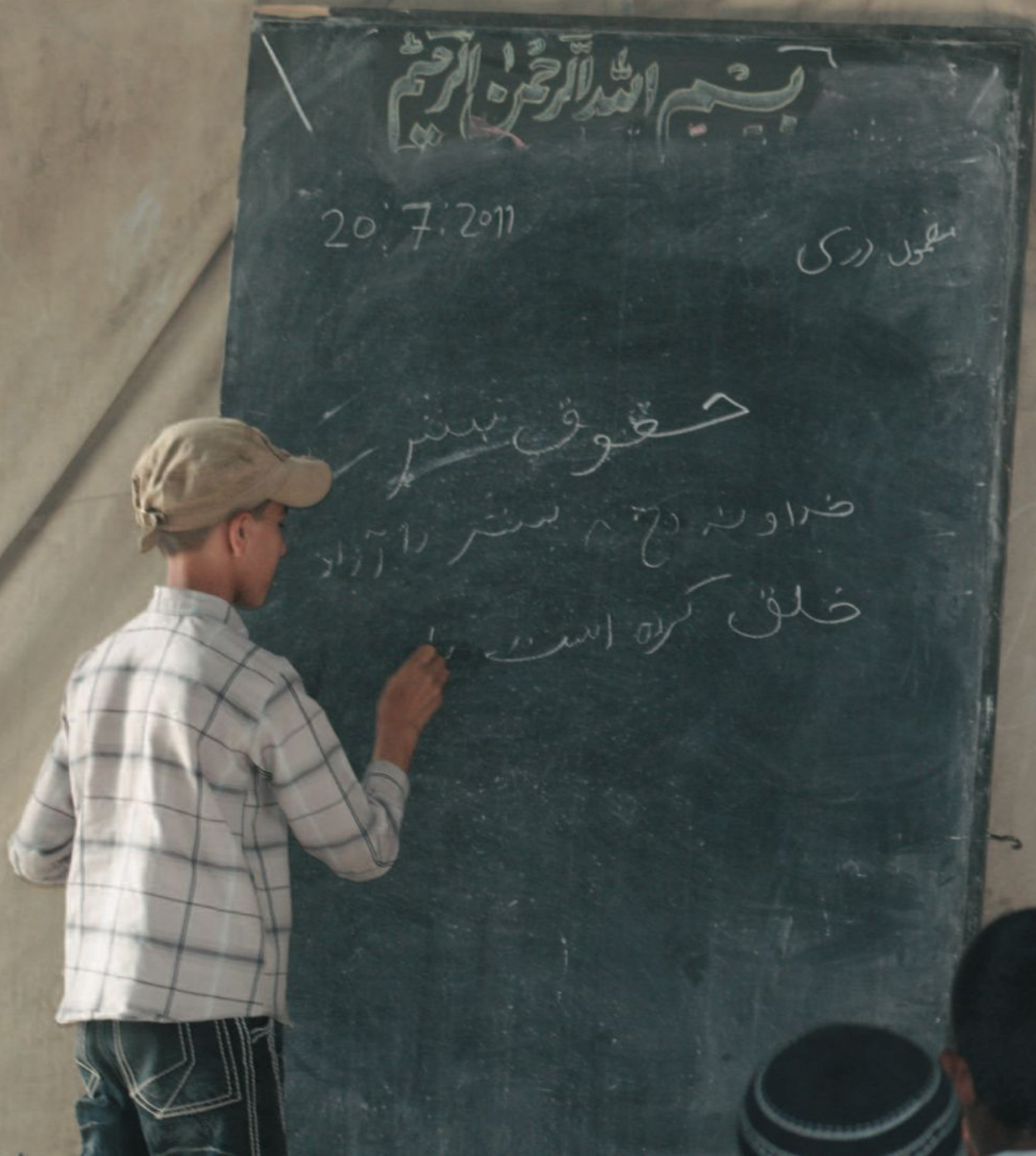
Hundreds of articles document the outrage of veterans' families who finally acknowledge the long term effects of the weapons on the health of soldiers, something that I would like to clarify, should not be taken lightly. However, the sheer disinterest in how this affects the civilians of Iraq is the final condescending aspect of the whole debacle. Soldiers are of course in closer contact to weapons, but, in reality, the uranium will be causing radiation poisoning for years and years after the troops have left. "The water, soil and air in large areas of Iraq, including Baghdad, are contaminated with depleted uranium that has a radioactive half-life of 4.5 billion years." (New America Media, 2010). The burden of disease will lie with generation after generation of Iraqi children born with deformities, leukemia, neuroblastoma, lymphoma and many other kinds of malignancies. Many of them were born after Sadaam was killed, they played no part in the war but they will suffer the health consequences of this war for the rest of their lives, however short they may be.

As Barack Obama stands shaking hands with Iraq's prime minister Nouri Al Maliki on the White House lawn, I wonder what we are patting ourselves on the back for?

Putting The Pieces Back Together Again,

The Role Of Development Aid In Rebuilding Failed States

By Scott Ruddick



Once a year, in conjunction with the Fund for Peace, Foreign Policy magazine issues a Failed States Index - a listing of the world's states that are in, or falling towards, collapse and anarchy. And, each year, the listing remains remarkably unchanged. The same forty or so nations, representing 20% of the world's states and home to more than one billion people, remain either collapsed or sliding towards failure.

It can resemble a sad, slow dance. Though the position of some will move slightly - this year, maybe two notches down; the year before, perhaps one up - for the most part they remain stubbornly in place. It is a sad reminder of the failure of the best intentions of the international community. Despite massive outflows of aid, many failed states remain locked in seemingly perpetual decay as poverty, ethnic conflict, epidemics, hunger and genocide churn within their borders.

It begs the question: if so little progress is being made in 'fixing' this situation, what can be done differently?

Speak to aid workers who focus on stabilizing failed states and you will hear a similar refrain: "they can be fixed and aid can play a pivotal role". For each Afghanistan, Sudan and Somalia - states that continue to struggle to achieve some level of stability and reform- there are the success stories--Singapore, Taiwan and even the American South. But the path to stabilization is neither linear nor easy.

There has not been a lack of attention to the issue. The attacks of 9/11 made it brutally clear that ours is an interconnected world. As a result, a mere year later, the then American President George Bush Junior signaled a shift in military thinking when he stated that global peace was "threatened less by conquering states than by failing ones." Today's youth, struggling to survive in the developing world, is tomorrow's terrorist, goes the thinking. With the consequences of state failure clear, stabilizing fragile states are now seen as a key component in the efforts of the developed world to address the issue of terroristic violence.

Experts who study failed states believe that many have the means to achieve stability, whilst the most positive contribution of aid can be working towards connecting these nations to the knowledge and systems they need to overcome their difficulties.

Clare Lockhart is one such aid expert. Co-founder of the Institute for State Effectiveness, Lockhart is a specialist in public administration and has taken an active part in an effort to save failed states. After working as an investment banker and barrister, she managed a program on state transition at the World Bank. She then joined the UN as an advisor to the Afghanistan government. With her co-author, Ashraf Ghani, she literally wrote the book on failed states. *Fixing Failed States* (Oxford University Press, 2008) has been heralded for its "rare sense of realism" by noted economist and development expert Paul Collier.

Lockhart argues that the typical project-based approach adopted by many aid agencies, who have little understanding of what struggling states need, is a formula for failure.

Rather, she advocates having state-building strategies crafted as a dual responsibility - between country leaders and the international community, on the one hand, and those same leaders and the citizens they lead, on the other. According to Lockhart, decision rights should be put in the hands of local communities to the extent possible. This, in turn, shifts the role of outsiders to catalysts and capacity builders, rather than doers, with aid playing a vital role. "Aid and relief organizations have a critical role to play; notably, first, in an emergency context where lives are at risk - for instance, after the tragedy of a flood, earthquake or tsunami. In these cases humanitarian organizations - partnering with the military and logistics companies in some contexts - are well positioned to be first



responders and save lives," says Lockhart.

"Second, they have a particular role to play in drawing attention to and addressing the needs of the poorest and most marginalized in society. And some of them have specialized roles where they have true comparative advantage; notably, tending to refugee issues, landmines, the disabled and categories of youth, the poor and women."

Yet as keen a proponent of the positive effects of aid that she is, she is also a fierce critic of current practices. Lockhart is clear: past efforts have largely not worked, and aid, as much as any other factor, needs to acknowledge its weaknesses:

"In recent years [aid agencies] have displayed their shortcomings, especially when they get into the business of large-scale reconstruction. Their incentives are not to see a capable set of institutions - public, private sector and civil society - emerge, but instead to displace those institutions. In many instances it is not clear that they act with more transparency, efficiency or accountability than the organizations they have displaced," she declares. "This conflict in incentive can lead to difficult contests over resources and divisions of labor. It calls for a much more rigorous set of protocols and a more thoughtful division of labor and set of accountabilities." For Lockhart, the fact that aid agencies may stumble is not surprising. "There are many potential problems, including a lack of understanding of the culture, context and language, an effect of displacing local initiative and decision making, as the NGO rather than the community asserts the right to make decisions, and the unintended consequences on the local society and economy of all the infrastructure of NGOs and relief agencies - as they hire qualified staff, rent houses, buy cars. This creates a bubble economy which can severely distort the local public sector, housing market and culture."

Still, she is not quick to let aid agencies off easily.

"The first (problem with aid agencies) is the distortion of the wage economy. If NGOs and agencies can hire drivers and translators for several hundred and sometimes thousands of dollars a month, but the same people will be paid a fraction of this to work as a doctor, teacher or engineer, the net effect is going to be to drain the very schools and clinics that the aid effort is seeking to restore. "The second is the competition for resources. Requiring greater transparency from both national governments, as well as NGOs, UN agencies and contractors as to the amounts given for the results intended would be a great start to empower the supposed beneficiaries - citizens - to hold decision makers accountable. We need to shift much more of the attention to domestic budgets; how revenue gets collected and where it leaks, and how budgets are decided on and executed. And the third is the disempowering effect of foreign entities taking decisions about local policy."



Banking On Stability

The lack of formal banking structures or access to financial services is a common problem for fragile states. Jesse Fripp has seen up close how a lack of financial services can cripple an emerging economy before it even begins. A vice president for ShoreBank International based in Washington, DC, Fripp has designed and managed microfinance institution start-ups in Romania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Iraq and Afghanistan.

"There is a tendency to write off these environments as helpless," says Fripp. "The problems in these states are so big, so numerous, it is hard to know where to begin. And each situation, each state is different in need and context." But as divergent as their needs may be, Fripp knows from firsthand experience that a lack of access to financial services will cripple an emerging economy.

"Financial services are the lifeblood of a healthy economy," he says. In fragile states, where the most basic of government services are non-existent, it can be difficult to get anything resembling a coherent approach to financial services in place.

This is where Fripp feels aid can step in to provide "single cycle, grant-driven financial services to get economies stable and then growing."

While it's a given that grant-driven services that focus on the immediate, humanitarian need are required to generate alternatives, for financial experts such as Fripp, the next step is often the hardest. "Long term, we need to find investors who are prepared to step in and put capital down. That can be difficult."

Fripp says that to attract foreign investment several factors are key. The state's financial system must have transparent and equitable regulatory frameworks in place. The infrastructure to deliver financial services must be solid. There must be a supply of skilled, educated staff to run the financial institutions. Fripp sees the latter requirement, human capital to help run the systems that oversee financial capital, as hardest to address.

"Institutions in failed states are drained of staff. The 'brain drain' is always significant," he says. "Anyone with credentials and education has long since fled. The reality is that the people left are those who had limited options, and those limitations are often skill-based in nature." To address these shortages, Fripp suggests that subsidy dollars be used to attract energized, educated staff back to the region to staff the institutions.

Building An Educated Middle Class Is Key

Dr. Ken Christie is head of the Human Security and Peace-building program at Royal Roads University in British Columbia, Canada. He has contributed to eight books, the most recent being *America's War on Terrorism: The Revival of the Nation-State versus Universal Human Rights* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008)

Like Lockhart, he is a critic of the conventional ways of doing aid in failed states. "Largely, it has not worked," he says. "The number of failing or failed states has risen dramatically, despite massive outflows of aid. The problems with conventional aid are many and they are endemic. It can create dependency syndrome, with whole populations dependent on aid. Communities supported by such artificial means can never be expected to transition. It can be used as a weapon by unscrupulous governments to remain in power. Rebel military forces will hijack aid, and use it as leverage. In short, aid can be - and often is - counter to the very intent of the aid community."

Perhaps not surprisingly for someone whose academic career has taken him to universities in the USA, Singapore, South Africa, Norway and Dubai, Christie sees education as a pivotal component of a strategy to build failed states:

"My work has concentrated on issues of human rights, security and democratization," he says. "And I have found, unequivocally, that

it is only those economies that can close the gap in education that stand a chance of achieving some stability.” Christie would like to see a shift in aid emphasis, away from economic development and infrastructure to an emphasis on building the basic literacy and education. “Only when there are people with enough education to enable them to participate in the local economy and to make informed choices, and in sufficient numbers that they have influence and some power, will we see failed states turn the corner.”

An emphasis on education resonates with Lockhart, who sees it as a way to stem the negative effects that NGO hiring has on local economies. “By invest(ing) more into training, we expand the pool of talented personnel - both those with the skills to work in NGOs, and to expand the training system to regenerate the core competencies of the country that often have been devastated by war. A simple exercise would calculate roughly how many of which skill set are required to staff the public service and drive the private sector; then assess whether the education system is aligned to provide this human capital in the right way; and finally suggest ways of meeting the gaps.”

“This needs to go far beyond skills training, or basic literacy,” he says. “I am talking about building a middle class, and doing it quickly and on a significant level. They are the key to a stable society.”

Towards A Better Tomorrow

As governments around the world review the proportion of their aid budgets they will allocate to fragile nations, they would do well to remember that rebuilding failed states is never going to be easy. While the desired end goal is clear - “citizens everywhere [want] fairness, openness, accountability, security of person, property and commerce, and opportunity in the market place,” says Lockhart - the path to get there remains considerably more ambiguous. Success will be elusive and most certainly defined by varying measures, dependent on the local context and situation.

Perhaps the best that can be hoped for is that aid interventions bend the trajectory away from anarchy and despair, and towards order and hope. The strategy for this could start by pointing to past accomplishments. After all, as Alastair McKechnie, former World Bank director for fragile states pointed out: “Success is possible. Many former fragile states have made good use of foreign aid and are set to be tomorrow’s emerging markets”.

When Does A State Fail?

The following attributes, proposed by the Fund for Peace, are often used to characterize a failed state:

- loss of control of its territory, or of the monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force therein,
- erosion of legitimate authority to make collective decisions,
- an inability to provide public services
- large scale breakdown in accountability and public finance systems
- breakdown of the monopoly on use of force
- poor standards in social services, including health and education;
- a criminalized or informal market place.

(source: Wikipedia)



The Current List Of Failed States

Change in rank from 2010 is shown in parentheses.

- Somalia (0)**
- Chad (0)**
- Sudan (0)**
- Democratic Republic of the Congo (+1)**
- Haiti (+6)**
- Zimbabwe (-2)**
- Afghanistan (-1)**
- Central African Republic (0)**
- Iraq (-2)**
- Cote d’Ivoire (+2)**
- Guinea (-2)**
- Pakistan (-2)**
- Yemen (+2)**
- Nigeria (0)**
- Niger (+5)**
- Kenya (-3)**
- Burundi (+6)**
- Guinea-Bissau (+4)**
- Myanmar (-2)**
- Ethiopia (-3)**

(source: Fund for Peace and Wikipedia)

Stamping Out Corruption In India

What About the Flip Side of the Coin?

By Dr.P.V.Ravichandiran,



Photo credit: Kangaroo/Flickr.com



Photo credit: Deepankar Raj/Flickr.com

India, the largest democracy in the world, has been shaken by the recent 2G spectrum corruption case. It is a scandal in which government officials illegally undercharged mobile telephony companies for frequency allocation licenses, the shortfall costing the country equivalent of almost US\$35 billion. Under the direction of the Indian Court, the Central Bureau of Investigation has arrested many VIPs, including a cabinet minister, several officers, corporate figures and others. With most of the main political parties in the country harboring corruption histories with different levels and volumes, as it is in rest of world, corruption has become the most notable byproduct of democracy in India.

Outraged, the public has cried out for firm action against corruption in the country. The activist realm is led by Anna Hazare, a newly famous anti-corruption leader. Akin to that of Gandhi, his protests include hunger fasts and non-violent resistant activities. He demands that a strong anti-corruption act, known as the Lokpal Bill (lokpāl is Sanskrit for ‘protector of the people’), be passed into law by the Indian Parliament and the movement has now achieved that aim.

But can corruption be stamped out at the level of policy alone? After all, many argue that in respect to such issues as good governance, India has a comparatively good constitution. One that is supplemented by democratically driven statutory laws, guiding principles and judicial frames that lie fully in line with International and UN norms. There are of course laws that are wide open to abuse. In an absence of the sort of judicial process enjoyed in many Western countries, a ruling cabinet minister, for example, can be sent to jail not through the accumulation of evidence to prove culpability beyond reasonable doubt, but through a largely unsupported accusation or complaint. Since such powerful legal provisions have already been ratified, guilty until proven innocent seems to be the status quo, leaving it open to surreptitious activities.

Such systemic loopholes have defined the rule of the game - the parameters guiding the behavior of government officials, that in some case have set in motion a runaway corruption train. So widespread is the problem that bribes have become a socially accepted, normalized and even expected custom, permeating all levels of official activities without guilt or shame.

It takes two to tango, however, and government workers are not alone in propagating corrupt activities. It seems that ordinary citizens can bypass all rules and regulations with an underhand financial ‘deposit’, whilst even selling one’s vote is a widespread, open practice. In this light, it is, therefore, not difficult to see the fundamental issue of corruption in India as both a matter of legal policy and everyday practice.

Yet, the anti-corruption movement hasn’t focused on this side of the coin. Activists are comfortable speaking about the rights of the people, but often forget to insist on the responsibilities of the individuals, of the citizens. Anna Hazare’s Lokpal bill may indeed cast a heavy hand on corruption by officials, acting as a ‘protector of the people from the government’, but who will protect the people from themselves? To affect major changes in everyday bureaucracy needs more of a cultural overhaul, fundamentally changing the mentality of the Indian people. In other words, the change has to come from the grassroots up.

Teaching Failed States to Function

By Appy Patakar



In recent years, international relations experts have debated the question of nation building - the process of constructing a functioning state that involves the creation or establishment of the institutions, public services, and security associated with a sovereign nation. Until recently, born out of U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, both of which are considered archetypal examples of “failed states”, this debate focused on nation building through military intervention, followed by attempts to rebuild infrastructure and security. However, this view of state building overlooks the most powerful weapon against failing states in our arsenal: education.

Ruthless dictators know that in order to cling to power the easiest root is through undermining education systems, and denying access to and demoting the value of schooling. Iraq was a nation of high culture before its school system was destabilized and Pakistan was much more stable before its education was all but dismantled. Helping failed states to build their education systems will therefore increase their national stability and that of the international community as well.

The positive effects of education are multiple. Both formal and informal schooling improves public health, for example, by teaching people to prevent disease and use health services effectively. Higher education levels lead to higher wages, which combat poverty and drive national economic growth. A pool of educated citizens can create a stable national and local economy, decreasing “brain drain” – the flight of a country’s most educated residents – and spurring further economy growth and stability. And in well-designed curriculums, students also learn about their rights and how to exercise them, thus empowering them to become agents of meaningful change. The movements of the Arab Spring, for example, are led by young educated people. They are capitalizing on their ability to access information, the greatest tool for freedom and demonstrating to the world that change is possible, particularly in countries where tyrannies exploit ignorance in order to disempower individuals and destabilize societies. All of this, in the end, helps increase political stability, since education creates citizens who are able and willing to participate in the type of fair and functioning government that failing states must create.

Today, the discussion of nation-building is shifting away from military intervention, as the wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan come to an end. President Obama plans now to shift from military involvement to strategic partnerships across sectors to help build Iraq’s and, soon, Afghanistan’s infrastructure and military and political capacity. Creating strong and stable education systems must be a goal of these strategic partnerships and it does not have to cost the earth.

In two studies on high performing and improving school systems around the world, McKinsey & Company, a global management consulting firm, found that education systems could be transformed in as little as six years and that these improvements do not necessarily require increased spending. For example, in its 2007 report [How the World’s Best-performing Schools Come out on Top](#), it highlights that, in less than two decades, the quality of Singapore’s education system went from “poor” to one of the best in the world, despite the fact that Singapore spends less on primary education than 27 out of the 30 OECD countries.

In its 2010 study, [“How the World’s Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better”](#), the organization focused specifically on this journey from “poor” to “fair” and examined how three states – Western Cape, South Africa; Minas Gerais, Brazil; and Madhya Pradesh, India significantly improved the quality of their education systems within a matter of years. Each of these states fell far behind the rest of their nations in terms of literacy, numeracy, and access to education. All three were marked by the problems that plague states without effective education systems: malnutrition, disease, poverty,



Photo credit: FreeDigitalPhotos.net

and lack of political influence and/ or stability.

McKinsey & Company found that for the journey from “poor to fair”, these states chose three types of interventions that focused on achieving the basics of literacy and numeracy. First, they provided motivation and structure for teachers. For example, in 2005, the Ministry of Education found that in Madhya Pradesh, less than 60% of students in standards 3 to 5 could read a standard 1 text, as compared with the national average of 67%. So, they set a goal of increasing literacy in the state through teacher pay incentives and strictly standardized and scripted teaching materials and lesson plans. One ministry official even claimed “that if a student in a class in one corner of the state is put into another school in a totally different location, he would not even notice the difference...Everyone has to teach the same curriculum at the same time in the same way”. By 2008, this large-scaled standardization raised reading levels in Madhya Pradesh far above the national average. The results were replicated in Minas Gerais in Brazil.

Secondly, to bring schools to a minimum standard, they created outcome targets and new assessment systems to direct increased and personalized support to struggling schools and communities. For example, in Western Cape, South Africa, education officials worked to support the lowest performers and tailored their interventions and support to local contexts based on community needs. In some cases they worked to increase parental involvement by requesting farming associations to allow parents time off to meet their children’s teachers. In others, they provided illiterate parents with oral methods of supporting their children’s learning, leading to marked improvements.

Third, each system worked to close the achievement gap by meeting students’ basic needs. Western Cape, Madhya Pradesh, and Minas Gerais all offered free school meals to their impoverished students. Madhya Pradesh even provided free uniforms and bicycles to their students, and Minas Gerais schools provided bathing facilities. All three systems understood that improving education meant getting students into the seats and giving them what they need to learn, whether that be a better classroom or textbook or even a meal and a shower.

While the journey from “poor” to “excellent” may take decades, these states demonstrate that the journey from “poor” to “fair” can happen in a matter of years. These interventions could help failing states move towards becoming functioning societies. As governments around the world examine countries such as Iraq or Afghanistan, they must see that the best nation building aid that they can provide is to help these countries strengthen their education systems, starting with these tried, tested and cheap interventions. An education system that actually educates its students can provide the foundation upon which improvements in public health, economic welfare, and political stability can be built, and in the process eradicate the violence, poverty, and political turmoil that plague failing states.



The Buds of the Arab Spring: Tending the Garden of Democracy

by Catriona Knapman



Democracy is the word of the moment in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). In the past three months elections took place in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco and calls for democracy were heard from Libya, Syria, Bahrain, Yemen. The EU Development Days, an international affairs and development cooperation forum, also recently delved into the use of democracy in development. Yet, is democracy really a good panacea for development? And are its consequences, implications and limitations fully considered by its propagators?

To go back to source, democracy is an archaic term, first coined in Ancient Greece. However, it has no specific definition since even its essential terms are disputed. It is complicated by the various different facets it entails, for example, like elections, freedom and rule of law; and the various forms that it takes, like representative, direct and liberal democracies, to name but a few. Indeed, democracy is not one concept but a complex notion.

Different commentators and actors in society also value separate aspects of democracy differently. Seen through the eyes of the media, for example, democracy means elections. For the development sector it means financing elections, rule of law projects and political participation. Yet, the broader issues it encompasses go much wider and much deeper into the very social fabric of society.

The broader issues democracy encompasses go deep into the very social fabric of society. The recent turn of events in MENA illustrate that democracy, as a developmental process, is not problem free, with uglier aspects evident in unprincipled and unregulated campaigning strategies; propaganda warning of a fast ticket to hell for supporting other parties; selling votes; and smear campaigns against opposition candidates. Yet the ugliest of them all is violence. While the citizens of Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco have proudly stood in long voting queues, crossed ballot papers and painstakingly counted votes, other processes have been less peaceful. In Libya, Syria and Bahrain, for example, democracy has been forged as guns fired; regime buildings have been attacked and occupations of public spaces prevailed. This is perhaps unsurprising since, historically, where dictatorships have controlled society, emerging from such regimes has required challenging its power and breaking down old structures. Yet this does not mean that this disorder is entirely negative. There is a silver lining even to this kind of dark, gloomy cloud. As the old state structures crumble and Presidents fall, their ashes create a fertile landscape. On this landscape new ideas, values and movements quickly take root in a disordered, tangled, yet, healthy growth of something new.

This can be remarked across the region. In the Egyptian and Tunisian elections, for instance, vast numbers of parties and candidates were on offer to voters. Movements and regimes disintegrated and once the debris was brushed away, faces and voices took their place. Where there were only a few figureheads, now there are many people, citizens, humans. As Wael Ghonim, Egyptian activist and computer engineer, stated about the Egyptian Revolution on a TED talk: 'no one was a hero, because everyone was a hero.'

As the different phases of elections and protests continue, the Arab Spring demonstrates a sustained and determined approach to democracy which challenges social and institutional barriers. The Egyptian protests against military governance are one such example; the continued pressure against Al-Assad in Syria is another; the questioning of the Islamist strategies and aims in elections constitutes a third; the discussions online, in academic and other fora yet a further demonstration. Indeed, the MENA revolutions remind us that democracy is not a guarantee but a daily practice which must be tended like a garden.

The buds of the Arab Spring have started to appear and, as they do, they reveal a social situation, which both reflects and differs from the old monolithic structures of tyranny and control.

Old trends are seen in the repression of Egyptian activists and the familiarity of Islam, albeit given a new political form. New trends also emerge in representation, expression, discussion and participation. Indeed, public participation through on and off line protest and debate, and social movements driving them, have remained a key feature of life in the MENA region throughout the past year.

MENA's democracy concerns the actions and decisions of citizens. This is a reminder that the Arab countries give to development practitioners. The citizens of MENA demonstrate that democracy is not a vote, neither does it start and end with elections, parliaments, political parties, courts or other state institutions. It demonstrates that power is not granted during elections or renounced in a new term. The democracies being built in MENA are not an end result, but a constant and sustained social and institutional discussion and renegotiation.

Democracy currently concerns our whole lives as citizens and we have a daily choice to give or deny it the light it requires to grow. The buds of the Arab Spring show promise of societies composed of multi-coloured movements and peoples whose roots are firmly entwined in their demands for freedom. Those gardens must be carefully tended so that these buds may flower. In developmental terms, democracy or elections are an end goal. Yet, as the MENA events suggest, this is far too simplistic and inspires a shallow type of democracy, too easy to break. Indeed, democracy, elections and other associated formalities for the Arab are but a small part of a much bigger project of social growth.





NGO in Focus::

Will Khan Academy Revolutionize Global Education?

By Avijita Kharel



Through a free online collection of more than 2,600 micro lectures, the Khan Academy tutors mathematics, history, finance, physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, economics and computer science. GSDM asks: is this is the model that will revolutionise global education?

The Khan Academy was found by Salman Khan (right), a Bangladeshi American who holds degrees in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science from MIT and also an MBA from Harvard. Originally, Salman's open-course series began as a verbal contract with a 7th-grade girl, Nadia, his younger cousin. Reportedly, Nadia was struggling in a math class and had agreed to sit in on remote tutoring sessions. After she skyrocketed a few grade levels in ability, more family and friends wanted in on the action, eventually forcing Khan to record the lectures online. In late 2004, Khan began tutoring his cousin Nadia in mathematics using Yahoo!'s Doodle notepad.

Since YouTube encouraged universal access, Khan thought "Why not?," and made the lectures public, on the off chance someone beyond his immediate friends and family would ever take an interest in his mathematics lectures. The result was shocking and the audience exploded. Shortly, Salman started receiving letters of gratitude from kids around the world. One wrote saying he had only passed algebra because of the videos; another said he used to hate maths until he started viewing the Khan lessons. Their popularity there and the testimonials of appreciative students prompted Khan to quit his job in finance as a hedge fund analyst at Wohl Capital Management in 2009 and focus on the tutorials (then released under the moniker "Khan Academy") full-time. In 2009, the Khan Academy won the Microsoft Tech Award in education. As the academy started gaining recognition, Salman decided to give up a lucrative financial career for the world of academia.

Gradually, the Khan Academy thrived. Fortunately, hidden among his millions of loyal students, were the wealthiest of educational philanthropists, Bill Gates and the Google Foundation. They bolstered the Academy financially. In 2010, Google's Project 10100 provided \$2 million to support the creation of more courses, to allow for translation of the Khan Academy's content, and to allow for the hiring of additional staff. In addition, non-for-profit partner organizations are making the content available outside of YouTube.

The Khan Academy now gets as many as 2,00,000 unique students every month, is the 98th most subscribed YouTube channel, and has had 57,275 subscribers since November 2006. In the word-of-mouth world of the internet, his increasingly popular lessons are viewed millions of times by people across the world.

The Academy's website (www.khanacademy.org) is equally popular. On it you can create a profile for the site simply by logging in through Google or Facebook. You can track your progress with some wonderful metrics. Teachers (or 'coaches') can monitor student progress in groups. Students can earn badges to keep them interested. The list goes on and on and it's all free.

The Khan Academy already has great videos on history, the sciences, finances, including venture capital! They are still expanding their exercises. If there's an objective way to present or evaluate a concept, chances are that Khan Academy could include it. All the lessons of traditional school, maybe even those that involve writing, could be there one day.

Offline versions of the videos have been distributed by not-for-profit groups to rural areas in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. While the Khan Academy's current content is mainly concerned with pre-college mathematics and physics, Khan states that his long-term goal is to provide "tens of thousands of videos in pretty much every subject" and to create "the world's first free, world-class virtual school where anyone can learn anything."

The Khan Team

The impact that the Khan Academy could have on the classroom is enormous. As Salman discusses in a video, they are already performing trials to see how teachers can use the Khan Academy platform to improve the way they track and help their students. With the Khan Academy, teachers would "intervene only when a student is stuck." In other words, the Khan Academy is supplementing the education paradigm in such a way that teachers are only needed as corrective influences.

Some critics say that the founder of the Academy doesn't have any previous experience as a lecturer, the platform doesn't offer advanced college level knowledge, and apart from lectures being boring and repetitive, their completion doesn't lead to attainment of any specific academic degree. However, the Khan Academy has been such an incontrovertible phenomenon in online education that it can't be overlooked. The great thing about this academy and its platform is that it can spread almost as fast as the internet itself. The Khan Academy's example has the enormous potential of attracting other entrepreneurs and philanthropists to the cause of free global digital education. Initiatives like these are going to change the face of the future education, and the new generation, certainly, is going to be raised in this new prototype of digital education.

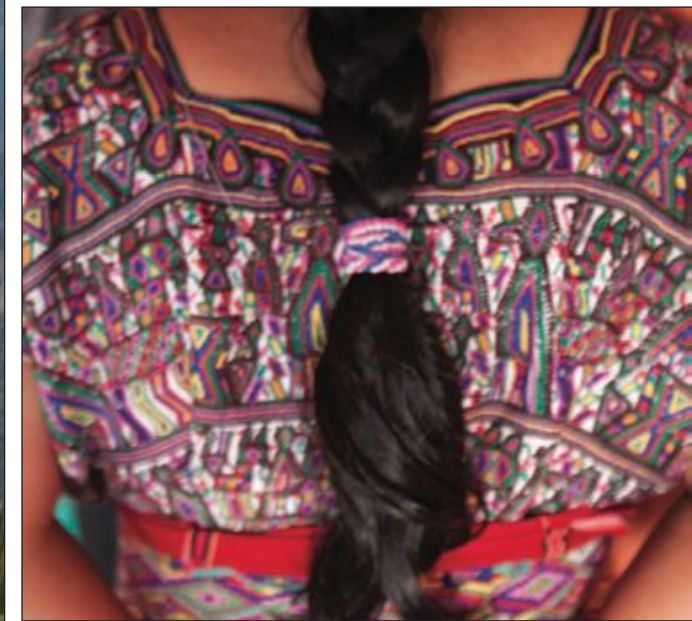
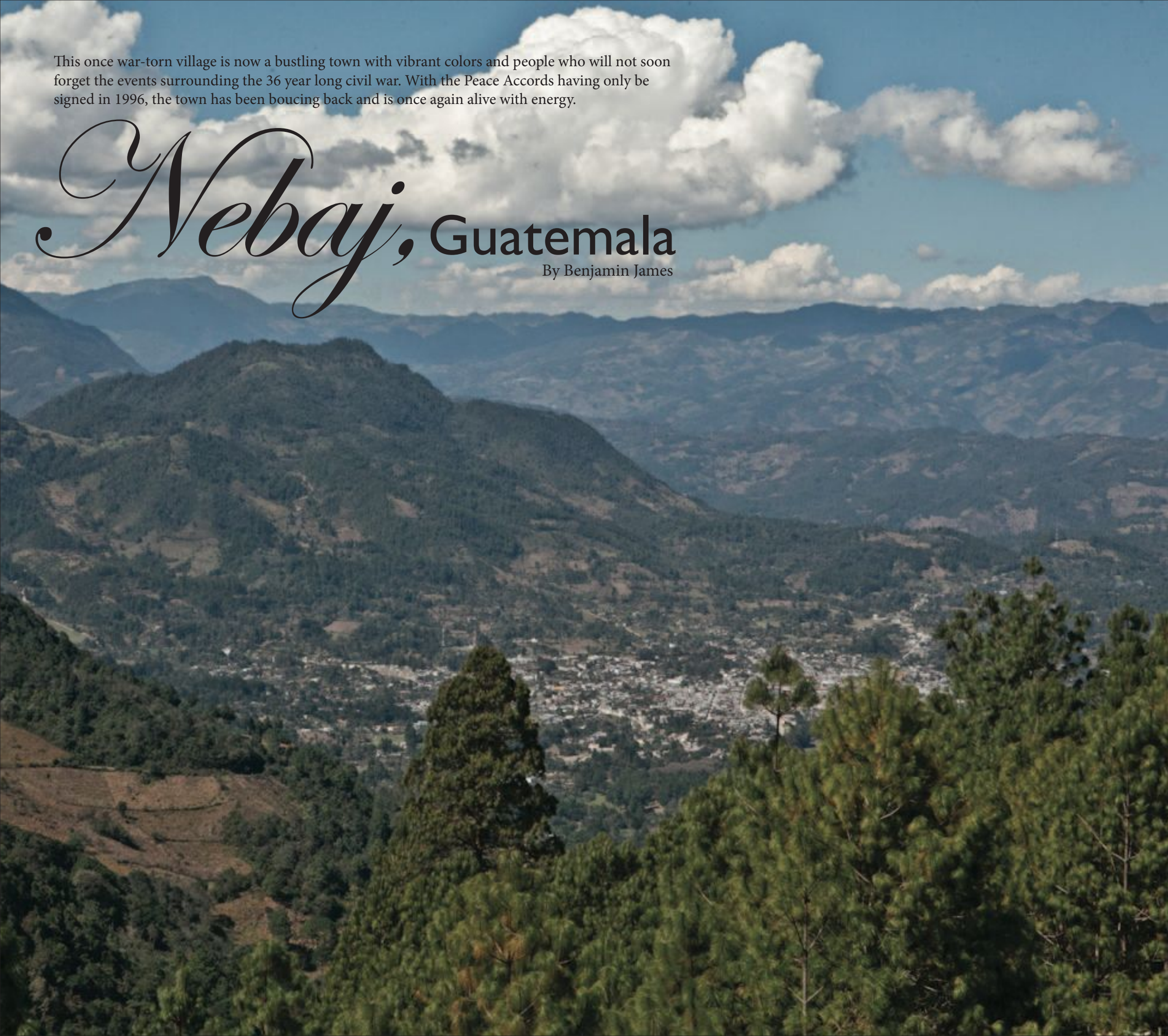
Founder Salman Khan



This once war-torn village is now a bustling town with vibrant colors and people who will not soon forget the events surrounding the 36 year long civil war. With the Peace Accords having only be signed in 1996, the town has been bouncing back and is once again alive with energy.

Neabaj, Guatemala

By Benjamin James





Top left clockwise:

1. Busy street in the middle of Nebaj.

2. Juana, a teacher in Nebaj, stands in the middle of her classroom. She's hoping that a NGO will chose her school to help build a new school.

3. A woman packs away her chickens at the locak market.

4. Two girls stand outside their school.

5. A man sits outside the church in the center of Nebaj sell-



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH
Sabin Ninglekhu Limbu, active member of

'STOP MONSANTO IN NEPAL'

On September 13, 2011, USAID announced a partnership with Monsanto and the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC) for introducing and promoting hybrid maize seeds in Nepal. The move became a controversial one and a group of activists formed a nationwide campaign 'Stop Monsanto in Nepal'. The campaigners also organized a sit-in protest in front of the US embassy in Kathmandu. The protest got significant support from the country's youths, NGOs and the academia. Global South Development Magazine Editor Manoj Bhusal recently caught up with Sabin Ninglekhu Limbu, an active member of 'Stop Monsanto in Nepal' as well as a PhD candidate at the University of Toronto, and talked about the anti-Monsanto movement to as well as wider issues of food security, seed sovereignty and sustainable agriculture in Nepal. An excerpt:

Could you tell us a bit as to why you decided to campaign against Monsanto seeds in Nepal?

Monsanto's history littered with lawsuit, lies, and libels necessitate that Monsanto be kept out of Nepal/earth. The purported hybrid maize seed project through which it would enter Nepal to 'develop' Nepal's agriculture sector cannot be trusted; there are ample evidence and examples from neighboring India and elsewhere to suggest that we need to err on the side of caution, plus Nepal's own crop failure in 2009/10 serves as a case in point. Besides, there are plenty of other national/local options that can be deliberated on if hybrid maize promotion is the key concern here.

There were reports that government hadn't actually signed any agreement with the company, what was the truth?

The truth is unclear because while the government, in media interviews and several public events, has clearly stated that no deal has been in place, documents leaked from USAID clearly indicate that significant dialogue was had in that front. However, USAID in recent times seem to have backtracked a little bit, hinting that it may engage in a broad-based consultation with "stakeholders" before determining "form" of the deal. That has been the official position that we have been made aware of publicly.

Why do farmers decide to use genetically engineered seeds? Isn't that for high yields? And isn't that desirable?

One has to look at under what political-economic conditions do farmers confirm to making such choices because it would be naïve to think that farmers have been bought into it because of GMs scientific claim alone. Is it out of free will? Or lack of option/support in other areas/types of agriculture? Or out of informed consent?

Or out of choice? These are the questions that also have serious long term implications for thinking about farmers' rights, food/seed sovereignty, Agro-biodiversity, crop diversity, food safety etc. As for GMOs claim of high yield, please keep in mind that there have been several scientific reports, studies, news coverage from around the world that have debunked the claim with evidence. Also, yield is not self-evident; it in itself doesn't translate into higher nutritional value and bigger economic outputs. Furthermore, if you factor in the kind of inputs GMs require in terms of finance and fertilizers, some serious questions around sustainability – economic, social and environment – arise.

How far have you come so far? You were also protesting in front of the US embassy in Kathmandu, what have been the results?

The campaign has had two important achievements. First, since announcing the deal in September 13 2011, USAID has made two releases, after each, they have backtracked on the deal. There is a hint that they might postpone, if not cancel, the deal. So sense of victory is only momentary. Second, issues that we have been raising not just on Monsanto, but also agriculture in Nepal, have transformed into a national scale debate. We created conditions for such transformation. The protest was an important instigator. Now, parliament has taken it up, Nepal's NGOs have been holding interaction programs on Nepal's Agriculture, and FM radio stations and news media provide coverage on a regular basis. These events have become conduits through which citizens, residents, politicians and bureaucrats engage in concrete debates on multinationals, Monsanto and Nepali agriculture. This is a good start. The challenge now is to translate these into documenting and promoting marginalized agriculture practice (modern/traditional organic farming that are sustainable have proven to give equal yield with adequate inputs but they find no currency in mainstream agriculture discourse/debate), rebuilding our national agriculture institutions (such as providing better funds/technical support to Nepal Agricultural Research Council), and reforming acts and regulations in place (such as determining a clearer/more rigid form of public-private partnership that would give stronger regulatory power to public institutions while holding private companies accountable in case of crop failures, for example). Not just the campaign, but also all of citizens and civil society organizations should find creative ways to gear their focus toward this.



What type of support you have received so far? How has been the support from the government and non-governmental sector?

We have formed networks with NGOs' working in agriculture sector. Some have joined us in crucial events such as the protest while jointly organizing interaction workshops and such with others. Nepali media such as news dailies and FM radio stations have done a great job in providing regular coverage. Students have continuously shown interest in joining the campaign. Parliamentarians have been organizing hearing sessions on Monsanto and agriculture. Support has come from many at multiple levels.

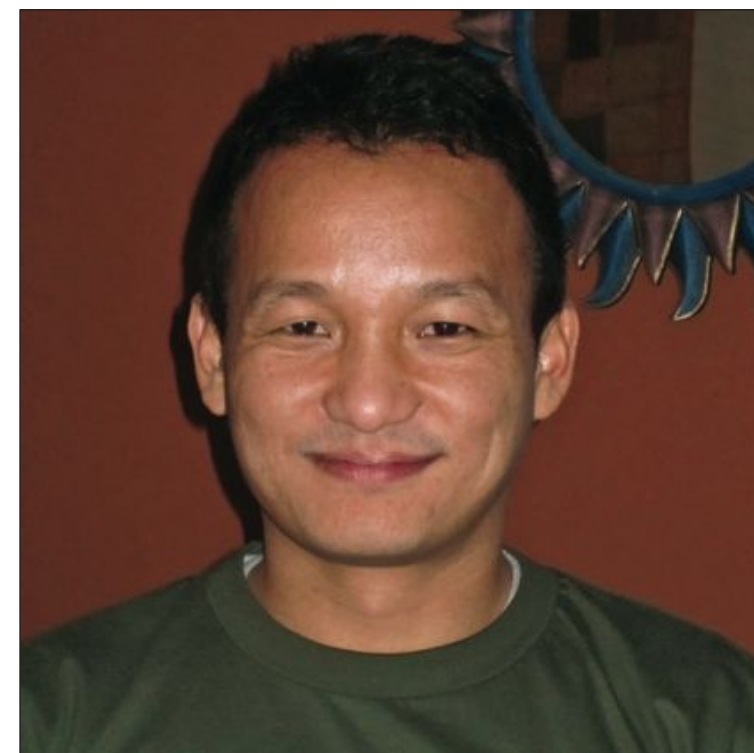
Is your movement a part of the Navdanya movement in India or it bears a separate identity?

This is not a part of Navdanya although of course the campaign adds a local voice to Navdanya's global anti-Monsanto stance. Plus, there is also some kind of informal connection. One of us actively leading the campaign also works for Navdanya. So she brings in some of her experiential knowledge/expertise to the campaign, but this is no way a formal relationship.

Food crisis has been a regular phenomenon and farmers around the world are grappling with the disastrous effects of climate change. What would you say to them? How should tomorrow's agriculture look like?

One that ensures farmer's right to remain primary producers of not just food but also seeds; one that confirms to basic principles of ecosystem management; one that provides farmers a more direct link to markets. This might involve putting some effort in finding a new common sense and value in our traditional organic farming methods as well as modern intensive organic methods.

Protestors marched in Katmandu, Nepal, against a proposed farmer training program involving hybrid maize seeds from Monsanto on November 25, 2011. Photo by Kashish Das Shrestha



Sabin Ninglekhu

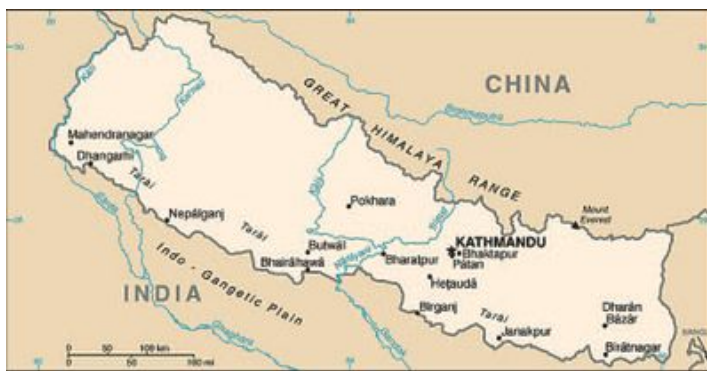
Nepal नेपाल

Curvy and narrow rickshaw-filled streets wind through the magnificent temples and colourful markets of Kathmandu, their sounds, smells, and sights illustrative of the transition from ancient cultural capitol to the polluted modernising city it is becoming. The largest (and pretty much only) city in the country, it stands in stark contrast to the rural villages that surround it, nestled in the valley of the biggest mountain in the world – the Mount Everest.

Nepal attracts nature-lovers and travel-junkies from across the globe, but there is much more to the country than the exhilarating experience it offers its tourists. In fact, what the little country has gone through in the past two decades alone would be enough to make any of us shudder: from overthrowing an unjust and outdated monarchy, to years of bloody civil war, to yet more years of instable governance and growing internal tensions, Nepal has seen a lot.

Throughout the majority of Nepal's history it was governed by monarchic rule, and democratic reforms only took place towards the end of the last regime in the late 20th century. Tensions started bubbling in the mid-1990's, when Maoist rebels made it their goal to put an end to the king's backward pseudo-democratic policies by adopting guerrilla tactics. This movement led to a violent and bloody civil war that caused thousands of deaths, most of them affecting civilians. The situation climaxed when, in 2001, King Birendra killed himself along with many members of the royal family, and his brother Gyanendra took to the thrown. He, in turn, applied coercive measures to crackdown on the brutal Maoist movement, but they had already occupied most of rural Nepal, leaving only larger cities in military control. After a three-month ceasefire in 2005 and further negotiations over the future of their nation, King Gyanendra abdicated the thrown and handed the power over to the people in 2007, and came into effect in early 2008.

Ever since, the federal democratic republic has continued to face bitter internal tensions and political gridlock. While the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) initially held the largest number of seats in the assembly, they were soon squashed by a coalition government of other major parties in 2009. Current issues now include determining the future of former Maoist combatants and their integration in the national military, and the failure of various Prime Ministers in the last three years to pass new constitutions has led to their terms being quite short. Maoist Prime Minister Bhattarai, who was elected in August 2011, certainly does not seem to have any easy task ahead of him, as he has both growing political tensions and deep-rooted poverty to deal with.



IN A NUTSHELL

Capitol: Kathmandu
Population: 29.9 million
Area: 147,181 sq km (four times the size of Belgium)
Geography: landlocked, between China and India; bordered by rugged Himalayas (including Mount Everest) in the north, flat plains in the south; great variation in climate, generally colder in north and subtropical in south
Official language: Nepali (spoken by 47.8%), many speak tribal languages
Ethnic groups: Chhettri 15.5%, Brahman-Hill 12.5%, Magar 7%, Tharu 6.6%, Tamang 5.5%, Newar 5.4%, Muslim 4.2%, Kami 3.9%, Yadav 3.9%, other 32.7%, unspecified 2.8% (2001 census)
Religion: Hindu 80.6%, Buddhist 10.7%, Muslim 4.2%, Kirant 3.6%, other 0.9% (2001 census)
Human Development Index: 0.458; Rank 157 (out of 187)

COUNTRY RATINGS (☹=poor; ☺☺☺☺=excellent)

QUALITY OF LIFE ☹

- Life expectancy of 67.5 years
- Poor health care and social services
- High risk of infectious diseases (due, in rural areas, to lack of sanitation)
- High unemployment and underemployment rates
- almost one quarter of population under poverty line

EDUCATION ☹

- Literacy: 57.9%
- rural areas have difficult access to schools

ROLE OF WOMEN ☹☹

- Maoist propaganda includes emphasis on women's rights
- Many rural communities still torture women accused of witchcraft
- More and more cases of domestic violence and rape are being reported

CHILDREN ☹☹

- Under five mortality (m/f): 52/55 per 1,000
- 38.8% children under 5 underweight
- low quality education limits future

FREEDOM ☹☹

- State killed almost twice as many civilians as Maoists since conflict started in 1996
- UN reports several human rights violation by the state such as illegal detention, torture, disappearances, and civilian killings
- First country in Asia to allow same-sex marriages
- One of the few Asian countries that have abolished the death penalty

ECONOMY ☹☹

- GDP per capita: \$1,200 (2010)
- Agriculture provides livelihoods for three-fourths of the population, accounts for one-third of GDP
- Industrial activity is usually related to agricultural processing
- Political instability limits foreign investment
- Recently declining tourist industry

ENVIRONMENT ☹☹☹

- Deforestation (overuse of wood for fuel)
- Water contamination (animal and human waste, runoff, and industrial contaminants)
- Wildlife protection
- Pollution (from vehicles)

FROM THE EDITOR



2011: It was women's year!

On 10 December 2011 for the first time in history three brave and ingenious women from the developing world stepped up to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo. The winners vehemently said that the prize didn't belong to Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman only, but to all women across the globe who fought for freedom, justice, equality and human rights.

They were true. The prize itself was a symbolic gesture of global recognition and appreciation for what women of our time have done. It was a demonstration of global solidarity to women who were brave enough to tear off the black veils of injustice and decided to chant slogans of freedom. It was an exhibition of global support to women who rejected violence and coercion, and as agents of change and progress worked for sustainable peace and development.

Now let's talk a bit about why the year 2011 was so significant that I call it a women's year. We all know that the year 2011 was a bad year for dictators. Many of us, at least on our TV screens, saw how 'imperishable' dictators were perished and thrown to dark corners of history. Not only dictators were dethroned, we also saw a global outrage against social inequality, political oppression and ruthless corporatism. People's dissent spread from Manhattan to Moscow, from Tripoli to Tahrir Square, and in all these protests women's participation was unprecedented and vigorous. Speaking to journalists in Oslo, Tawakkul Karman, the Yemeni activist and one of last year's Nobel Peace laureates, said that the Arab spring, in fact, was 'a global spring led by women'.

Nawara Belal, an Egyptian activist who consistently protested in Cairo's Tahrir Square during the 18 days of the uprising in January that toppled President Mubarak, said that this generation of women should be remembered as Women of the Revolution. Her reference is clear. For the first time in history, Egyptian women were out in Tahrir Square facing rubber bullets and tear gas and shunning cultural norms that subjugated women as inferior, helpless beings. In another example, Samira Ibrahim, another Egyptian protester who was harassed by taking her virginity tests, went to court and won a legal battle against police to stop virginity tests on female protesters. Women in Saudi Arabia challenged the traditional norm that didn't permit women to drive. In 2011, they were brave enough to come out with their four wheelers. The regime seemed to have sensed the inner unrest and announced that women will be given the right to vote in council elections in 2015. In Afghanistan, Malalai Joya kept her voice high and warned religious fundamentalists that they can no longer mess up with women's rights to dignity and equality. These are clear signs of brevity and vivid signs of change that, as global citizens, we should be proud of.

However, women's participation is not restricted to activism and dissent only. While women's face in the Arab world might look like that of a protester, in other parts of the world their role is diverse. Another 2011's Nobel Peace laureate Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the Liberian President, was reelected in 2011 and, though amid controversies, has taken up the Herculean responsibility of smoothing the scars of civil war and rampant poverty by ensuring equity and development in the war trodden Liberia. Similarly, in 2011, Brazil saw its first female President in history as Dilma Vana Rousseff was elected as the 36th President of Brazil. Whereas in Thailand, another woman, Yingluck Shinawatra was chosen as the country's first female prime minister. Women like Cristina Fernández, Laura Chinchilla, Sonia Gandhi and Aung San Suu Kyi kept their mission unflinching.

And perhaps you remember, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala made headlines when she left the World Bank in July, where she was a managing director and the second-in-command, to become the finance minister of Nigeria. This was one of my favorite news stories of 2011.

All these instances show that women in the developing world are getting the momentum. The veils of injustice and oppression are being shredded, discriminatory and illogical cultural norms are being questioned and, almost everyday historical feats have been made. Though there seems to be still a long way to go, but that long journey towards dignity, equality, justice and freedom certainly got a significant mileage in 2011.

Each issue is
a unique issue.

GLOBAL SOUTH
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