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Life in Post-War Nicaragua

Rural
Women in
Bangladesh:
the Key to
Food
Security &
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The
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Camp-
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Development Inspirations 2012

Initiatives and People Inspiring Action and Promoting
Sustainable Development from Around the World

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Global South Development Magazine is a quarterly magazine published by Silver Lining Creation, Finland. The magazine covers a wide range of developmental issues primarily of the developing world and is an initiative of freelance writers and development activists from different parts of the world.

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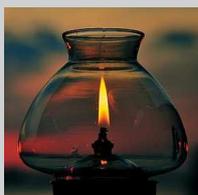
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Letter to the editor

Microfinance needs an overhaul

I read your 'investigative' feature about microfinance in Bangladesh, and based on my own experience with Microfinance, I can say that you made a good diagnosis of so many complexities attached to it.

In my opinion, microfinance should be carried out in a holistic manner, but that seems very hard because it requires almost a complete overhauling of the system. There are ideological issues of

institutions and even individuals involved in microfinance activities.

In so many discussions I always ask: Microfinance is really for whom? And that instantly makes me like an 'odd' character in otherwise a smooth story.
Ramon M., Rangpur, Bangladesh



Women of the evolution!

Your latest issue was a good read. But I would have called it 'women of the evolution' instead of 'women of the revolution' as women empowerment in the Middle East has a long and evolutionary history.

The Arab Spring was not fought for women's rights per se, but just to bring down reckless dictators. The movement wasn't caused by Twitter or Facebook either. Neither it was particularly aimed at consolidating

democracy in the region.

I am not very pessimistic, but it will take a significant amount of time and effort to properly establish women's rights in the region and mere legal provisions and seasonal 'revolutions' won't be enough for that.

Fatima M, Cairo Egypt



Focus more on citizen journalism

I have been reading Global South Development Magazine for a while now and I love it. However, like many other development publications, GSDM faces the danger of parachute journalism.

There seem to be quite a few local, citizen journalists writing about their own issues, but many of GSDM reporters seem to be western NGO workers working in the developing world, and at times the reporting seems very shallow.

Nothing against the

NGO/INGO workers, but in my opinion, GSDM should promote citizen journalism and encourage the locals to write about themselves, and as far as I have understood, the magazine is all about that.

Even in the developing world, selecting unbiased, independent reporters is a daunting task as many people do have their own personal interests and hidden agendas, but I think in any case they can do a better job when it comes

to reporting their local communities, problems they face and the solutions they have found.

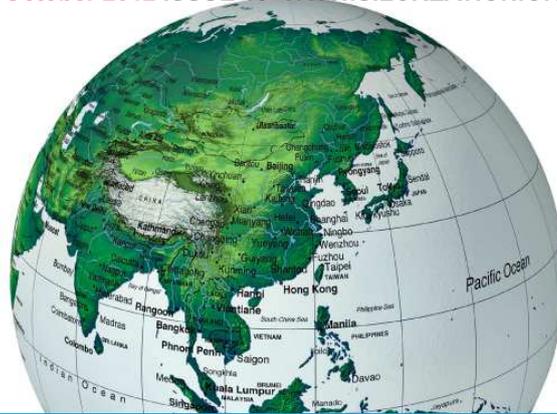
Sujata C. New Delhi, India



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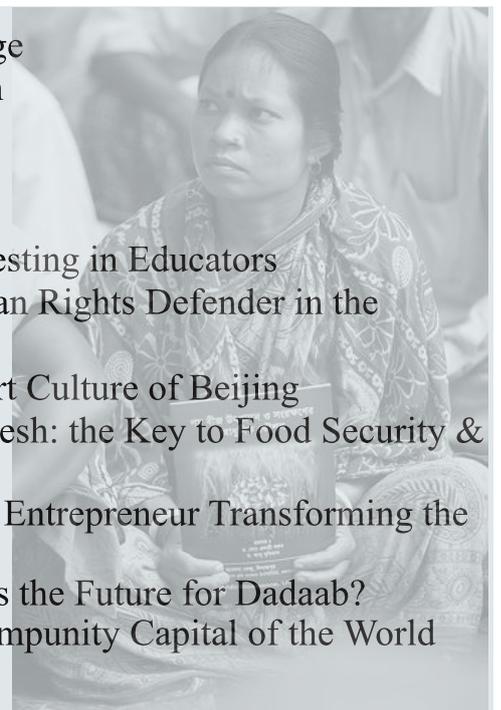
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Unsung Heroes and Inspiration for Change

By **PAULA FYNBOH**
GSDM guest contributor

"It's easy to feel paralyzed by all the world's problems and think that there is no way we, as everyday individuals, can begin to make an impact"

"This month, as we hear about overwhelming social problems, let's challenge ourselves to not feel paralyzed by our seemingly lack of power to affect these conditions or believe that we can't affect change without an esteemed title or credentials. Let's not forget that everyday people matter"

While watching the U.S. Presidential debates last week, a friend of mine asked me an interesting question: "If you became the First Lady, what would be your platform?" Beyond thinking about the issues I care most about, I found myself day-dreaming about what it would be like to have the power to influence an entire country, focus their collective will and really make a dent in improving the lives of people around the world. While this is a noble goal, it's also a seductive trap. Very often we feel like we need to either know everything about an issue or be in a recognized high-profile position to enact change. However, real people everywhere are proving this wrong.

I think about the anger, apathy and confusion that Ioulia Fenton mentions feeling after reading countless environmental and economic books in her "Be the Change You Want to See" book challenge article this month. It's easy to feel paralyzed by all the world's problems and think that there is no way we, as everyday individuals, can begin to make an impact. This is a very real feeling and I hear it on a regular basis from the every-day citizens I work with on civil society campaigns across the globe. We tend to feel that if we can't do it all or know all the answers, then it's not worth trying.

This is the danger that we as NGOs and civil society organizations create when we lift up and celebrate only the best of the best of us. People like Nget Thy from the Cambodian Center for the Protection of Children's Rights in Gareth Mace's article and Helena Lutege, the female entrepreneur from Tanzania in Mary Namusoke's piece certainly deserve our attention and recognition, but so do the many nameless and faceless among us, like the person who simply asked Chinese Graffiti Artist, Zhang Dali, "Who are you?" and sparked a nation-wide dialogue in Carolyn Look's article: Graffiti on the Great Wall: The Hidden Street Art Culture of Beijing.

I remember bringing a woman with me to the U.S. Capitol to meet with her

Senator on a Citizen's Lobby Day I was working on several years ago. The woman was so nervous to have a conversation with her elected official that she was visibly shaking. I tried to reassure her that she didn't need to have all the answers; she just needed to tell her story. Her personal story was more compelling than any pie graph I had stuffed away in my brief case.

As we began the meeting, the volunteer advocate (I'll call her Kris) forgot all her talking points, but proceeded to pull out her family photo album and showed the Senator the people in her life that lost their lives to cancer. A brother. A nephew. A mom. A best friend.

The bill that we were advocating for eventually passed. The piece of legislation and all the elected officials and influential advocacy groups that supported it were hailed in the press, but there was no mention of Kris, a regular, every-day person who did what she could in 15 minutes of her time to make the world a better place, simply by telling her story. No fancy degree, title or facts and figures necessary.

This month, as we hear about overwhelming social problems, let's challenge ourselves to not feel paralyzed by our seemingly lack of power to affect these conditions or believe that we can't affect change without an esteemed title or credentials. Let's not forget that everyday people matter.

After all, if the rural women in Bangladesh, featured in Debora Di Dio's article this month are transforming food security and nutrition for their entire community by fetching water for their families, planting crops and caring for children aren't waiting to become First Lady to fulfill their platform, there's no reason I need to wait either.

Paula Fynboh is an independent contractor and consultant who specializes in capacity building, story telling, civic engagement and grassroots participation. She can be reached at paula.fynboh@gmail.com.



Malian refugees in Damba camp / Eight years old Abubakrim, lies down on the ground inside the health center in Damba refugee camp with his mother Fadmata checking on him. Photo: UNHCR/H Caux



Wheat fields in Salang, Parwan Province, Afghanistan. In Afghanistan 12 to 15 percent of land is arable. Approximately 1.5 million hectares consists of rain-fed land and farmers depend on rains for agricultural production. UN Multimedia/Fardin Waezi.

PAKISTAN: Quality education still a long way off



- 2015 Education MDG in jeopardy
- 30% of population gets less than 2 years of education
- Policy hinders progress"

ISLAMABAD, 9 October 2012 (IRIN) - As evening approaches in the centre of Pakistan's capital Islamabad, children gather at a small playground, chatting and laughing. It is a scene played out in countless parks across the country, but the children are not here to play after school - they are here to attend one.

For three hours every evening, free classes run here for anyone who wants to attend, with the idea being that some of the many children who live on Islamabad's streets, or work in its markets and houses, might benefit.

Mohammad Ayub, who runs the unofficial school, began teaching children whose parents could not afford to send them to school in 1988.

Despite the fact that state-run primary schools do not charge fees and many provide free textbooks, other expenses (such as stationery, uniforms and transportation) mean that for many poor families, schools are unaffordable.

"It became quite popular and many parents who couldn't afford a meal - forget education - would send their children to my little school in the evenings," Ayub said.

The school, which relies on volunteers and donations, is one of dozens of informal institutions in the capital which are helping to educate children.

Pakistan has made limited progress in improving the quality and reach of its education system, and millions of children are missing out on schooling altogether in what the governments of Pakistan and the UK have termed an "education emergency".

Despite making education a fundamental constitutional right in 2010, Pakistan has no chance of fulfilling its Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal education by 2015.

Over seven million primary-aged children do not

attend school, according to a 2011 report by the Pakistan Education Task Force (PETF), a body which includes senior education officials and independent experts.

The UN Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) said in 2010 that 30 percent of Pakistan's population lives in a state of "extreme educational poverty" - receiving less than two years of education.

"We could clearly see that an emergency was unfolding. Fifty percent of children of primary school age were not attending school or not completing it," said Shahnaz Wazir Ali, social sector adviser to the prime minister and PETF co-chair, adding: "We can no longer treat the education sector with a business-as-usual approach."

PETF reckons the economic cost to Pakistan of not educating its people effectively translates into hundreds of millions of dollars in lost productivity.

A success story

Many of those who have finished Ayub's informal school in Islamabad have gone on to complete high school and college, and today have jobs they could never have dreamed of. Ayub estimates that 20 percent of the students finish grade 10, with around 10 percent going on to complete degrees at colleges. Many, like Yasmin Nawaz, a 30-year-old mother of three who graduated from the school in 1994, became teachers themselves.

"I finished middle school, grade 8. My parents couldn't afford to send me to high school, but Master Ayub said I must," Nawaz said. "He paid for my textbooks and my exam registration fee, and in return, I taught here at the school. I then taught elsewhere as well."

Despite the clear return on this investment and

MALI: Children take up guns

SEVARÉ, 8 October 2012 (IRIN) - Children as young as 14 are joining military training camps run by militias in southern Mali preparing to fight Islamist groups in the north. At the same time, Islamist groups in the north are recruiting children as young as 11 to man checkpoints, gather intelligence, search vehicles and patrol the streets in Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal, according to aid agencies and human rights groups.

Fatoumata Tall, a 16-year-old from Ségou in south-central Mali, had never held a rifle before coming to a militia training camp in Sevaré, in central Mali about 45km from the Islamist-held north.



After six months of rigorous training mainly from former soldiers in the Malian army, she is ready for battle, saying she cannot accept the occupation, or the Islamists imposing Sharia in her country.

"I am determined to fight... Our goal is to liberate the north. Whatever the price, we can't abandon our people," she told IRIN.

In Sevaré alone, hundreds of youths and children, many of them 14 or under, are living and training in run-down barracks or school-buildings. They spend hours each day learning how to use a gun, simulating hand-to-hand combat, and exercising.

Calling themselves the FLN, or the Liberation Front of the North, most are proud to be here and many have come without their parents' knowledge or approval. "It's my country and I'm doing whatever it takes to defend it," said Fatoumata Tall, explaining that her parents would force her to leave immediately if they knew where she was.

One camp holds 1,000 youths, another 400, according to militia trainer Col Ibrahima Outtara, though IRIN was unable to verify these figures.

The militia are short on arms and have to borrow guns from the Malian army for weapons-training, said leaders at FLN camp just outside of Mopti. The government promised food, equipment and funding but it never materialized, so trainers rely on handouts from the local population to get by.

None of the youths IRIN spoke to had eaten more than one meal of rice per day.

One of the drivers behind a military coup that ousted President Amadou Toumani Touré in March was the long-term neglect and marginalization of the Malian army, which needed more manpower, weaponry and better training to take on Islamists in the north. In what Reuters described as a "spectacular own goal" the political havoc in the south was a contributing factor to Tuareg rebels and Islamist groups taking control in the north.

Tall hopes to join the army when she "graduates" but Mohammad Maiga, a former soldier who directs one of the camps, said he knows recruits will not be accepted as they are under-age.

Mali is a party to the Convention of the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol, barring recruitment of children under 18.

Pakistan's pledge to spend at least 4 percent of its GDP on education, that figure has been decreasing. Education spending today stands at less than 1.5 percent of Pakistan's GDP, according to PETF.

"The government recognized this problem early on. We've been working hard, on our own and with our major partners, especially the British government, to improve the situation," Ali said. "Much more needs to be done but the government has taken some significant decisions and implemented them too."

These efforts include investments in teacher training, infrastructure and providing textbooks to students, but it is not merely a matter of getting children into school. The quality of their education also needs to be addressed, analysts say.

"One of the solutions you hear to the problems in Pakistan's education sector is for the private sector to step up and fill the gap," Abbas Rashid, executive director of the independent Society for the Advancement of Education, told IRIN.

"Around 30 percent of students are attending private schools, but what kind of education are they getting?"

Poor quality

Private schools, analysts say, are preferred by parents over government schools, despite the higher fees, but the quality of education at these schools is often only marginally better. "The issue is: better does not necessarily mean adequate," said Rashid.

According to the 2011 Annual State of Education Report (ASER) compiled by the South Asian Forum for Education Development, 45 percent of grade 5 students in public schools can only read a grade 2-level story in Urdu. The number is only slightly better in private schools - 57 percent.

That parents are concerned about quality is reflected by the fact that many of the students at Mohammed Ayub's school attend government schools in the morning. Seven-year-old Rimsha Samuel goes to a government primary school in the morning, and after lunch, heads to Ayub's school for further classes.

"After I study here, I understand my lessons really well. I don't forget and do well in tests," Samuel said.

Lack of resources not the only problem

Meanwhile, Ayub says: "Do I think the education system in Pakistan has let the children of this country down? Sure... But the reason for that is not lack of resources. If resources were an issue, where did they get money for all these school buildings where teachers don't teach... There's just no will to improve the situation."

Experts agree that just throwing money at the problem will not solve it, and that policy and governance are issues that have to be dealt with at the same time to achieve any lasting results.

"Money is one of the main issues, but there is a problem with how policies are made. And they are constantly changed, not using the research that has been carried out on the sector," said Fareeha Zafar, an independent education expert.

Accountability

"There is the issue of governance, there are no accountability mechanisms. For example, even if you do have sufficient teachers - which we don't - if they are not in school, it is not possible to achieve anything."

The LEAPS (Learning and Educational Achievement in Pakistan Schools) project and PETF estimate that teachers in government schools, despite being paid more than their private sector counterparts and having greater job security, are not present one-fifth of the time. Government school teachers often use political connections and union action to protect themselves.

"Even if a senior officer reports a teacher that is not performing or not even attending school, it is very difficult to take action because they will involve the unions or go to an MNA [member of the National Assembly]," said Zafar.

"Even if you get that [teacher accountability], the quality of education, of textbooks, is an issue. So all of this needs to be considered, not just what is spent on education, but how." (IRIN)

SWAZILAND: Child marriages banned

MBABANE, September 2012- The practice of men marrying underage girls - which has been an accepted social norm for centuries but has been linked in recent years to the spread of HIV - was recently declared illegal in Swaziland.

Known in SiSwati as 'kwendizisa', the marriage of an adult man to an underage girl was considered a legal "grey area" prior to the promulgation of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act of 2012.

According to the 2005 Swaziland constitution, some customary practices are allowed unless they conflict with constitutional clauses.

"Swazi men marrying girls once the girls enter puberty is not a customary law. It is not mandatory. It is tolerated because it has always been done. But times are changing, and Swaziland has the highest HIV prevalence rate in the world. This practice has added to the spread of HIV. It is a great victory for public health and for the rights of girl children that this outmoded practice must now end," AIDS activist Sandra Kunene told PlusNews.

Married adolescents are at greater risk of HIV infection because many of them are in polygamous unions, face sexual violence or are unable to negotiate safe sex. The girls also tend to have little contact with their peers, restricted social mobility, low levels of education and limited access to media and health messages.

NEPAL: Community forest value untapped



KATHMANDU, September 2012

Government oversight is preventing local communities from reaping economic benefits from forests they have spent decades regenerating, activists say.

Communities "cannot make [the] best use of their available resources because of the restrictions imposed and a complicated process of getting approval for harvesting of any timber and non-timber forest products," Ganga Ram Dahal of the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI), a global coalition promoting forest land tenure reform, told IRIN.

The challenge is "safeguarding the rights" of communities, Bharat Pokharel, forester and deputy country programme director in Nepal for the Swiss development agency Helvetas, explained at a recent regional workshop on forestland tenure held in the capital, Kathmandu. Today, community forestry covers 1.6 million hectares, or a quarter of all forestland in Nepal.

Southeast Asia wasting too much food

BANGKOK, October 2012- Food losses in Asia due to disasters or poor storage, packing and delivery are set to worsen, and governments are ill-prepared to stem the wastage, according to experts recently convened by the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies in Singapore.

Possible solutions include redistributing



edible wasted food to people; turning it into energy and agriculture inputs; and developing new technology to separate food waste from other rubbish. Policymakers need to take a "total supply chain approach" or else risk breaking Southeast Asia's fragile food system, said the experts.

"It is likely that the region wastes

approximately 33 percent of food, but accurate estimates are not available due to a dearth of quantitative information."

Increasing urbanization means food will tend to travel farther, something that could exacerbate the food waste problem. Governments need to better fund the tracking of food waste (especially fish, vegetables and rice), they said.

Life in Post-War Nicaragua

Nicaragua is the second poorest country in the western hemisphere. The governing political party, Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN), was brought to power after overthrowing longtime dictator Anastasio Somoza in the 1979 revolution.

In the 1980s, the FSLN began implementing social programs aimed at reducing illiteracy and hunger, but was soon forced to divert scant resources to fight Contra Wars against U.S.-armed militias, which were notably composed with Somoza's former guardsmen.

Today, the nation is still recovering from decades of violence and many residents, known as "Nicas", lack basic food items as they watch local crops get shipped overseas. The following is a compilation of thoughts and conversations from the rural areas in the northern Nicaragua one month before the 2011 elections.

By **DIEGO CUPOLO**
Text & Photos



Corina's story

We spent four days in a tunnel once. During the war, the Sandinistas used underground tunnels to get from one house to another. It was a good way to trick Somoza's men and escape.

At one point they were bombing Esteli. The military was all over the city. Soldiers would radio each other before bombing raids and say "take cover, we're going to drop candy."

Twenty of us had to stay in a small tunnel for four days during a period of very heavy bombing. I was the only one that would go out in the street to see what was happening. How did we eat? We didn't eat, it's that simple. We had one bucket for piss and that was it.

The war was terrible, but it felt good to fight for something we believed in. I was a nurse through most of the revolution. We went out in the mountains and gave aid to guerrillas in their camps. After the war I was a teacher in Esteli. We won the war and our main goals were to educate the poor and

help farmers.

But we weren't allowed to do that. Señor Reagan started the Contra War after Somoza fell. He armed Somoza's former military men, trained them in Honduras, and there were always battles near the border. It was a very hard time.

The U.S. put an embargo on us, just like the one in Cuba, and they didn't stop it until the FSLN lost power in 1990. Now we're back in power. We have Daniel. He's not so great, but we don't have a better choice. He's the least evil of our choices. Who else am I going to vote for? The Reds? I'm Sandinista.

It's been hard ever since the revolution, sure. We're in a transitional faze. I guess it's normal.

But the worst part, the absolute worst part about everything I've experienced in my life is how the U.S. always gets involved in our lives. They never leave us alone. They want to control the world and here, in poor little Central America, they really show it. It's like we're their children.

"Now we're back in power. We have Daniel. He's not so great, but we don't have a better choice. He's the least evil of our choices. Who else am I going to vote for? The Reds?"



El Viejito

"He's waiting to die," she said.
 "He's lived more than a hundred years and he lost his vision three months ago."
 "He worked hard all his life. He was a tough man, but now he just stays in his room all day because he doesn't want anyone to see him so old and so blind."
 "He says he doesn't like being with people anymore because he can't see them. It makes him uncomfortable."
 "He's funny, though. Last night he was yelling for me to make him coffee. It was four in morning. He can't see so he doesn't know what time it is anymore. Night and day are the same for him."
 "You know, he met Sandino in person when he was a teenager. After that, he went on to do a lot of work for the FSLN."
 "Is he dead yet?" A voice asked from the kitchen.
 "No, I checked on him this morning, but maybe he's dead now."

Javier

No, I'm not voting in the elections. I already know who's going to win. Daniel.

There's no real opposition and the FSLN has all the money. It's corruption. Let me give you an example. We have special officers that count the votes in every election. Normally, each party has their own officer, but all of the officers are now part of the FSLN. Basically, we have people counting votes for the parties they're running against.

People know our government is corrupt, but they don't do anything about it. They think changing our politics means another war so they don't complain much. With the revolution not so far in the past, most people just want peace. The FSLN knows this and it's part of how they

stay in power. Not many people will speak badly about them. It's dangerous to speak against them. They don't kill you or torture you like Somoza, but they'll ruin your life.

You know, they have offices in every town where they give you a special document saying you're a Sandinista. If you're against any of their policies they take this document away from you and this is important because most places require it when they hire you.

Daniel is looking more like a dictator every year.

It's a shame really. The FSLN started with good intentions: help the poor, vaccinations, health services, education in rural areas. Now things changed. We're not getting anywhere. Daniel always criticizes the U.S. in his speeches, but then he signs trade deals with them when he gets back to his office. We've been getting more

help from Chavez lately, but he's the same. Chavez yells and screams about U.S. imperialism, but in the end, he sells most of Venezuela's oil to the U.S.

It's the same story in every Latin American country. We seem to copy each other, dictators and all.

Me, I just want to make a little money and support my family.

It's hard living here on the farm. We lose a lot of money and we don't even have enough people to work the land anymore. Everyone's moving to the cities thinking they'll have better lives, but they just find more problems. You have to buy everything in the city and most of it's pure garbage.

I don't know what to do, really. I feel stuck. Maybe something will change later, but for now we have Daniel and Daniel promises everything and delivers little.



"People know our government is corrupt, but they don't do anything about it. They think changing our politics means another war so they don't complain much. With the revolution not so far in the past, most people just want peace"



Doña Maria

The war was horrible. We never had enough to eat. It was worse for the children though. They suffered the most. Children and old people. Anyone who couldn't run fast enough.

This was my family's land, but we had to move to Managua during the war. It was too dangerous here near the border. There were troops everywhere. They passed by every day. They'd take people away and we wouldn't see them again.

What happened to them? They killed them of course. They killed my mother.

That's what they did. It was worse during the Contra War. They came to poor villages on purpose. They knew no one would notice. No one was watching. They did what they wanted to us.

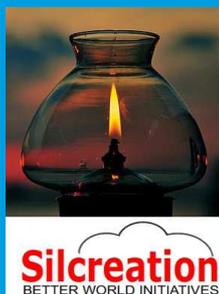
We couldn't come back home until the late 80s. Fifteen years after we ran away. When we arrived the FSLN had stolen parts of my father's land and gave it to other people. It was part of their anti-poverty campaign. But we were lucky. We got to keep most of our land. Other people came back and found new families living in their houses. I knew a woman, the FSLN took her house and she had to move to Canada as a refugee. She had three children up there and stayed there. I guess she's doing well.

Us, we have to stay here. This land is what we have. It's not good land and not much can grow in it, but it's ours. We grow coffee. That's what we do.

At least we have peace now. That's all I want.

Do you want something to eat?
I get worried when you don't eat.

"The war was horrible. We never had enough to eat. It was worse for the children though. They suffered the most. Children and old people. Anyone who couldn't run fast enough"



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“Be The Change You Want To See”
Join Us in A Book-Inspired Personal Pledge

12 Initiatives Taking Positive Steps Towards a Healthier, Fairer and More Sustainable Food and Agriculture System

Story of a Rural Bolivian University

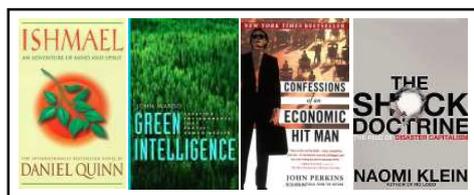
Ecoliterate—A Book Of Inspiration for Practical Action

Argentina Paving the Way for Today’s Occupy Movement

A dedicated journey: One man’s commitment to children’s rights in Cambodia

“Ten
Women
Who Inspire
Me”

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By IOULIA FENTON
GSDM Assistant Editor

I tend to get pretty depressed after reading many economic, international development and environmental books—factual, fiction or otherwise. If you do not know what I mean, I highly recommend reading Daniel Quinn’s 1992 novel *Ishmael*. Set up as a conversation between a teacher and student, where the former happens to be a hyper-intelligent, talking Guerrilla, the book slowly takes the reader through environmental philosophy reasons for how we have managed to get ourselves into the present day environmental mess. Upon turning over the last page I felt empty and angry at everyone, especially myself. Being on vacation in El Salvador and staying in an air-conditioned hotel room with an outdoor pool, which already felt pretty uncomfortable, all of a sudden felt like a ridiculous extravagance that was killing the planet. I immediately understood why one reviewer had said: “From now on I will divide the books I have read into two categories -- the ones I read before *Ishmael* and those read after.”

The simple lack of available information or transparency around the use and effects of chemicals in every product that surrounds our lives—as well as more blatant and grievous releases of chemicals into the environment by army weapons testing and other industries—exposed by Yale Professor John Wargo in his 2011 book *Green Intelligence* left me feeling paralysed. The massive private efforts to shut the public out and the inadequate policies and regulations in place to hold businesses responsible for polluting the environment and human beings to the point of disease and death was devastating—I just had no idea what I could do.

The 2004 *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* was one of only two books that ever made me literally weep upon finishing it. I remember the moment vividly as I shrank deep into my long-haul flight airplane seat and quietly sobbed on my route to do fieldwork in Guatemala. The book is a personal life history exposé by John Hopkins that claims that he, and many people like him, were used to convince the political and financial leadership of underdeveloped countries (often using false projections) to accept enormous development loans from institutions like the World Bank and USAID that saddled them with an impossible debt and perpetual under-development—while the developing countries had to pay back loans with interest to U.S.-dominated institutions, they were contractually obligated to use U.S. firms for the projects that were the purposes of the loans to begin with, thus making sure that internal development would not, in fact, occur.

Naomi Klein’s 2008 *The Shock*

Doctrine—a carefully researched and documented behind-the-scenes story of how American “free-market” policies have come to dominate the world through exploitation of disaster-shocked peoples and countries—had a similar, sinking effect. I simply felt powerless to be able to affect a change when so many of the world’s inequalities and injustices seemed to be purposely orchestrated by a powerful few that are unreachable to so many of us.

And there are many more book examples like that—all with one thing in common: I felt worse than before and immobilised after reading them: I had no idea where to start.

Then, through serendipity more than plan, I began to slowly see things differently. Living and working in different countries like Bolivia, Thailand, Nicaragua and Guatemala, for example, I saw many hardships, but also many small victories that ordinary people were winning by improving their lives and the lives of others. The sheer passions and determination that Edwin showed—a gentle giant of a man, an artist and a teacher who found a dream job working for an educational NGO in Guatemala—was simply inspiring. He worked long hours and weekends, through harsh weather, illness and personal trauma, not because he has to go to work, but because he wants to help his indigenous Maya community.

My recent involvement with Worldwatch Institute’s Nourishing the Planet project was also enlightening. Recognising that the current global systems are not sustainable and are, in fact, destroying people and the planet, it highlights individuals, initiatives and organizations that are striving to make a difference. The projects are often small, started on someone’s spare time, with little funding but a ton of commitment, enthusiasm and heart. Yet, they are making huge differences in people’s lives and in improving the environment.

I also began reading books and works with the objective of looking not only for problems, but good, practical suggestions on how to solve them. For this issue I reviewed *Ecoliterate: How Educators Are Cultivating Emotional, Social and Ecological Intelligence*, written by Daniel Goleman, Lisa Bennet and Zenobia Barlow of the Center for Ecoliteracy. It tells eight stories that start by outlining problems of injustice, corruption and pollution that pertain to such things as the awfully destructive mountaintop mining; poverty and unfairness in distribution of resources and quality of education in schools; and environmental and social destruction of oil drilling in indigenous people’s traditional home environments. Yet, the bad news only sets the scene and the book

is a revelation of practical action that individuals and communities—including children and youths—are making in their fight for a better world.

My most recent foray into Fred Magdoff’s and John Bellamy Foster’s 2011 *What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know About Capitalism* also surprised me as, after a long description of how things have gone wrong, the book ends with a long chapter on what activists, academics, policy makers and normal people should and can demand to help change things around.

As I began to get more and more inspired, the words of

Ghandi—recounted to me by a close friend—really helped put things in perspective. “Be the change you want to see,” he said when, in turn, quoting his own grandfather. So I have decided to make a pledge to no longer be inactive or feel paralysed because the size of the problem seems too big for me to make a difference. We can all make small changes and, as part of the GSDM inspiration issue, I pledge to do everything I can—within the time that I can spare and within the confines of the changes that I can realistically make—to make sure that my life reflects my ideals as much as possible. I will carry a thermos flask to make sure I never buy a bottle of water or take my coffee to go in a throwaway paper cup. I will carry a reusable shopping bag to make sure I never use a plastic one. I will not buy clothes unless I absolutely need them and I know that they are sourced and made responsibly. And, locally, I will work to improve my community and be a greater advocate for sustainability, social justice and the future of humanity. Join us, feel inspired and feel empowered to make a change. After all, as the zen saying goes: “Happiness is when what you think, say and do are in harmony.”

“through serendipity more than plan, I began to slowly see things differently. Living and working in different countries like Bolivia, Thailand, Nicaragua and Guatemala, for example, I saw many hardships, but also many small victories that ordinary people were winning by improving their lives and the lives of others”

12 Initiatives Taking Positive Steps Towards a Healthier, Fairer and More Sustainable Food and Agriculture System

By IOULIA FENTON & ADAM NELSON

The world's global food and agriculture system is not working. On the one end, the Green Revolution has converted much farmland into industrial agricultural production that uses man-made chemical pesticides and fertilizers instead of methods that are more harmonious with nature. This has led to the loss of biodiversity as tillage and use of pesticides have killed off or deterred other plant and animal species. It has also helped fuel climate change as more and more forests are cut down for conversion to agriculture, while chemical pollution has furthered air, water, and land pollution. It has also led to the sprouting of a multi billion dollar a year genetically modified crops industry with plants engineered in genetics labs to be compatible only with certain companies' chemical agricultural inputs. Far from delivering the promised gains in yields and greater incomes for developing country farmers, it has led to pesticide dependency and spiraling cycles of debt and death as smallholders fail to keep up (see GSDM April 2012 issue on Farmer Suicides in India for more details).

On the other end of the system, every year the world produces enough food to adequately feed and nurture every human being on the planet. Yet, already huge disparities in access keep growing as advanced nations waste enough food to feed three billion

additional people, while one billion of their neighbors in the South face crippling problems of severe under-nutrition. The problem is complicated by the fact that—as a result of an industrial food business system geared towards longer shelf-life and bigger sales and due to poor policy and individual decisions—much of the food that does reach both rich and poor consumers is highly processed and loaded with salt, sugars, and fats, while lacking even the basic nutrients. This has led to widespread obesity throughout advanced and developing nations and more deaths are now attributed to related non-communicable diseases—heart attacks, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, and the like—worldwide than to any other cause.

Although the situation may seem dire, there is something that everyone can do to make a difference. Fortunately, individuals, communities, and organizations around the world are taking action—big and small—to address different challenges along the food and agriculture chain. As part of the inspiration issue, we bring you 12 tales of such nuggets of positivity that prove that the scale of the problem need not cause depression, paralysis, and inaction. Rather, that taking on smaller, focused chunks of the issue can lead to impressive results and real impact on the health and lives of others.

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1. Urban gardening greens Johannesburg in a bid to tackle climate change

Tlhago means nature in Afrikaans. And it is nature that the Tlhago Primary Agricultural Cooperative has brought to the roof-scape of Johannesburg, South Africa. The project was started in 2010 by Tshediso Phahlane and his enthusiastic team-mates by securing

funding from the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) to create the first garden on a building rooftop donated by the city's Affordable Housing Company (Afcho). The organization's goal is to tackle climate change (CC) by educating youth and community members about its causes and effects. It also teaches them how urban gardening can be part of the solution to environmental problems, while minimizing unemployment, poverty, and malnutrition.

The cooperative does much of its teaching in the communities' own



Tlhago Cooperative's Rooftop Harvest (Photo Credit: Tshediso)

languages and so far, through outreach and educational activities, it has transferred urban gardening skills to more than 100 people from local communities. Since its conception in July 2010, the cooperative's six organizers have planted two rooftop gardens at the heart of the metropolis and they dream of one day greening the entire metropolis.



PepsiCo U.K. is working towards a truly sustainable business model thanks to the work of Forum for the Future (Photo Credit: Forum for the Future)

2. Forum for the Future is helping the food industry be more sustainable

Forum for the Future—a global independent non-profit that seeks system-wide solutions to global challenges—believes that, by fundamentally changing their operating models, businesses can be the key to future sustainability. They work with major and smaller industry players—like PepsiCo, Target, Unilever, supermarket chains Marks and Spencer and Tesco, and smaller, dynamic enterprises like the farmer's networking platform

Sustaining, organic baby food producer Ella's Kitchen, and Fair Trade-focused Cafédirect—to help them see the world differently. The PepsiCo Global Scenarios and Strategy 2030 project, for example, included interviews with more than 100 experts from within and outside the industry and a series of workshops to engage key people across the business. It illustrated to leaders that things like obesity and climate change are not merely public

or individual problems, but, in fact, represent significant risk factors as far as profitability and viability of PepsiCo itself.

There is a big difference between being a little greener and being truly sustainable, and the ultimate vision of the Forum is to help companies become the latter. For example, one of the Forum's pioneer partners Kingfisher—a non-food retailer that sells things like lawnmowers and paint—has developed a vision of becoming a net-positive company in

3. Returning produce to food deserts in Chicago

Sheelah Muhammad is the co-founder of Fresh Moves—a project working for food justice in Chicago's poorest areas. The organization employs five people from the communities in which they operate—prioritizing difficult-to-employ individuals who struggle to find work elsewhere—to bring fresh fruit and vegetables to communities that lack greengrocers or other

sources of healthy food options. Their vehicle of choice? A converted city bus operating as a mobile greengrocer's.



The Fresh Moves Bus (Photo Credit: Fresh Moves)

Today, under the slogan "No more food deserts. The drought is over!" Fresh Moves operates a weekly route stopping in 12 different locations in

Chicago's West side. The bus has been converted with multiple vertical rows of fruit, vegetable, and greens-filled greengrocer baskets on the inside (over 40 different products in total) and painted in crimson-red with ripe bananas, carrots, and watermelons on the outside. The produce offered is as seasonal and local as possible—the project sources goods from Chicago's urban agriculture initiatives, such as Windy City Harvest and

Growing Power, and supports African-American farmers outside the city.

4. Re-linking sustainable education to the rural job

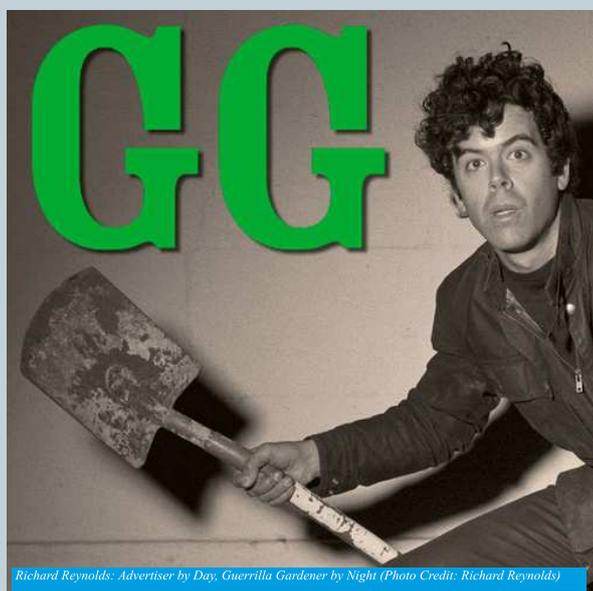
Steve Dudenhoefer is the founder of Ak'Tenamit, an indigenous-run non-governmental organization (NGO) in Guatemala. They recognized early that the country's education system was de-linked from the potential job market and over the years have developed their own methodology providing appropriate vocational training for indigenous boys and girls from rural areas to become future leaders in



Ak'Tenamit's 2010 Graduates (Photo Credit: Ak'Tenamit)

their communities and generators of their own wealth. Set in a remote location on the Rio Dulce, the

curriculum is implemented in the Ak'Tenamit boarding school, serving as an academy and practical training village. It houses an on-site restaurant and handicraft shop where students from hundreds of different rural communities receive some of their 3,000 hours of practical training in leadership, sustainable tourism, sustainable agriculture, and community well-being, instead of training as accountants or secretaries. Students also learn about, preserve, and identify with their Mayan language and culture, something that has been actively suppressed throughout much of Guatemalan history.



Richard Reynolds: Advertiser by Day, Guerrilla Gardener by Night (Photo Credit: Richard Reynolds)

Richard Reynolds lives in a relatively cheap, small, inner city

countryside, he decided to

5. Guerilla Gardening is Redrawing Green-Fingered Battle Lines

flat in a large, grey, 1970s purpose-built, ex-council authority block. Unfortunately, as with most cities around the world, this relative affordability comes at a price—the surroundings tend to be as grey as the buildings themselves.

As a frustrated gardener who grew up in the

reclaim the darkest of spaces by planting grasses, shrubs, and flowers on abandoned grim lots.

He called it Guerilla Gardening, blogged about it, and soon found that he was not alone—at the last count of his followers, there were more than 83,000 gardening guerillas around the globe causing gorgeous green havoc with nothing but green fingers, a handful of seeds, clippers, and spades.

something about that. Initially going out alone, under the cover of darkness, he began to slowly and secretly

6. Revitalizing Uganda's agricultural and culinary traditions

In the Mukono District of Uganda, Developing Innovations in School Cultivation (DISC) has set out to educate the next generation in hopes of continuing Uganda's agricultural and culinary traditions. At Kisoga Secondary School in Kampala students are being taught to manage a sustainable school garden that produces fresh fruits and vegetables. Food from the garden, served at lunch, has significantly decreased

child malnutrition in the village.

DISC coordinators, Edward Mukiibi and Roger Sserunjogi, have also been improving young students' views towards agriculture. Due to their work in reversing stereotypes, students no longer see agriculture as a burden, punishment, or a last

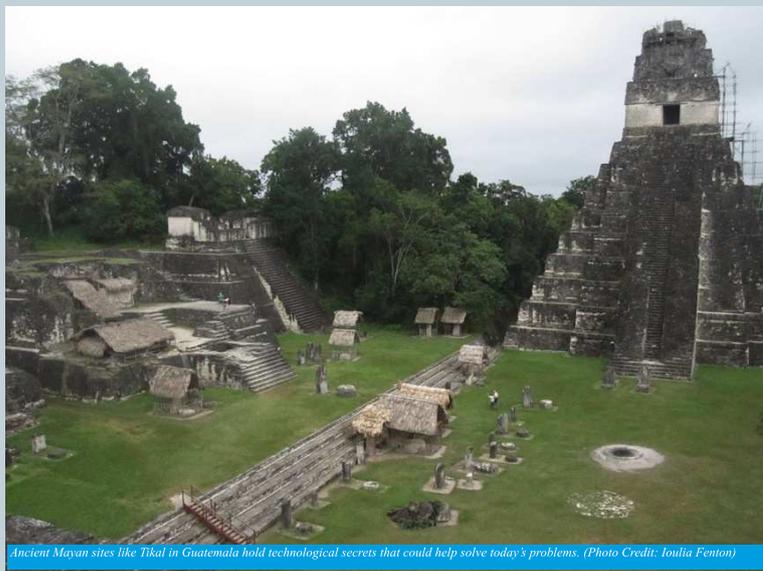


Project DISC is helping to improve health and nutrition of entire communities in Uganda. (Photo Credit: Project DISC)

resort, but are starting to see it as a viable alternative with which to make money and assist their communities. With recent support from Slow Food International, DISC has expanded its original program to 15 other schools.

7. Using ancient technologies to address today's food and agriculture problems

The borders and surrounding regions of Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize were once home to millions of people who managed to thrive despite the area's poor soils, climate variability, and pronounced wet and dry seasons. To this day, the area has never been occupied to the same levels, partly because modern technology has not been able to practically resolve these problems. In an attempt to find a solution, Dr. Ezgi Akpınar Ferrand—a Turkish researcher working at Southern Connecticut State University—started conducting research on a relatively simple ancient Mayan system of human-



Ancient Mayan sites like Tikal in Guatemala hold technological secrets that could help solve today's problems. (Photo Credit: Ioulia Fenton)

made ponds called aguadas—that were lined with locally-sourced natural materials such as impermeable clay, plaster, and stone—as an alternative to more modern agricultural practices. With plentiful water reserves collected in

the aguadas, filtered for consumption with connecting silting tanks, they represent a manageable way to provide water for agricultural, drinking, and other needs.

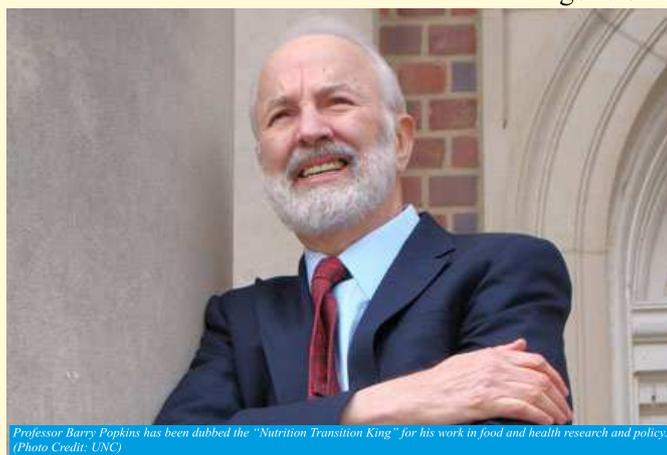
Now Dr. Akpınar Ferrand has teamed up with ethnographer Dr. Betty Faust on an applied project—reconstructing an ancient canal irrigation system with raised agricultural fields to help the struggling Mayan farming community of Pich, a village of 2,000 inhabitants in the state of Campeche, Mexico. If

successfully reconstructed, this system would help nourish the surrounding land, increase income and water security, and be a model for other populations living in the area.

8. Changing food environments one policy at a time

Following in the footsteps of advanced nations, much of the developing world is undergoing the nutrition transition—rapid changes in the types of foods that are available and consumed that lead to diets shifting from traditional plant-based and home-cooked foods to meat-derived and processed products. This is accompanied by an epidemiological transition from infectious to chronic, non-communicable diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease, which are now killing more of the world's people than anything else.

One culprit is the growth of the sugary drinks industry, and for many,



Professor Barry Popkin has been dubbed the "Nutrition Transition King" for his work in food and health research and policy. (Photo Credit: UNC)

like the distinguished Professor of Global Nutrition at the University of North Carolina's School of Public Health, Dr. Barry Popkin, the solution lies in changing public policies to make healthier options more widely available and easily accessible to the public. In 2006,

Popkin launched the U.S Beverage Guidance Panel, which successfully brought the discussion over the problem of sugary intake to nutritionists and policy makers in the U.S and around the world. He has gone on to contribute significantly to

the Mexican Beverage Guidance Panel, too, which eventually led to 20 million people on government-funded food programs to switch from whole milk to 1.5 percent milk and to schools cutting out sugary beverages. To help governments measure the impact of the problem, Dr. Popkin has conducted National

Health and Nutrition Surveys in China, the Philippines, and the United Arab Emirates, while also advising decision-makers on national healthy food and drink policies and programs in South Africa, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

9. Fighting desertification in the Sahel

addressing the issue by

Sahel Eco is a non-profit organization helping to improve the lives of those living in Mali's desert and semi-desert regions. Desertification due to deforestation represents the biggest threat to Malian lifestyle, where 70 per cent of the population lives on less than a dollar a day and depends heavily on rainfall to water their fields and animals. Working predominately in the Mopti, Segou, and Koulikoro regions of Mali, the organization is

continuing the work of SOS Sahel International UK. Members of Sahel Eco are showing farmers that proper tree management will protect soils and provide economic benefits through timber, fuel, animal feed, fruits, herbal medicines, and even raw material for mats, baskets, and hats. Through demonstrating the benefits of agro-



Sahel Eco is helping farmers re-green desert soils. (Photo Credit: Sahel Eco)

forests, Sahel Eco has been building support for and improving local knowledge of tree management to dramatically impact the encroaching desertification in Mali.



Mr. Sakthivel is turning animal dung into organic fertilizer gold. (Photo Credit: The Hindu)

G. R. Sakthivel, an Indian sugarcane farmer and a member of Erode's organic farmers' federation, has developed an ingenious way to filter cattle waste to create higher sugarcane yields while decreasing his labor input. The system first collects and mixes cattle dung and

The remaining nitrate-rich, organic liquid is used as fertilizer and dispersed through a drip irrigation system. The natural fertilizer not only increases yields, but also increases the presence of earthworms and the soil's water-retaining

10. One man's ingenious animal waste filtration system is increasing India's sugarcane yields

urine. Then, a series of filtration systems separates solid matter, which is used for biogas production.

capacity. This, in return, means Sakthivel spends less time and effort re-working soils hardened by chemical fertilizers, while increasing his income. The system has the potential to save farmers up to Rs.27,000 (about \$500) per acre and promises to work for other crops, too. Already ten sugarcane farmers have adopted the system in the Sathyamangalam region and others are following suit with great results.

11. Back to the Maya Nut future

Though generally not consumed by modern populations, the Maya Nut has historically been a vital and nutritious staple of the Central American Maya. Incredibly nutritious, it is high in calcium, fiber, iron, folate, potassium, antioxidants, and can be eaten by both people and livestock. It also provides many ecosystem services to rainforests and people—it protects watersheds and biodiversity and the Maya Nut tree is perfect for reforestation by providing

valuable shade and protection from rain and erosion all year around.

Now, with the help of the Maya Nut Institute—which teaches rural communities over 100 ways to



The Maya Nut is transforming people's livelihoods and benefiting the environment all across Central America. (Photo Credit: Maya Nut Institute)

prepare the nut to produce savory and sweet foods, drinks, baked

goods, sauces, and condiments that they can consume or sell—it is also a valuable source of income to indigenous populations across Central America. To date, the institute has reached over 1,200

communities across Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Mexico.

By running workshops on how to cook and market their own goods, the institute has made considerable

impacts on the lives of women too. Since its conception, 17,000 women have been trained resulting in the establishment of 20 separate woman-run businesses that produce and market Maya Nut products across

12. Re-greening the Jordanian desert

Founder of the Permaculture Research Institute of Australia, Geoff Lawton, has embarked on a new mission to regreen the Jordanian desert. For the task, he has developed a basic system of permaculture—a philosophy of working with, rather than against nature in all human endeavors—he calls an “anti-evaporation” design. The system



The Jordanian demonstration site is showing hundreds of farmers how to re-green the desert. (Photo Credit: Permaculture Research Institute)

restores the productivity of the Sahel desert soils that are too high in salt content for agricultural production; it utilizes mulching, compost beds, and sunken, shaded garden beds to increase organic matter while reducing salt buildups.

By using a 3,000 square meter demonstration site in Jordan, Lawton has been able to show locals how to work and practice his anti-evaporation system. By doing so, he is restoring the soil's fertility and turning the Jordanian desert back into an oasis. With

agricultural lands becoming less productive due to salinization, Lawton has provided a system that not only restores soil nutrients, but one that is also economically and environmentally beneficial.

From innovations that work at the local community levels to those helping change how businesses operate and the policies that shape our environment, the world is full of inspiring examples that show that everyone can do something to make a difference. We thank guerilla gardener Richard Reynolds in London, rooftop

climate change changer Tshediso Phahlane in South Africa, youth engagers Edward Mukiibi and Roger Sserunjogi in Uganda, organic waste-filterer Mr. Sakthivel in India, the global food policy fighter Barry Popkins, and everyone else for

their continuous efforts in making the world's food and agriculture system more productive, healthful, and environmentally sustainable.

Ioulia Fenton leads the food and agriculture research stream at the Center for Economic and Environmental Modeling and Analysis (CEEMA) at the Institute of Advanced Development Studies (INESAD) in La Paz, Bolivia. Adam Nelson is a research and communications intern with INESAD.

HEALTH: New TB vaccine on the horizon



LONDON, October 2012 - A research team at Oxford University in the UK is very close to determining the efficacy of their new tuberculosis (TB) vaccine. If current clinical trials are successful, it will be the first new TB vaccine in almost a century.

The urgent need for a new vaccine is emphasised by research showing that extensively drug-resistant (XDR) forms of the disease are rapidly spreading.

Today, most babies in the world are immunized with the old Bacille Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine, first used in 1921. The leader of the Oxford research team, Helen McShane, says it saves children's lives, but beyond infancy its effects are limited.

"We know that when BCG is given at birth, it does work well to protect against tubercular meningitis and the disseminated disease that has spread outside the lungs... What we also know is that BCG is very variable in protecting against lung disease, which is where the burden of the disease is, particularly in adults and adolescents," she said.

Oxford's vaccine, known as MVA85A, is designed to boost the effects of BCG. "It's that efficacy against severe disease which is the rationale behind keeping BCG and making it better," McShane said. Clinical trials are taking place in South Africa, following 3,000 babies, all of whom received BCG; half of them also received the new booster vaccine. Trials of the vaccine's effectiveness in adults are taking place in both South Africa and Senegal, with results expected in the first quarter of 2013. (PlusNews)

Ecoliterate—A Book Of Inspiration for Practical Action

Ecoliterate inspires practical action towards sustainability



IOULIA FENTON
GSDM Assistant Editor

One of the hardest things to do for anyone interested in issues of environmental sustainability is to translate ideas and complaints into practical, positive, change-making action. For those who try to teach the next generation of environmental and social leaders in schools, in communities, or even online, this is even more important—merely talking about problems is likely to inspire only the students’ depression and frustration at lack of solutions. Luckily, *Ecoliterate*, a new book by psychologist Daniel Goleman and Lisa Bennett and Zenobia Barlow of the Center for Ecoliteracy—an organization that supports and advances education for sustainable living—is a deep well of ideas for those seeking inspiration.

The book is based on the premise that being successful at any endeavour requires more than a good IQ. Drawing on co-author Goleman’s seminal books, *Emotional Intelligence* and *Social Intelligence*, it explores the importance of developing the ability to manage one’s own emotions and maintain good relationships with others. It describes these capacities as key to improved academic success and the cultivation of ecoliteracy, which is the understanding and caring about the connections between humans and other aspects of the natural environment.

The authors also introduce five ecoliterate practices:

1. Developing empathy with all forms of life by recognizing that human being are not separate to the rest of nature.
2. Embracing sustainability as a community practice involving other people.
3. Making the invisible negative effects of environmental destruction visible for all to see.
4. Better anticipating unintended environmental consequences of human actions.
5. And a better understanding of how nature sustains all life.

Believing that teachers “are ideally situated to lead a breakthrough to a new and enlightened ecological sensibility”, the authors spend the rest of the book taking an in-depth look at six eight real-life case studies that embody these five practices.

The first, for example, is a story of a community’s fight against Mountaintop coal mining in the Appalachians—a practice that has destroyed 500 mountaintops, 1mn acres of forest, and

2,000 miles of streams since the 1980s. The far-reaching, invisible effects of the mining were made visible to a group of students from Spartanburg Day School, South Carolina. The kids went on a “Power Trip” to Kentucky. The excursion contrasted an on-the-ground visit to a largely undisturbed, lushly green part of the mountain range with an airborne view of fractured earth and sludge ponds of the heavily mined Black Mountain. The children felt such a strong emotional response from an innate empathy with the natural world that they were propelled into a range of practical actions, including publishing stories in local media and starting school and community-based environmental clubs.

The third story tells the tale of the Gwich’in people’s resistance to oil drilling in Alaska—an intrusive practice that threatens to destroy the environment and their very way of life.

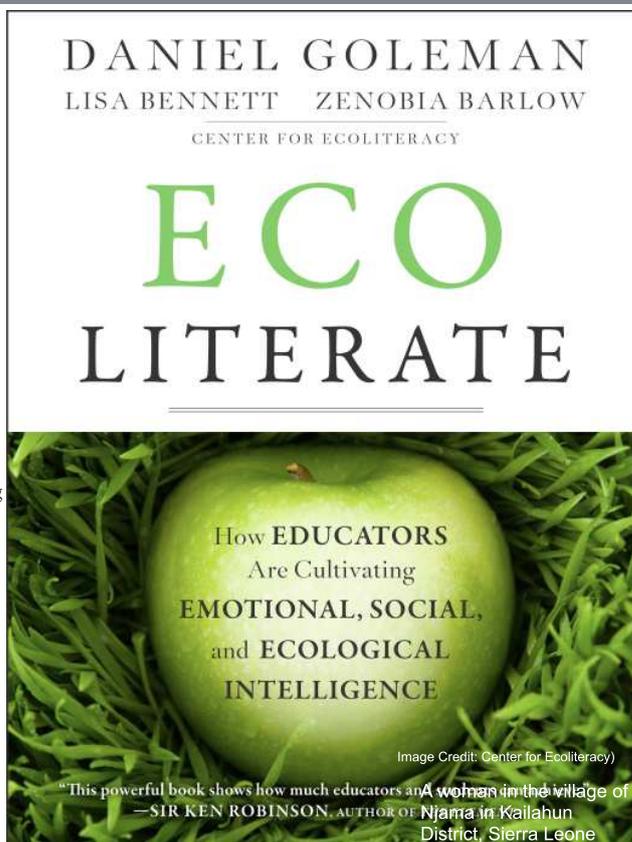
The fourth narrative talks about Kids Rethink New Orleans, a student organization that is fundamentally reshaping schools’ lunches, environments, and general sustainability for the better.

Next, the reader is introduced to Dr. Aaron Wolf whose research into cross-border management of common water resources, such as rivers and lakes, has shown that cooperation is best achieved when emotional, ecological, and even spiritual dimensions of importance of different parties are addressed.

Then the story of the Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed (STRAW) program illustrates how, through emotional, social, and ecological intelligence, over two decades more than 30,000 kids have engaged in positive, ecosystem restorative action.

Through the tale of the La Semilla Food Center, Anthony, New Mexico—a grassroots organization that is leading the charge against obesity and hunger in local communities by forming Youth Food Policy Councils and youth farming opportunities—the reader learns how vital building connections can be in inspiring community-wide action. These and two other stories carry powerful messages and inspiring examples of practical action taken by adults and children all around the United States.

Complete with lesson-planning guides for each chapter and a professional development plan, the book is written specifically for educators. However, it will strike a chord with anyone interested in sustainability. Aspiring and current



"Ecoliterate is a very timely contribution to a growing movement that is aiming to secure a sustainable future for upcoming generations"

"The book is based on the premise that being successful at any endeavour requires more than a good IQ"

activists and leaders will certainly draw from Teri Blanton—one of the main advocates against mountaintop removal mining—and her views on effective leadership: “don’t lead through anger,” she says, “reach people on a human level through stories, foster dialogue instead of debate, [and] speak from the heart.” Others would find truths in the words of Sarah James—an indigenous woman leading the Gwich’in (Caribou) people’s stand against oil development in Alaska—too. “There is nothing hard about it,” she says when talking about reducing, reusing and recycling,

“there is nothing easy about it, it is something you do every day. And if everybody does it, it will become a way of life.”

Overall, *Ecoliterate* is a very timely contribution to a growing movement that is aiming to secure a sustainable future for upcoming generations. And because of the relevance of the grassroots case studies it covers, the myriad of inspiring wisdoms to be found in the words of the stories’ propagators, and the general accessibility of the writing, it is a must read for anyone interested in making or seeing a change from the bottom up.

Story of a Rural Bolivian University

A university on the eastern slopes of the Andes in rural Bolivia is providing an avenue for students to obtain professional skills and lead sustainable development in their own communities, something that was unattainable prior to its founding in 1993.



By **RACHEL SATTERLEE**

The Unidad Académica Campesina-Carmen Pampa (UAC-CP), a college offering undergraduate degrees to men and women from Bolivia's rural area, was founded by Sister Damon Nolan, a missionary Franciscan who has worked in education in the tiny Andean community of Carmen Pampa since 1980. She witnessed the lack of access to higher education, absent from most rural areas in Bolivia, and recognized that young people—especially girls—had very few opportunities to become professionals in order to help advance their own communities. Tuition and housing at universities in large cities like Bolivia's capital city of La Paz are unaffordable for young people from rural areas and access to higher education is limited, even if they have personal motivation and moral support from their families. In addition to economic obstacles, attending a university in a large city takes young people away from their traditional communities, separates them from their communities' livelihoods, and rarely offers the experience needed in order for them to return to their communities and help stimulate local development.

The UAC-CP is fulfilling this need, offering undergraduate degrees in agronomy, education, nursing, veterinary/animal science

and rural tourism. The students practice service-learning through community service projects that benefit the College itself and surrounding rural villages. Classroom studies, community outreach, research methods, production activities, the focus on peace and justice, an emphasis on gender balance, and a group of dedicated professors and administrators are all part of the College's unique curriculum that give students the footing they need to succeed after graduation.

One example of success is a 1999 Agronomy graduate named René Villca. Villca is the executive director of a honey processing association called FUNDACOM, based in the town of Coroico, near the College. FUNDACOM was founded in 2005 by a group UAC-CP graduates who continue to manage the budding enterprise. Five out of six of his current employees are UAC-CP alumni (see photo), and Villca manages the intake and processing of honey from many small, rural indigenous farmers from across the entire region. Startup funding was provided by the Horning family from Washington, D.C., and now FUNDACOM receives funding and support from FONADAL, an E.U.-supported institution that "promotes integral development

"Tuition and housing at universities in large cities like Bolivia's capital city of La Paz are unaffordable for young people from rural areas and access to higher education is limited, even if they have personal motivation and moral support from their families"

processes by financing projects prioritized by local stakeholders and beneficiaries...in the areas of economic, social, and environmental [development]." With this support, Villca's business is able to provide 98 percent of its supply of honey to the Subsidio Prenatal y Lactancia program of Bolivia, which is the



equivalent of WIC (Women, Infants and Children) food assistance in the United States. FONADAL pays FUNDACOM a market rate for the honey that they provide for free to poor families in Bolivia. The remaining two percent of their honey is sold in the general market.

When asked what FUNDACOM's role is in supporting sustainable and environmentally friendly livelihoods for rural people, Villca responds that, "We generate development that supports the protection of natural resources. Beekeeping is an activity that requires a healthy environment."

FUNDACOM provides technical support to the beekeepers that work with them, helping farmers solve problems, and giving advice about how to increase production. In this way, Villca hopes that the association can contribute "con un grano de arena [with a grain of sand], helping to fulfill the mission of College, to empower the neediest people."

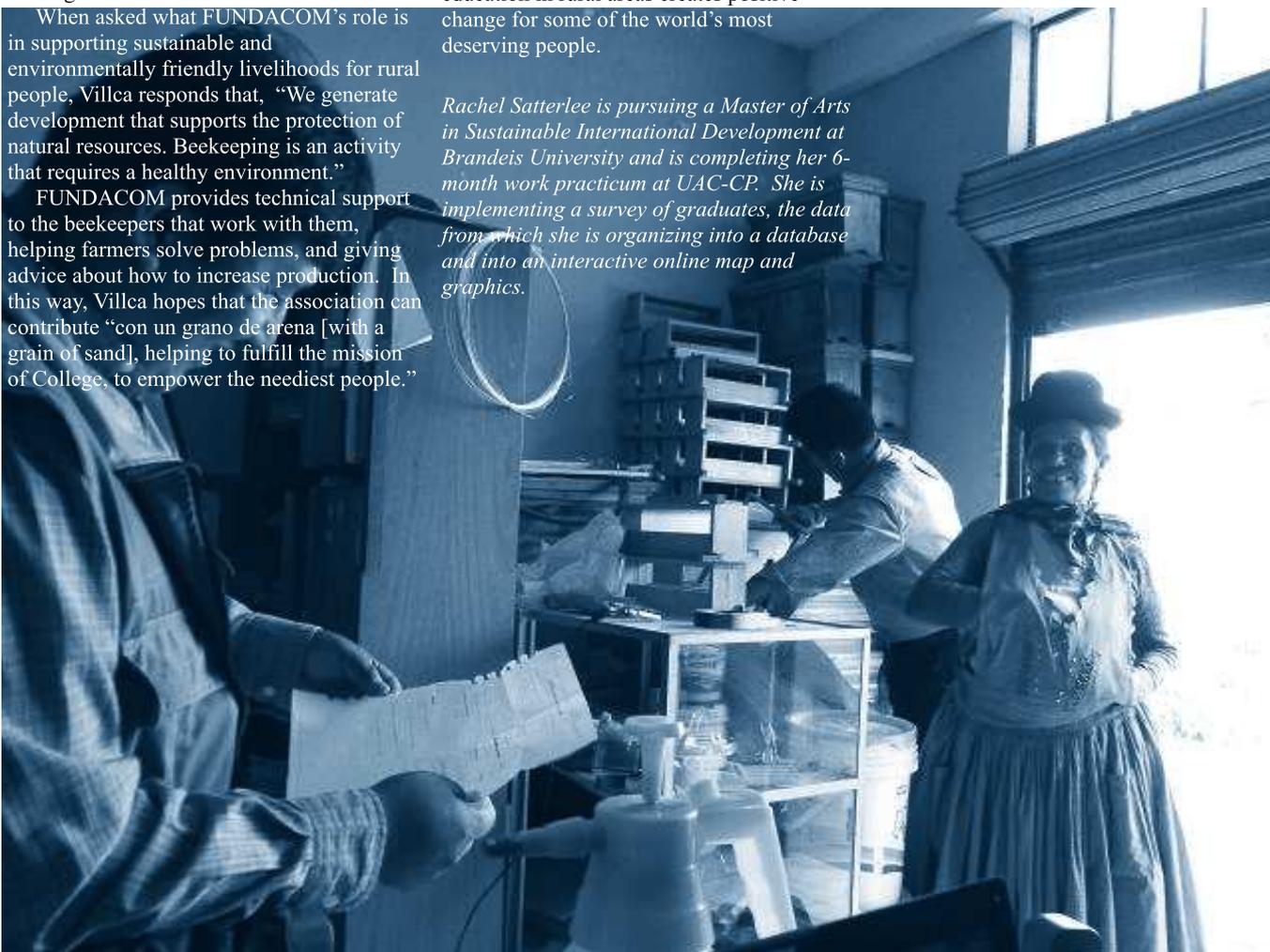
Villca has tremendous gratitude for his education and the support that he received at The Unidad Académica Campesina-Carmen Pampa. He grew up in Charazani in an indigenous Quechua family, with his four siblings, and parents who never had the opportunity to go to school. His father did not contribute to the family, and his mother earned the equivalent of less than one dollar per day. His mother encouraged her children to pursue education, and with her moral support he graduated from high school. Villca later became the first person in their family to enroll in college. With two scholarships from Catholic missionaries, he was able to pursue a degree in agronomy at the UAC-CP.

It is clear that Villca regards all of his success with much grace and appreciation, as does the FUNDACOM staff. He says that without his college education at the UAC-CP and the scholarships that he received, he could not have studied beyond high school. He knows his education has not only completely changed his role within the community, both in terms of leadership and acceptance, but also his own perception of himself and a pride in his culture and rural community. He is grateful to be able to support his wife and kids on an income that provides a living wage.

As more students enroll in degree programs at the College, and as more students graduate, there continues to be more and more inspiring stories similar to that of René Villca. And one thing will never be in doubt: education in rural areas creates positive change for some of the world's most deserving people.

Rachel Satterlee is pursuing a Master of Arts in Sustainable International Development at Brandeis University and is completing her 6-month work practicum at UAC-CP. She is implementing a survey of graduates, the data from which she is organizing into a database and into an interactive online map and graphics.

"The UAC-CP is fulfilling this need, offering undergraduate degrees in agronomy, education, nursing, veterinary/animal science and rural tourism. The students practice service-learning through community service projects that benefit the College itself and surrounding rural villages"



Argentina Paving the Way for Today's Occupy Movement



VICTORIA PEEL YATES
GSDM Argentina

"Argentineans put on a display of incredible resourcefulness and resilience as they carved out a new society from what was left of the old. Barter systems, community-run kitchens and even an alternative currency quickly rose from the ashes of the old system, while protesters took to the streets with such force that they ousted five successive presidents within two weeks"



Cacerolazo, Buenos Aires, 2001
Photo: possible futures project

Last year's "Occupy" movement was as polarizing as it was ubiquitous. From its beginnings on Wall Street, the protest spread across the world, even as far as Burundi, and was largely influenced by the events of the Arab Spring, which had taken place earlier in the year. People were protesting against the power of the so-called "1%", accused of causing the global financial crisis through reckless and irresponsible decision-making. Ordinary people across the world bore the brunt of the repercussions caused by these actions, and, in an unprecedented show of solidarity, took to the streets to voice their outrage at being left to pick up the pieces.

But for many Latin Americans, this movement, though new to many peoples around the world, couldn't have been more familiar. One could even argue that tactics and philosophies surrounding the movement drew inspiration from similar movements in Latin America, such as the occupation of factories during Argentina's economic crisis.

In 2001, economic disaster struck Argentina and transformed its economy almost overnight from being one of the region's

strongest to one of the weakest. Faced by sudden and extreme unemployment, poverty, and homelessness, ordinary Argentineans put on a display of incredible resourcefulness and resilience as they carved out a new society from what was left of the old. Barter systems, community-run kitchens and even an alternative currency quickly rose from the ashes of the old system, while protesters took to the streets with such force that they ousted five successive presidents within two weeks. Factory workers occupied their places of work out of sheer desperation, under the slogan "Occupy, Resist, Produce".

Whether the social movements in Latin America directly inspired the Occupy movement of 2011, it is hard to say, but the parallels between them are striking. They share a common enemy in the global banks, international lending institutions, and multinational corporations, who are arguably largely to blame for the crises of both 2001 and 2008. Moreover, both have sought to make revolution a part of everyday life and to challenge the status quo.

“Ten Women Who Inspire Me”

By **DANIELLE NIERENBERG**
Director, *Nourishing the Planet*

Danielle Nierenberg is the Director of the Washington D.C.-based Worldwatch Institute's Nourishing the Planet project, which highlights innovations around the world that are working to help alleviate hunger and poverty while also protecting the environment. Danielle recently travelled to more than 30 countries in Africa and Asia to meet with individuals and organizations that are driving small and big initiatives with huge impacts on the lives of the people in their communities and the world. To mark International Day of Rural Women (October 15th) and the GSDM October 2012 Inspiration issue, she describes members of the fairer sex who deserve praise and recognition.

Throughout September 2012, Worldwatch Institute celebrated the crucial role that women and youth play in ushering in the just and environmentally sustainable future that we're working hard to bring about. Even in the 21st century, women own less than 15 percent of the world's land, earn 17 percent less than men on average, and comprise two-thirds of the world's 776 million illiterate adults. In the hope to also inspire GSDM readers, I would like to highlight ten amazing women from all over the globe who have been ongoing sources of inspiration to myself, *Nourishing the Planet*, and others:

1. Nany Karanja

Nancy Karanja is a professor of soil ecology at the University of Nairobi. From 2005 to 2009, Karanja was the sub-Saharan Africa regional coordinator for Urban Harvest, an initiative to enhance urban agriculture's potential and food security in Kenya. She has led a number of studies on nutrient harvesting from urban organic waste, the reuse of urban wastewater for vegetable production, and the assessment of health risks associated with urban livestock systems.



2. Rema Nanavaty

Rema Nanavaty is General Secretary of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), the largest union of informal sector workers in India. Founded in 1972, SEWA now has 1.3 million members, including small farmers, forest workers, salt farmers, artisans, and entrepreneurs. SEWA helps its members get fair prices for their produce,

access markets and small loans, and grow enough food to feed themselves and their families. SEWA also provides micro-credit loans through its own women's bank and insurance policies, while women can learn about new farming practices and improve their reading and writing skills at its training centers



3. Anna Lappé

Anna Lappé is co-founder of the Small Planet Institute, a non-profit organization dedicated to furthering democracy and equitable development worldwide. Lappé is the co-author of *Diet for a Hot Planet: The Climate Crisis at the End of Your Fork and What You Can Do About It*. Lappé is also a founding principal of the Small Planet Fund and has for more than a decade been a key force in the growing international movement for sustainability and justice in the food chain.



4. Sue Edwards



Sue Edwards is Director of the Institute for Sustainable Development, an organization working to influence Ethiopia's governmental policies on education, agriculture, and the environment, so as to create

awareness and promote sustainable development. She has lived in Ethiopia for more than 40 years. Both Edwards and her husband Tewolde Berhan Gebre Egziabher are passionate about the role that smallholder farmers can play in creating a sustainable future for all living things, from the greatest to the smallest, from the most appealing to the most appalling.

5. Stephanie Hanson



Stephanie Hanson is the Director of Policy and Outreach at One Acre Fund. From 2006 to 2009, she covered economic and political development in Africa and Latin America for CFR.org, the website of the Council on Foreign Relations. In 2008, she won a News and Documentary Emmy for ‘Crisis Guide: Darfur’, an interactive media guide that explores the history and context of the crisis in the Darfur region of Sudan.

6. Elizabeth Katushabe

Elizabeth Katushabe is a Program Officer with the Pastoral and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa (PENHA), an international NGO led and inspired by Africans, committed to addressing issues of pastoralist concerns from a regional perspective. Katushabe has held meetings and workshops with parliamentary leaders and pastoralists in East Africa, attempting to bridge the gap between policy makers and rural communities. Katushabe has also worked with PENHA to emphasize the role that herders can play in protecting the environment, by employing practices such as rotational grazing.



7. Shirley Lewis

Shirley “Baglady” Lewis is the Founder of Baglady Productions, an organization that works with schools, individuals, and the government to put sustainable behavior into action. Her work includes writing for newspapers in the United Kingdom and Australia, magazines and in-house journals, news radio reporting and presenting for the BBC and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. She is most well-known for her original campaign to say “no” to plastic bags.



8. Sunita Narain

Sunita Narain is the Director General of the Centre for Science and Environment, a New Delhi-based public interest, research, and advocacy organization that researches and lobbies for sustainable and equitable development. Narain also heads the Society for Environmental Communications, and publishes the fortnightly science and environment magazine, Down to Earth. Her research has focused on the relationship between the environment and development, and has raised awareness about the vital need for sustainable development.



9. Marceline Ouedraogo

Marceline Ouedraogo is President of Burkina Faso’s rural women’s association, Songtaab-Yalgré, which is the first group in the country to produce and sell certified organic shea butter. When she started Songtaab-Yalgré in 1990, Ouedraogo went door to door and woman to woman, asking people to join. Because many of the women who joined the association were illiterate, Ouedraogo developed a program to teach them to read and to write. Today, the association is composed of over three thousand women in nearly a dozen villages, and has 11 centers where they collect shea nuts, or shea butter nuts. All of the profits from the sale of shea butter—and peanut oil, soap, and other products the group is now making—are distributed equally among the members.



10. Nely Rodriguez

Nely Rodriguez is a mother, farmworker, and key leader with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), a community-based farmworker organization based in the southern United States. CIW is comprised of more than 4,000 mostly Latino, Haitian, and Mayan Indian members working mainly in agriculture throughout the state of Florida. Rodriguez has been a vital part of organizing and inspiring her community to speak out against injustice in the tomato fields. She is also vocal about the hardships and sacrifices women make in the fields to put food on the table for their families while caring for and raising children.



A dedicated journey: One man's commitment to children's rights in Cambodia



By GARETH MACE
GSDM Cambodia

"We don't know when we will die, [so] I like to do as much as I can. I want to try to make a difference." The words of Nget Thy (pronounced "Tee"), Executive Director of The Cambodian Center for the Protection of Children's Rights (CCPCR), could so easily be passed off as empty platitudes by those sceptical of motives behind success in the development field. But all it takes is one meeting with Mr. Thy to see that here is a man who is most certainly not in the work of social good to further his own ego. His journey from a poor orphan up through the ranks of one of the country's longest established children's NGOs is certainly not something that he feels any need or inclination to shout from the rooftops. "If it's good for CCPCR, I'm okay [to do it]," he replied to an interview request.

CCPCR was established in 1994 with a mission to ensure that all children and youth have equal rights in society and are free from all forms of violence and exploitation. It now has active projects throughout Cambodia—projects like the Phnom Penh rehabilitation shelter for girl survivors of abuse, exploitation and trafficking—that focus on key issues like child labour, trafficking and abuse through diverse activities encompassing prevention and community awareness, as well as the rehabilitation and reintegration of those

rescued from trauma.

Thy, a dedicated husband and a father to three kids, is as kind-hearted and gracious a man as you could hope to meet. But it is his ingenuity and endless endeavour to progress his organisation that really sets him apart from his peers. Thy works seven days a week and can't remember the last time he had a holiday. "I just work—I never have [thought] about time. When I'm tired I just take a rest or eat some food," he says. Always putting his work first, he spends much of his spare time reading documents and articles to generate ideas for CCPCR.

Undoubtedly what drives and inspires Thy is the circumstances of his own childhood— orphaned at a young age, him and his elder sister experienced desperate poverty and hunger. "It was really difficult. Often we would just eat rice and not very much," he recalls. "Knowing and remembering those struggles has definitely inspired me. I want to help poor people. I want to help children get [an] education so that they can get [a] good job—when they have opportunities, they can do the same as me," he says. As a result of his influence, access to education and empowerment through vocational training are key to the CCPCR's philosophy.

Mr. Thy's own crucial opportunity came as a young adult in 1992, when he passed enrolment examinations to study at

"CCPCR was established in 1994 with a mission to ensure that all children and youth have equal rights in society and are free from all forms of violence and exploitation. It now has active projects throughout Cambodia—projects like the Phnom Penh rehabilitation shelter for girl survivors of abuse, exploitation and trafficking—that focus on key issues like child labour, trafficking and abuse through diverse activities encompassing prevention and community awareness, as well as the rehabilitation and reintegration of those rescued from trauma"



Cambodia's Prek Leap National College of Agriculture. "It was so great for me!" he enthuses with an infectious smile as he remembers the opportunity that a move to the capital Phnom Penh presented for him. Yet, as he would quickly learn, this next chapter would not be without its challenges. With no close family or any friends in the city he hoped to find shelter at a Pagoda—a Hindu or Buddhist temple or sacred, many-tiered building characteristic of India, Cambodia and countries of the Far East. Unfortunately, two residences turned him away because he was a stranger. This distrust was symptomatic of the time when Cambodia was dominated by the Pol Pot regime—Pol Pot was a Cambodian Maoist revolutionary who led the oppressive Khmer Rouge from 1963 until his death in 1998 that was responsible for the death of more than two million Cambodian people (21 per cent of the population).

Fortunately, Thy eventually found a home at a Pagoda close to the University, where he lived with other students and assisted the monks with alms collecting, cooking and house work in return for food and lodgings. With the day sometimes starting as early as 4.30 a.m., this experience was exhausting. But Thy worked hard as he was grateful for the opportunity and he understood the importance of contributing to the spiritual pursuits of the resident monks.

Through his work, Thy made a good impression on everyone he met and soon was offered a leadership position in a new orphanage set-up by a wealthy foreigner. "I was so lucky! They gave me \$50 per month, which was a lot for me at the time. I would buy vegetables and cook with them," he remembers. "This job was so important for me. I learned many things like how to be more independent and responsible through writing reports and things like that. This was when I realised I wanted to work for a community organisation," he says.

Following his graduation from Prek Leap—and after a handful of low paid stopgap jobs—it wasn't long before Thy found himself as an employee of the recently established CCPCR. He earned himself a contract as a case investigator in 1996 and was promoted to reintegration officer in 1997, before landing the role of Project Manager in Kampong Cham Province in 1999 and Sihanouk Ville two years later. The organisation had become the ideal home for this empathetic and hard-working young man.

His progress and ability would next take him to the Philippines. Following CCPCR's recommendation, he was awarded a scholarship to study at South East Asia Rural Social Leadership Institute within Seasolin Xavier University in Cagayan De Oro City that gave him the opportunity to leave his home country for the first time in his life to earn a Diploma in Social Development and Leadership. He subsequently re-joined the CCPCR in 2004, became its Deputy Director in 2007 and completed his meteoric rise three years later by becoming the top man in the organization—the Executive Director.

Regrettably, he did not have the luxury of basking in this proud achievement as the organisation was in the midst of one of the most testing financial situations it had ever known. "Because of the economic crisis, funding became very limited around that time and I had to work so hard to reform and reorganise to allow us to continue our work. It was very difficult," he says.

Even now, funding is an issue rarely off the agenda for long and it can cause anxiety: "When things are going well and I see the direct results of our work and the faces of the children we are helping... I love my job so much. Other times it's just so stressful," says Thy.

So what does Thy hope the organisation can achieve while he is at the helm? "Oh so much!" he smiles again. "I would really like us to be more [financially] secure. To do this, it would be great if we could own our own shelters, instead of renting them, and to have our own income-generating business, so we don't have to rely on the donors so much," he dreams.

Mr. Thy's route from humble beginnings to great successes have not been dominated by personal ambition, but have been driven by a heartfelt desire to make a difference to the people of his country. He is a truly inspirational figure, whose dedicated journey and unwavering commitment to children's rights in Cambodia shines a light of hope where the darkness of poverty and justice dominates.

Gareth Mace is the Cambodia country-correspondent for GSDM. He is also a Program Coordinator with Village Focus International, an organisation that partners with CCPCR on the Phnom Penh rehabilitation shelter project. Photos: CCPCR Facebook page.

"Mr. Thy's route from humble beginnings to great successes have not been dominated by personal ambition, but have been driven by a heartfelt desire to make a difference to the people of his country. He is a truly inspirational figure, whose dedicated journey and unwavering commitment to children's rights in Cambodia shines a light of hope where the darkness of poverty and justice dominates"



REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE

新加坡共和国

Republik Singapura

சிங்கப்பூர் குடியரசு



Photo: TIME

By **CAROLYNN LOOK**
GSDM Editorial Assistant

There is a lot more to this tiny country than the fame it receives for its foreign investment, spicy noodles and strict ‘no chewing gum’ policies. The history of Singapore is in fact very unique for a former British colony. It demonstrates a story of success against all odds—political, social and agricultural. And although it is a small country, it is now known as one of the Four Asian Tigers, having one of the biggest trading ports in the world. But how did this Tiger get its roar?

Little is known about Singapore before being colonized. Formerly known as Temasek (“Sea City” in old Javanese), it was part of various local empires and experienced its rise under the Sultanate of Malacca in the 15th century, before it came under the influence of the Malay Sultanate of Johor in 1511. As of the 14th century, it was also known as Singapura (meaning “Lion City” in Sanskrit), based on a legend that told of Srivijayan Prince Sang Nila Utama visiting the island in 1299 and mistaking an unknown animal for a lion.

The commonly viewed ‘founder’ of the nation was Sir Stamford Raffles, who established a British port on the island in 1819 with permission from the Sultanate of Johor. It became part of the British Straits Settlement in 1826 and, unlike its colonized neighbour Malaya, whose people felt more emotional attachment towards the homeland, Singapore had more loyalties to Britain. Prior to Raffles’ arrival there were no more than 1,000 people on the island, which soon became populated by immigrants from all

across the region, united by British rule. Both Malaya and Singapore, however, experienced an urged demand for independence during the Japanese occupation in World War II. In the 1950s, when the war was over, Singapore found itself with high levels of deprivation and unemployment. The British tried to improve the situation by slowly increasing local representation in government, but with the formation of opposing parties and Britain’s efforts to combat communism, riots increased as students of Chinese-funded schools felt discriminated against. Singaporean PM David Marshall travelled to London to demand complete independence, but was turned down with the words “If I give you independence, it may fall into the hands of the communists.” He was devastated and resigned from his position.

At the same time, Malaya next door had already achieved independence under the powerful Prime Minister known as “The Tunku”. The two countries’ histories and economies were deeply interwoven and many Malays were already living in Singapore. Britain acknowledged that a political merger between these two countries would help crush communism in Singapore and allowed them to declare independence in 1963 to merge with the Federation of Malaysia. Under this agreement Singaporeans still had some autonomy and did not automatically become Malaysian. Malaysians saw the merger as an economic benefit, but were concerned that the racial ratio would be off-balance with too many Chinese. Sadly, only two years after the merger, Singapore was expelled

from the Federation. Singapore had expected equality for all and saw itself as a partner, not a component state, while Malays wanted to retain special privileges. Malaysian leaders did not want to compromise their superiority and when the 1964 elections won a seat for a Singaporean party “the Tunku” became afraid. Racial tensions were rising and the economic benefits did not materialize, so he expelled Singapore because it was “the only way to maintain peace and harmony in Malaysia.”

Lee Kuan Yew, the leader of Singapore at the time, had been a faithful believer of the merger and was devastated by the separation. He had always believed that Singapore could not survive on its own, but he was determined to prove himself wrong. He said of his newly born nation “Some countries are born independent...we had it thrust upon us.” How did this small country with few resources survive against all odds? After its dramatic break-up with Malaysia, the leading party, People’s Action Party (PAP), made an effort to unite national identity by accepting the country’s colonial past. This acceptance, rather than the despising that is usually felt by formerly colonized countries, made it particularly tolerable for foreign investors, who saw that Singapore valued stability. This is something that is unique to Singapore’s history as not all former colonies had as strong of a cultural tie to Britain as Singapore did at its time of independence.

On a macro-economic level, Singapore has become hugely successful. However, its GDP doesn’t reflect the inequalities that the

Country Profile | Singapore

country's wealth rests upon. Although Singapore is one of the world's most expensive cities, it still fails to implement a minimum wage policy, forcing low-wage immigrants to work several jobs in unfavorable conditions to make ends meet. Furthermore, the Indonesia-Malaysia-Singapore Growth Triangle, established in

1990, has encouraged this exchange of low-wage immigrants (mostly female, informal labour, with very few rights) to work in Singapore's industries and power the wealth of a few. The population continuously criticizes the government for allowing the income gap between the rich and the poor to widen, while the high level of industrial

activity is taking its toll on the environment. Singapore now faces the challenge of promoting more socially and environmentally sustainable development policies before the government loses its credibility, which could end the PAP's almost five decade reign.



KEY INDICATORS



Capital: Singapore

Population: 5.4 million

Area: 697 sq km

Geography: Made up of 63 islands at the southern tip of the Malayan Peninsula. Tropical, humid climate with very little arable land and few natural resources.

Languages: Mandarin (official) 35%, English (official) 23%, Malay (official) 14.1%, Hokkien 11.4%, Cantonese 5.7%, Teochew 4.9%,

Tamil (official) 3.2%, other Chinese dialects 1.8%, other 0.9%
Ethnic groups: Chinese 76.8%, Malay 13.9%, Indian 7.9%, other 1.4%

Religion: Buddhist 42.5%, Muslim 14.9%, Taoist 8.5%, Hindu 4%, Catholic 4.8%, other Christian 9.8%, other 0.7%, none 14.8%

Human Development Index: 0.866; rank 26 out of 187

EDUCATION

- 20% of national budget goes to education spending
- described as "world-leading"
- compulsory primary school
- adult literacy 92.5% (women 88.6%)

ROLE OF WOMEN

- challenge of balancing traditional with modern-day roles
- 23.4% women in national parliament
- 42% of workforce, though this is less based on gender discrimination than on lower academic qualifications

FREEDOM

- enforces mandatory death penalty for drug trafficking and homicide, although the government is moving towards abolishing it

ECONOMY

- free-market economy
- relies heavily on exports, particularly in consumer electronics, information technology products, pharmaceuticals, and on a growing financial services sector
- GDP Growth: 4.9% (2011)
- GDP composition by sector: 0% agriculture, 26.6% industry, 73.4% services

ENVIRONMENT

- industrial pollution
- over 85% of coral reefs face wipe-out due to high coastal industrial activity
- limited natural freshwater resources
- limited land availability presents waste disposal problems

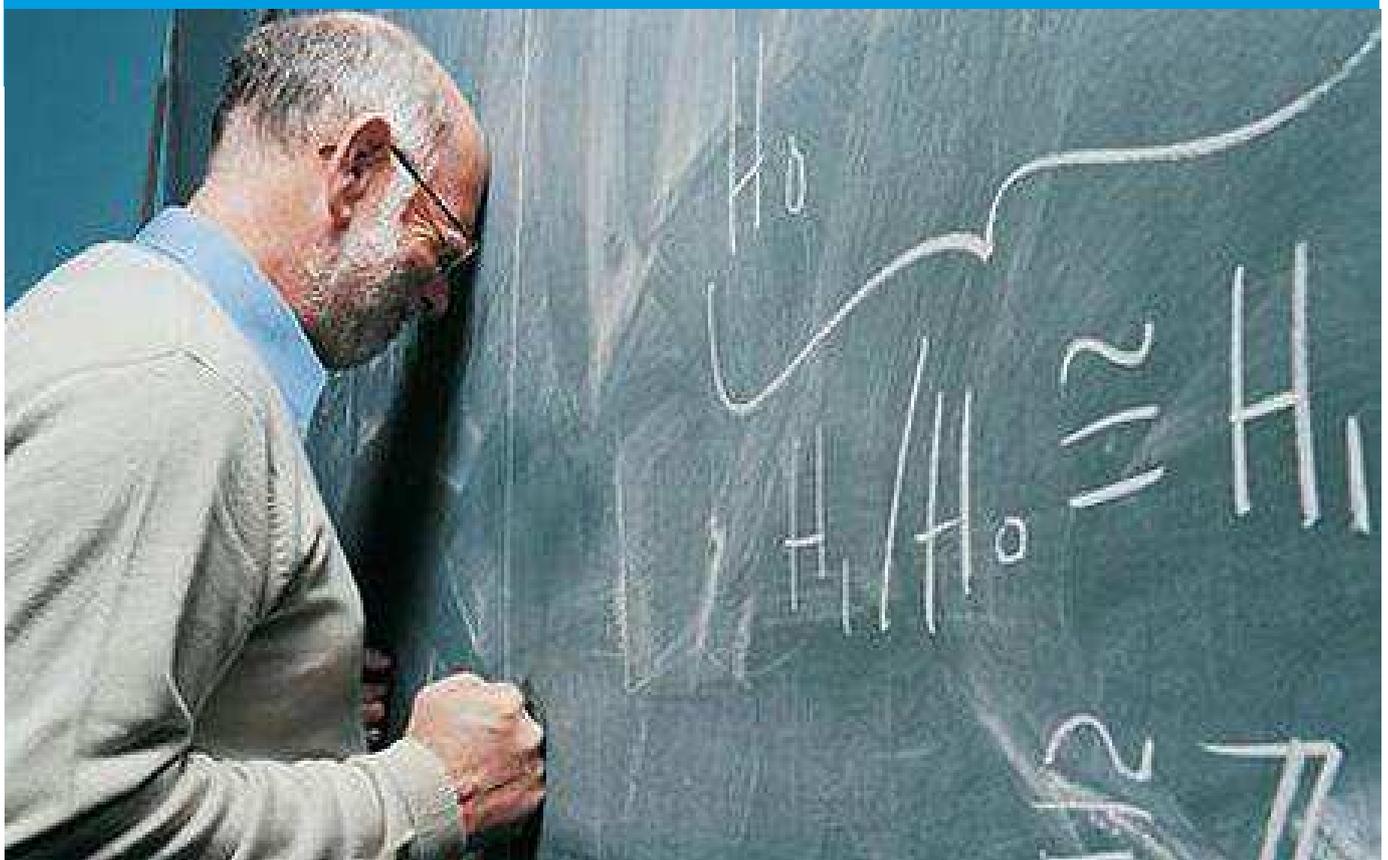


Improving education means investing in educators

You can supply a student with the best texts, the best infrastructure and the best materials, but if the right person isn't in place to take all of these resources and turn them into something educational, there is no point in investing in education at all.



NOAH MARWIL
GSDM Latin America



This Quarter's Tip

Teachers are the linchpins that dictate whether our children lead successful lives.

Improving school teacher quality is an effective and cost efficient way of improving education for thousands of students living in the developing world and it can be achieved by providing teacher training, creating local teacher networks, instructing teachers on how to solicit additional classroom materials from their government and donors and helping to alleviate other stressors on

teachers (i.e. transportation, safety, comfort).

The Problem

As opposed to what many believe, deficits in education are largely caused by an inefficiency of service delivery rather than a lack of interest in education. The average citizen wants to send their child to school, as they correlate higher education with more lucrative job opportunities. However, it is the lack of materials, quality and accessible schools and well-trained teachers that make school a feckless

endeavor and, in turn, discourage parents from making their child's education a family priority.

Though in many developing countries jobs are hard to come by, well-trained, motivated teachers are still in high demand. Teacher training programs are often expensive, time consuming and hard to come by. Most teacher training facilities are located in larger metropolitan areas, making it difficult for non-city dwellers to attend classes. As a result, rural villages are often given no choice but to rely upon trained

urbanites to educate their children. However, since rural conditions are often quite rugged and unforgiving, many teachers either refuse rural assignments or simply do not show up. The government is subsequently forced to hire poorly trained teachers to compensate for the scarcity of qualified educators. As stated in the Handbook on the Economics of Education, only 62% and 69% of primary school teachers in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, respectively, are considered to be trained.

The Theory of Change

A child's educational outcome is most strongly impacted by the quality of his/her teachers and, therefore, focusing on improving teacher quality will ultimately improve the quality of education.

There are two factors most affecting teacher quality—training and motivation...or lack thereof. Teacher training includes in-service training as well as centralized workshops to improve teachers' classroom management, lesson planning and resource acquisition (i.e. how to solicit materials and equipment from government). In addition, sharpening math and literacy skills—the two academic abilities that translate most closely into essential life skills—will be vital when looking to make the largest gains in education as a cornerstone of development.

In addition to skills training, it is important for teachers to know how to access educational materials for their students to be used both for in-classroom and at home. For example, the ability to petition a government for more texts or classroom furniture can greatly impact a student's classrooms experience. Furthermore, imparting information to students regarding where they can check out a library book or where to go for remedial classes empowers them to take control of their own education.

Equally as important as training a teacher is motivating a teacher. As mentioned above, teachers are often assigned to work in remote, rural villages with run down infrastructure and uneducated, sometimes antagonistic adult populations. Their pay is meager and often not remunerated in a timely manner. It is therefore extremely difficult to ensure not only that a teacher gives their full attention to their job, but also shows up for work.

There are a number of methods of increasing teacher motivation that are both sustainable and do not require

increased educational funding. 1) Creating a network for teachers in different villages to learn from each other and mentor one another can create a much-needed support system for teachers who feel lost, scared or frustrated. It also provides a venue to share experiences or new teaching methodologies that some may have picked up in training session. 2) Improving sanitation infrastructure is relatively inexpensive and highly effective in increasing female teachers attendance (See Room to Read's The Relationship between School Infrastructure and Educational outcomes). Not providing a safe, comfortable place to go to the bathroom or change sanitary products during their menstruation period can lead to high teacher absentee rates. 3) Finally, holding the teachers accountable for their work can be an incredible motivator. Having a parent association check in on classes during the school day and penalize and/or reward teachers based on their in-classroom presence, classroom management (i.e. students are in seats learning as opposed to running amuck outside) and test scores and grades could light a fire that some developing world teachers so desperately need. As a rule, people who know they are being watched tend to alter their behavior accordingly. Evidence of Efficacy

In December 2010 the Journal of Education for International Development published a paper written by Ann Emerson and colleagues from the American Institutes for Research (AIR) entitled Teacher Peer Learning Groups: Contributing factors to cluster sustainability that takes a look at the benefits of teacher peer learning groups. The study suggests that taking advantage of teacher networks and establishing regular group meetings increases a teacher's sense of stability, community, clarity of purpose, agency and competency.

Camfed, an organization dedicated to the education and empowerment of women in the developing world, organizes many committees at a variety of different levels—some are high-level and include Ministry of Education staff; others are very localized and include only parents of students—which has helped in their aim to ensure that community voices are heard. In their report titled Camfed Governance: Accounting to the Girl, they demonstrate the child protective powers of community involvement and teacher

"A child's educational outcome is most strongly impacted by the quality of his/her teachers and, therefore, focusing on improving teacher quality will ultimately improve the quality of education"

accountability.

The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) has done studies on interventions related to literacy and teacher training. In their paper titled A Better Way to Teach Children to Read?, teachers trained in a new type of literacy curriculum produced students who were more literate and read more. Also, in the paper Pay Based on Student Performance on Tests, teachers whose pay was based on student performance increased their students' learning. The same was also true if they were offered prizes for high test scores.

Conclusion

Investing in teachers is a proven method to affect educational results. Given the proper support and training, one teacher has the ability to affect the lives of hundreds of children. You can supply a student with the best texts, the best infrastructure and the best materials, but if the right person isn't in place to take all of these resources and turn them into something educational, there is no point in investing in education at all.

Can family work as a human rights defender in the developing world?

Merely saying that women are half the sky is not enough, it's time to realize their vast space in that sky and happily accept and support their existence, movement and progress towards equality and prosperity.



By KOMAL POUDEL
Guest contributor

When we are talking about an scarcity of institutional setups to defend human rights in the developing world, we do not often pay that much attention to one institution that could possibly do this job: the family.

The developed developing dichotomy can be felt in areas of human rights promotion as many developing countries do not have sufficient and effective mechanisms to ensure human rights to their citizens. Whereas, in contrast, developed nations seem to have mechanisms that ensure their citizen's rights and welfare needs. In short, the government is the protector and provider in the developed world, but that job belongs to the family in much of the developing world. As many of us have our own personal experiences as well, the family works as a decision maker, opportunity creator, financial regulator, and welfare provider in our part of the world.

So far so good, but the problem begins when that institution discriminates among its members. Often women members of the family are deprived of financial and property rights and offered with meagre welfare support. Decision making rights for women are rare and due to discrimination and lack of opportunities, their talents remain untapped and their capabilities unrealized. Still today millions of women suffer in different corners of the world, in the name of religion, for the sake of tradition and superstition and most of the time to fulfill masculine needs.

When it comes to gender discrimination and suppression, I remember a sad event in Nepal which I witnessed just after the announcement of democracy in 1990. In order to mark the achievement, a big rally was organized in the district headquarters I was working in. Like many other, a local woman also attended the event, carrying a party flat in her hands. However, in the evening, her both hands were chopped off by her husband for attending a political rally.

Dr. Bruce, a British doctor, working in the Western Regional Hospital in Pokhara attempted to cure her hands, but it was too late. Consequently, she lost her both hands. This, however, is just one of extreme examples of women suppression we see everyday in many parts of the developing world.

Recently, I was listening to a BBC interview of a Pakistani woman whose nose had been chopped off by her husband, but due to social and cultural pressure she had been living with that man for more than 30 years, all the time having to cover her nose. On the other hand, we do frequently hear about cases of honor killings, stoning, dowry demands and acid attacks in many, primarily, muslim countries.

Banning girls and women from participating in social events, traveling, visiting relatives and barring their right to choose their life partner independently seem to be pervasive even in what many perceive as liberal societies in the south. Women rights violations are not sole characteristics of developing societies

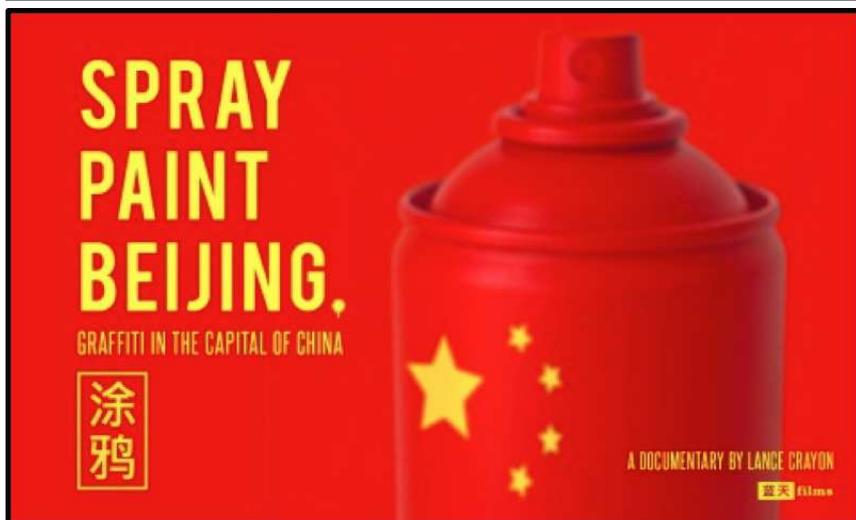
though. While living and working in the West, I do have witnessed different forms of gender discrimination in families and work places.

Discrimination and early marriage seem to be closely interlinked. As girls are deprived of education and cannot stand on their own feet, the society believes the only one way to make life easier for girls is marriage. There is no guarantee that life is comfortable after marriage because if a man wants to marry second wife, he can leave first wife with children. There are numerous women with children on the streets of developing countries, who were abandoned by men.

So when we see the family as a defender of human rights and provider of basic welfare, we need to look at the family authority, that in many cases are men. So we have to start working with them, educating them, convincing them, and warning them. They to recognize that their constructive role can result in a perfect family. They have the privilege of getting education, employment and also have property rights, so their commitment and readiness to support women is crucial. It's time to genuinely realize that a family, a society and a nation with powerless or disempowered women is not able to make significant progress in economic, social and political terms. Merely saying that women are half the sky is not enough, it's time to realize their vast space in that sky and happily accept and support their existence, movement and progress towards equality and prosperity.

Graffiti on the Great Wall

The Hidden Street Art Culture of Beijing



By **CAROLYNN LOOK**
Editorial Assistant

Beijing, China. Hundreds of buildings tower over the people that bustle between them every day. Some get demolished, some get rebuilt, some just get a fresh layer of paint. But what strikes you as you walk through this eclectic monster of a city is that none of its buildings are covered in tags or graffiti as they are in other metropolises. Or so you would think on first sight.

Coming from the capitol of street art in Berlin, I was astonished to see that Beijing is so “clean”. But moving away from the centre and beyond the 2nd Ring Road, graffiti starts popping up in various neighbourhoods, often with local tag artists claiming a certain territory or mobile spray-painted images immortalised (until removed) on the sides of public buses. The street art culture in Beijing is in fact a growing sphere of artistic expression: hidden, yet increasingly powerful.

The phenomenon is not as new as it first appears. According to the 2005 China Heritage Newsletter by the Australian National University (ANU), a 2004 archaeological project revealed that graffiti on the Great Wall was already popular in the 16th century, when “soldiers’ wives decorated parts of the wall with images of clouds, lotus blossoms and ‘fluffy balls’ (xiuqiu), ‘symbols of

peace and love’.” Today, graffiti has come back with renewed strength, and to fulfil quite a different purpose.

In the past 17 years, graffiti has become an inspiring field of dialogue between the public and the central Chinese government. Beijing-based artist Zhang Dali opened the city up to street art in 1995, after spending several years in self-exile in Italy, where he became familiar with the techniques of graffiti and its ability to arouse spontaneous communication. Upon returning to Beijing, he started by spraying in the hidden side streets and underpasses of a city that seemed more like a gigantic construction site. Later he left his mark on old, run-down buildings scheduled for demolition, claiming back the space that had once been important to people living there. His symbol was his spray-painted profile, appearing like a ghost in alleyways and creating a mysterious presence, as well as his tag “AK-47”. Several days after spraying for the first time on an overpass in Beijing, Zhang walked by and saw that someone had written underneath “What the hell are you doing? Who are you?” He took a picture of it and titled it “Dialogue”.

Although it wasn’t until three years after Zhang started spraying that he actually started making a stir, the

"The street art culture in Beijing is in fact a growing sphere of artistic expression: hidden, yet increasingly powerful"



effect was that he created a dialogue that soon involved the whole city. In 1998, several cultural magazines began discussing the cultural significance of graffiti: whether it could be considered art, its coexistence with urban development, and what the social role of the artist is. In light of the debate, Zhang even gave up his anonymity to join in, and—although he was met with hostility by the press, who characterized him as a vandal—he used the chance to communicate with the Beijing public.

Little did he know that he started something that would soon transform the entire city. In the years leading up to the 2008 Olympics the government gave yet another push for rapid modernisation and, with that, destroyed a lot of the older traditional buildings to make way for new ones. The Chinese character *chai* was one that soon permeated traditional hutongs all over the city. It warned people that their homes, schools, work-places and lifestyles would soon be ‘demolished’, and replaced with show-offish skyscrapers, hotels and restaurants to impress and please foreigners. But this did not quiet the dialogue that had been created—far from it. When the Central Arts Academy was relocated because of the city’s renewal policies, its students decided to go around the city and paste the *chai* character on the buildings they didn’t like. This method of using official discourse as a method of resistance created a symbolic terrain for residents to partake in the moulding of their city. Today, graffiti is a trend that is on the brink of exploding in China. But the

road has been bumpy, often met with mixed reactions by officials. Artists watch in dismay as the government paints over some of the oldest graffiti walls in Beijing to hide their creativity under a thick layer of grey. Some get arrested and put in prison for several days. Many feel that the government doesn’t care about the “aesthetic pollution” that is sometimes created by graffiti, but that they only care about what the graffiti is trying to express. But mostly the officials simply don’t know what to make of it. Street artist Zyko—speaking in a March 2012 documentary *Spray Paint Beijing*—says that the people, on the other hand, are always very curious about what he is doing. They stand by watching, smoking and drinking, interested in his message.

All in all there are only about 30 street artists in Beijing, of which less than half is regularly active. This is quite a low number for a metropolis, but their works have had a great impact, if only to get observers to question their role in producing and reproducing the city they live in. Graffiti is impossible to ignore. It is always there on the opposite wall when you go through the door in the morning, or in the underpass when you’re walking to school. It can be a big detailed mural, or a scribbled tag. No matter the form, it’s impossible not to listen to its message, even if one does not agree with it. In many ways, graffiti in Beijing has been less a criticism towards the government than towards the passivity of the public. It has forced them to literally open their eyes.

The significance of street art in China is two-fold. Firstly, it is a manifestation of creativity and originality in a country that is criticized for its sole ability to replicate and mass-produce. Many say that the lacking element in the Chinese economy is creativity, but perhaps they have been selecting entrepreneurs from the wrong places. The movement proves that Chinese people are capable of thinking outside the box, but the ones who end up in high positions are the ones who conveniently think inside of it. Sadly, these are the ones who get to decide the fate of the city.

Secondly, the intricate platform for dialogue that street art has created counters the West’s overly radicalized views of repression in China. It is a form of resistance specifically

"If art has the ability of transforming and inspiring society, this must surely be one of its greatest moments"

contextualized in Chinese culture, using indirect protest, irony and allusion to convey a message, while Western movements use ‘louder’, more black and white methods such as enemy-targeting and solution-finding, which don’t work in China. The roles of individual actors are more ambiguous and less dramatized than a Western lens may lead us to believe. One could argue that repression of street artists is stronger in the West: A recent article published in *The Huffington Post* was titled “‘Beijing Was More Open-Minded’: Street Artists Speak Out Against London’s Olympic Clean Up”. The fact that, in China, graffiti has not led to censorship, but rather to an alternative form of communication is worthy of recognition.

The scene is not only growing in Beijing: The rest of China has taken out its spray cans too. Shanghai is quite the hotspot for famous street artists, even featuring works by renowned Portuguese street artist Alexandre Farto that goes by the alias Vhils. Chongqing—a major city in Southwest China and one of five state capitals—has one of the longest graffiti walls in the world, stretching across 1.25km. *Spray Paint Beijing* a great resource for learning more about this artistic movement that is on the verge of exploding.

If art has the ability of transforming and inspiring society, this must surely be one of its greatest moments.

Rural women in Bangladesh: the key to food security and nutrition



By **DEBORA DIO DIO**
GSDM special correspondent
Food Sovereignty and Rural Livelihoods

The month of October marks International Day of Rural Women (October 15) and World Food Day (October 16), an opportunity for the international community to celebrate the bold leadership and outstanding contributions of rural women around the world towards reducing hunger and undernutrition. The International Day of Rural Women recognizes the critical role and contribution of rural women, including indigenous women, in enhancing agricultural and rural development, improving food security and eradicating rural poverty. This International Day was established by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2007, while World Food Day was established by the Food and Agricultural Organisation's Member Countries at the Organization's 20th General Conference in November 1979.

Rural women play a critical role in meeting the food and nutrition needs of their households and communities, and they are key to the success of emergency and development programmes. The United Nations' Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that "Rural women have the potential to improve the well-being of entire societies if given equal access to resources and set free from the discrimination and exploitation that hold them back. Countries where women lack land ownership rights or access to credit have significantly more malnourished children. By empowering rural women we could end the hidden development tragedy of stunting, which affects almost 200 million children worldwide". Despite impressive reductions in the percentage

of the population living below the poverty line, 925 million hungry people are still desperately poor and consume less than the minimum daily recommended food intake (FAO, 2010). Under-nutrition among pregnant women in developing countries leads to 1 out of 6 infants born with low birth weight, and poor nutrition plays a role in at least half of the 10.9 million child deaths each year (2012 World Hunger). Climate change will also pose further risks for the ultra poor, accelerating hunger and increasing the risk of undernutrition and food insecurity.

The case of Bangladesh is particularly significant. Bangladesh ranks 129 among 169 countries in the 2010 Human Development Index, and 116 among 169 countries in the Gender Inequality Index (GDI). A joint assessment of Household Food Security and Nutrition conducted in 2009 by WFP and partners reported that nearly 40 percent of female-headed households are estimated to be food insecure compared to 24 percent of male-headed households. Inequality and discrimination against women continue to have significant impacts on the efforts to reduce poverty. The proportion of ultra poor (intake of 1,600 k.cal/person/day) and extreme poor (intake of 1,805 k.cal/person/day) is higher for female-headed households than male-headed ones.

The challenges. Rural women and girls make up a quarter of the global population, yet they routinely figure at the bottom of every economic, social and political indicator, from income, education and health to participation in

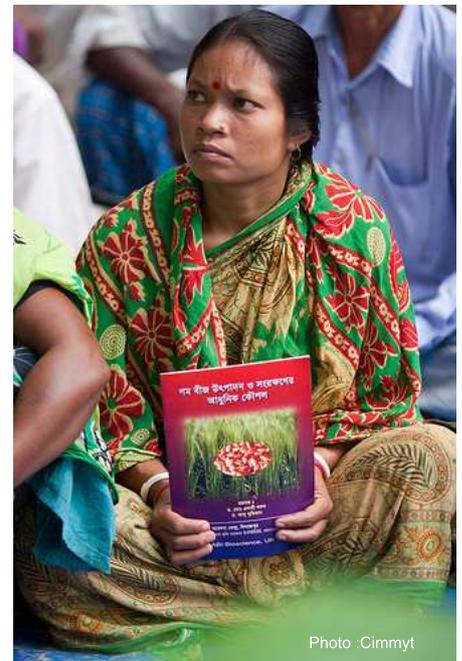


Photo :Cimmyt

"Despite impressive gains over the past two decades, rural women in Bangladesh remain particularly vulnerable to food insecurity and undernutrition"

decision-making. In most parts of the developing world rural women participate in crop production and livestock care, provide food, water and fuel for their families, and engage in off-farm activities to diversify their families' livelihoods. In addition, they carry out vital functions in caring for children, older persons and the sick.

Despite impressive gains over the past two decades, rural women in Bangladesh remain particularly vulnerable to food insecurity and undernutrition. They face discrimination in accessing assets and resources and are more likely to be involved in unpaid family-related work or in low-paid work. Rural women are also at higher risk of being subjected to violence, with far less access to redress for the human rights violations they suffer. Due to social restrictions, they face additional barriers in generating income and are more vulnerable than men to the consequences of natural disasters. Low status within the household and cultural practices associated with childbirth and intra-family food distribution lead to gender discrimination in the allocation of food especially for adolescent girls, and pregnant and lactating women. The high prevalence of early marriage and undernutrition in mothers and adolescent girls contributes to the cycle of undernutrition where neonatal deaths account for two-thirds of all infant deaths. An estimated 30% of adult Bangladeshi mothers are chronically malnourished, and at least 39% of women suffer from anaemia during pregnancy.

Michelle Bachelet, the Executive Director of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women- UN Women, stated that no enduring solution to the major global challenges – from climate change to political and economic instability – can be solved without the full empowerment and participation of women across the world. Nevertheless, rural women continue to face considerable social and economic hardship in accessing assets and resources, such as, credit and agricultural tools.

The solutions. Breaking the cycle of hunger and poverty at its roots begins with women, because in situations of desperate poverty, access to food is power. This is the reason why the United Nations with the major players of food and nutrition security, especially the World Food Programme, prioritizes women and works in innovative ways to ensure that rural women are empowered. Empowering rural women is critical to

the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and to do so development partners implement a wide range of community-based interventions that support women. If women's ability to act as economic agents of change in the household can be strengthened, and their decision-making authority to use resources to the family's optimal benefit can be enhanced, women are able to improve and sustain the food security of their family members, and potentially the nutritional status too. Empowering women with the resources to help lift their households and communities out of poverty can make significant impacts on Bangladesh's efforts to reduce food insecurity and undernutrition.

"Breaking the cycle of hunger and poverty at its roots begins with women, because in situations of desperate poverty, access to food is power"

The Government of Bangladesh is committed to attaining the Millennium Development Goal 3 to promote gender equality and empower women. The Government acknowledges that inclusion and empowerment of women are key thrust areas for improving the long-term food security and nutrition situation of ultra poor households, and for the development of Bangladesh overall. Gender disparities continue to place constraints on development and the failure to guarantee equal participation of women in the socio-economic development is a price that Bangladesh cannot afford to pay. The exclusion or marginalization of women and food and nutrition security not only reduces opportunities for growth, stability and cooperation, but it also reduces productivity, and economic benefits for the local communities are put at risk to present and future generations. Since the country's independence in 1971, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA) and its corresponding representation through the Department of Women at district and lower levels have

been playing a key role in promoting gender equality and women's rights in Bangladesh. The present Awami League-led Government has promised to restore women's rights to inheritance and to end discriminatory laws by implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform of Action (BPFA). In the last few years, the Government has strengthened its commitment to equality between women and men with the National Policy for Women's Advancement (first formulated in 1997, and last revised in 2008) and more recently with the passing of the long-awaited Domestic Violence Bill (October 2010). Gender considerations are a core element of the National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction II (2009-2011) with special emphasis on women's contribution to the country's economic development, and are incorporated in Vision 2021 which presents a specific commitment to mainstreaming gender concerns in all policies and to promoting gender equality in all aspects of society. With the objective to leverage women's role as decision makers, the Government of Bangladesh has committed to advocating for changes in social attitudes and ensuring women's greater representation in all aspects of decision-making.

Women are a pivotal force behind achieving a food secure world. The complementarities and synergies between increasing women's access and control of livelihoods and household food and nutrition security are multiple. For instance, enhancing women's access to food security and nutrition interventions has a direct impact on access to food and dietary improvement for the entire household due to women's multiple role of producers of food, managers of natural resources, income earners, and caretakers. Therefore, increasing knowledge and resources in women's hands leads to gains for rural women, their children and family. Through employment generation, rural women enjoy greater participation in household decision-making, gain enhanced status in the family and community, and their mobility and community participation also increase. Because women's food security and nutrition is a life cycle issue, when food security and nutrition interventions are targeted at women they can make an enormous difference on the reduction of undernutrition, maternal and neonatal mortality rates, improvement of dietary choices, hygiene awareness and practices, and generally higher

"The exclusion or marginalization of women and food and nutrition security not only reduces opportunities for growth, stability and cooperation, but it also reduces productivity, and economic benefits for the local communities are put at risk to present and future generations"

productivity at home and work, thus contributing to the prosperity of the society as a whole.

Michelle Bachelet of UN Women highlighted that providing women farmers with equal access to resources would result in 100 to 150 million fewer hungry people, while ensuring that they have income, land rights and credit would mean fewer malnourished children. Higher levels of gender equality correlate positively with higher levels of per capita gross national product. Socially prescribed roles continue to limit women's access to economic resources such as capital, skills, and marketing know-how, at both national and local level. These same social norms limit women's participation in decision making processes that affect their lives, including on food security and nutrition.

United Nations agencies and development partners can support

Governments around the world by creating an enabling environment for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in addressing food and nutrition challenges. The UN system can support to mobilise additional resources and promote and protect women's rights; eradicate the persistent burden of poverty on rural women and develop women's capacity through health and nutrition care. Furthermore, UN agencies and other development partners can support Governments in capacity building objectives, by fostering exchange of knowledge and expertise, and helping coordinate and leverage efforts to promote and sustain the mainstreaming of food security and nutrition issues in national plans, policies and budgets. By investing more in women, we amplify benefits across families and generations.

"The health of women is a crucial factor in the health of children, but gender discrimination leaves women particularly vulnerable to disease and death"

UNICEF Bangladesh



Helena Lutege: A female entrepreneur transforming the lives of thousands in Tanzania

Beginning as an individual small lender with no formal background in banking and finance, and starting only with five clients, the venture has become a full fledged microfinance institution now.



By MARYNAMUSOKE
*GSDM special correspondent
 Development & Democracy in
 Africa*

Mrs. Helena Lutege is an inspiring women entrepreneur in Tanzania. Coming from a background characterised by poverty, she was determined to work hard to break through and live a decent life. Helena is the founder of Better Life for Tanzanians Trust Fund (BELITA), a microfinance organisation which she started eight years ago to provide financial services to small entrepreneurs, especially women, in Tanzania. Helena was born about 55 years ago in Musoma District, Mara region in the Northern part of Tanzania. She was raised by a single mother, a mere peasant who struggled to make sure her children attend school. Helena made it up to Grade Four (Senior IV) and when she first sat for the Grade IV national examinations she failed but insisted and repeated the class another year and finally passed. She then came to Dares Salaam, the capital of Tanzania,

where she started doing some petty work including as a shop attendant, keeping poultry for business and so forth. It was during this time that she met with her husband. The husband encouraged and supported her to go for further education (a Diploma in Business Administration). After obtaining this diploma, Helena worked with the Tanzania Revenue Authority and in 2006, she started her own business, the present day BELITA (Better Life for Tanzanians Trust Fund). Having secured some capital and come up with an idea to begin extending small loans to individuals who needed them, she utilised the servant's quarter at her marital home premises as the office to operate her business which has grown since then. Beginning as an individual small lender—with no formal background in banking and finance—with five clients, the venture has now become a full fledged

microfinance institution. Belita now serves more than 3,000 clients, of whom 75% are women living in the sub-urban, urban, rural and coastal areas of Eastern Tanzania. Majority of these people have small businesses and borrow between Tzs. 50, 000 (about US\$32) to 1,000,000 (about \$645).

Mama Belita, as she is commonly identified by most of her clients says it has not been a smooth road all the way. She recalls facing a lot of resistance from her family who at first did not support her engaging in a lending venture or using the home premises. But that did not discourage her. Instead, she sought to strengthen her skills: In 2010, Mama Belita completed a post graduate diploma in microfinance at the University of Dares Salaam. With a philosophy of Begin, Believe and Become, her vision now is to see BELITA serve people beyond Tanzania

The world's largest refugee camp: what is the future for Dadaab?



By **EDVIN MACHATA**
GSDM West Africa Editor

Dadaab, the 20-year-old refugee camp spawned by the Somali Civil War, has become a perpetual humanitarian disaster, with thousands of people malnourished, without shelter or any means of subsistence. Providing what little health care and social services there are in the camps still costs the Kenyan government and the international community hundreds of millions of dollars. Largely, it is a problem without a good solution.

While having generously accommodated the refugees for two decades, some Kenyan politicians have started to call more aggressively for repatriation after the surge of new refugees following last year's famine. Sanctioning a military intervention into Somalia in order to establish safe havens suitable for relocation has been part of this. This in turn has been met with opposition from humanitarian agencies running the camps. While they argue correctly that a repatriation at this stage would likely increase insecurities for refugees and aid workers alike, they do not provide any constructive solutions of their own.

Indeed, the scale of the camp puts any type of solution to a tough test. Currently 500,000 refugees, mostly Somalis, inhabit five camps in an arid environment around a village that 20 years ago was home to a mere five thousand inhabitants. To put that into perspective, it's as if the city of Liverpool in the United Kingdom grew

to its current size from a sleepy unknown village in merely two decades.

Integration?

Melanie Teff at the Guardian's poverty matters blog suggested that the refugees living in Dadaab could be an asset in a comprehensive regional development plan. She points to the entrepreneurial spirit of many residents of Dadaab, and research by Cindy Horst, Senior Researcher at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), and others have illuminated the many successful ways of coping with life in the camp. Like in most populations however, only a small number have had that little extra luck together with an entrepreneurial spirit to create something. The majority need jobs available for them to take part in a developmental project.

This is not to underplay the achievements of the camps' entrepreneurs. A study by the governments of Kenya, Denmark and Norway estimated that as much as US\$14 million is channelled into the region through the agencies in Dadaab, and that refugee entrepreneurs themselves turn over \$25 million.

This may sound like impressive figures, but even when added together, and shared only among camp residents, not local Kenyans, it merely amounts to \$78 per person. This is but a fraction



Alima Ali Abdi, 37, holds one of her three children as she waits in line to be received at the Ifo refugee camp in Dadaab. Photo:USAID

"When we arrived, the police made us line up facing a wall and said we should 'think about never coming back to Kenya'. Then police officers hit all of us three or four times on the back and head with a stick. That night the Kenyan men in a cell next to ours, which was separated only by bars, urinated in plastic bags and threw them at us and cursed at us in Swahili all night long"

Dadaab, the world's biggest refugee camp, is home to a staggering 450,000 refugees, most of whom are from neighbouring Somalia. 1,200 people arrive each day seeking assistance.



than actual desired policy.

Solutions?

Considering that the staggering challenges with both integration and repatriation are made more difficult by the great number of individuals that need to be taken into account, both integration and repatriation must be employed in a

of Kenya's still low \$1,800 GDP per capita, and it highlights a particular socio-economic characteristic of most late developers: they do not lack manpower, but capital. Thus, from a developmental stand point, it seems hard to argue that manpower-rich, capital-poor Dadaab has any value to add to a national Kenyan economic project, it merely dilutes the government's scarce capital resources.

Except for the tough job of funding a comprehensive regional development plan, there are important political obstacles. Before its civil war, Somalia had difficult relations with its neighbors. It occasionally laid claim to Somali inhabited territory beyond its borders, notably in the Ogaden war with Ethiopia in the 1970s and a proxy war in Kenya (the so-called Shifita war). Kenya is worried that if it integrated a great number of additional Somalis in its east, similar future claims may seem more plausible and be supported by a 'fifth column'.

This worry and the perception of Somali immigrants as taking jobs and drawing a disproportional amount of humanitarian aid is also fueling strong racist sentiments towards the immigrants. A 2009 Human Rights Watch report, entitled From Horror to Hopelessness, detailed some racist abuse faced by Somali immigrants in detention in Garissa:

"When we arrived, the police made us line up facing a wall and said we should 'think about never coming back to Kenya'. Then police officers hit all of us three or four times on the back and head with a stick. That night the Kenyan men in a cell next to ours, which was separated only by bars, urinated in plastic bags and threw them at us and cursed at us in Swahili all night long. We complained to the police but they did nothing to stop them." Repatriation?

However, even while integration in Kenya seems difficult, repatriation is no

less challenging. In spite of Kenya's claims that their incursion has secured southwestern Somalia from Al-Shabaab—the Islamist militia that for many years controlled much of southern Somalia—civilians continue to flee the area rather than returning.

There are many second and even third generation refugees in the camps that have nothing to return to in Somalia. Also, many more recent refugees have no close family left across the border, and most who used to own property that served as a means of subsistence had these destroyed or violently appropriated.

Without support to re-integrate back into Somali society, it is likely that a great number of immigrants would become internally displaced persons (IDPs). Merely rebuilding the Dadaab complex 100 kilometers east makes little sense—not even for Kenya, as it would still be a hotbed for terrorist recruitment but with easier access for Al-Shabaab operatives.

A sudden influx of refugees into the politically and economically fragile Somalia could have devastating effects on the situation. Conflicts over repossessed land and livestock would be likely, which would feed into the conflict between the Somali government and Al-Shabaab.

The continuing insecurity and the lack of opportunities across the border means that voluntary compliance is highly unlikely, and without it repatriation is not really an option. Moving the entire population of a large city by force would require too many of Kenya's police and military forces, leaving other regions and possibly safe-zones in Somalia with inadequate security. It would also violate the 1951 refugee convention, bringing international condemnation and possibly sanctions onto Kenya. With an election year looming, it is likely that tough calls for repatriation are more a call for votes

medium to long-term, regional, cross-border development strategy. A third option, not explored in detail here, is resettlement to a third country, which has been, and should continue to be, pursued for as many as possible who are willing.

There are also some positive aspects to the situation. As there are significant numbers of Somalis permanently settled in Kenya since before independence, the Somali clan system could be used to have distant relatives help integrate Somali refugees out of clan solidarity. And, as IRIN reported on the 15th of June 2012, there is some political support for the integration of a smaller number of refugees that have personal ties to Kenya.

In Somalia, the continued military offensive against Al-Shabaab has fueled some optimism that the main violent threat may soon be defeated. The appointment of the moderate Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to the presidency gives Somalis a more neutral figure to unite behind. Still there is a long way to go for peace and stability.

The combined integration, repatriation and resettlement of the refugees need a lot of time, money, political will and long-term security in order to succeed.



Honduras: Violence, repression and impunity capital of the world

By **GRAHAME RUSSELL**

There is no end in sight to violence and repression in Honduras, nor the impunity and corruption with which the powerful economic, military and political sectors act. With American and Canadian governments and businesses maintaining political, economic and military relations with Honduras, their support only serves to further empower and legitimize the regime, all the while benefitting from the Honduran government's subjugation of its people.

A HUMAN RIGHTS AND SECURITY ABYSS

Since the US and Canadian endorsed military coup of June 28, 2009, which ousted the democratically elected government, hundreds of pro-democracy activists have been killed by the state and its death squads. As a result, Honduras has been called "the murder capital of the world", the "journalist killing capital of the world", the "LGBT killing capital of the world", the "inmate killing capital of the world" and the "lawyer killing capital of the world", by the North American Congress on Latin America, the Monthly Review, the Miami Herald, the BBC, and the United Nations, respectively.

"[Honduras] is quickly turning into a disaster zone. [...] To make matters worse in Honduras, there are indications that elements of the U.S.-backed government are complicit in the violence and criminality. [...] The murder rate of 82.1 per 100,000 residents [...] gives Honduras the highest homicide rate in the world," said a January 2012 editorial in the Miami Herald entitled Central America's Free-fire Zone.

"It's time to acknowledge the foreign policy disaster that American support for the Porfirio Lobo administration in Honduras has become. Ever since the June 28, 2009, coup [...] the country has

been descending deeper into a human rights and security abyss. That abyss is in good part the State Department's making. [...] According to the United Nations, it now has the world's highest murder rate, and San Pedro Sula, its



second largest city, is more dangerous than Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, a center for drug cartel violence. Much of the press in the United States has attributed this violence solely to drug trafficking and gangs. But the coup was what threw open the doors to a huge increase in drug trafficking and violence, and it unleashed a continuing wave of state-sponsored repression," said Dana Frank in a January 27, 2012 New York Times op-ed entitled In Honduras, a mess made in the U.S.

This situation of repression and violence has gotten even worse. On May 11, 2012, a US-DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) raid in the Ahuas community of northeast Honduras left at least four innocent people dead, including two pregnant women. Many more were wounded.

EMPOWERING AND LEGITIMIZING THE ILLEGITIMATE

While the United States receives most attention regarding its support for the military-backed government of Honduras, Canada has played a major role in empowering and legitimizing the regime.

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Latin America | Honduras

Canada and the U.S. are the only governments that deemed the violent, illegitimate post-military coup elections in November 2009 both 'fair and valid'. Canada and the U.S. are the only governments to have maintained full political relations with the military-backed regime. Since the coup, both countries—particularly Canada—have even expanded business dealings in Honduras.

In August 2011, Canadian Prime Minister Harper became the first foreign leader to actually visit Honduras since the military coup (most governments in Latin America today still do not have full political and economic relations with the military-backed administration). Leading a delegation of politicians and business executives, Prime Minister Harper signed a free trade agreement with Honduras that gave international credibility to the regime, further entrenching the rights of Canadian maquiladoras (sweat-shops), tourism, mining businesses and investors in Honduras.

OUR PROBLEMS

North Americans must pressure and keep on pressuring our elected

politicians and government officials to take action against the current Honduran government. Putting public pressure on North American governments and businesses is vital if we are to stop empowering and legitimizing the illegitimate Honduran regime.

It is equally important to support (with funds, human rights accompaniment, solidarity delegations, etc.) civil society groups in Honduras—many of which are members of the National Resistance Front—that are courageously struggling to denounce the abuses and human rights violations, all the while working to restore their democratic order and to re-found the state and society.

2013 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS
Despite this situation, there is a chance for positive political change in 2013. The wife of the militarily ousted President Zelaya has been chosen as leader of a new political party—LIBRE. Whereas many Hondurans—now in the National Resistance Front—were not Zelaya supporters before the coup, they have been moved by the dignified and courageous positions that both Mel Zelaya and his wife Xiomara have taken

since the day of the coup.

The 2013 presidential elections will pit corrupted pro-coup, pro-oligarchy parties—that are likely to be backed openly or indirectly by the US and Canada—against the LIBRE party, a political movement that has grown out of civil society's courageous opposition to the military coup and on-going repression.

LIBRE would easily win truly democratic elections, given the chance. However, these elections will undoubtedly be characterized by electoral corruption and threats and suppression against LIBRE supporters.

This is at once a struggle for democracy and human rights in both Honduras and across Latin America. It is also a fight to hold North American governments, companies and investors accountable for legitimizing the illegitimate and for empowering a repressive and undemocratic regime.

Grahame Russell is a non-practicing Canadian lawyer, author, adjunct professor at the University of Northern British Columbia and, since 1995, co-director of Rights Action.

Photo Corner



Women sort pistachios by hand at a privately-owned factory in Herat, Afghanistan. Photo: UN Multimedia

Lula aide guilty of corruption



The Supreme Court in Brazil has found a top aide of the former Brazilian president, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, guilty of corruption.

Jose Dirceu, Lula's chief of staff from 2003 to 2005, was convicted of running a scheme that used public funds to buy support from opposition parties in congress.

He denies the scheme ever existed and says the allegations are political.

Lula, who remains hugely popular in Brazil, was not implicated in the case.

The former head of Lula's Workers Party, Jose Genoio, and its treasurer, Delubio Soares, were also convicted by a majority of the Supreme Court justices.

They potentially face between two and 12 years in jail, but the sentences will not be passed until the whole hearing is concluded. A lengthy appeal process is also likely.

Mr Dirceu is a former left-wing rebel who fought Brazil's military government in the 1970s and was eventually sent to exile in Cuba.

Along with Lula, he was one of the founders of the Workers Party (PT) and was one of the former president's closest political allies.

Mr Dirceu has said right-wing media and politicians fabricated the allegations to bring down the government.

The scandal, which erupted in 2005, for a time threatened to engulf the Lula administration but he was comfortably re-elected as president the following year.

Global warming 'may lead to smaller fish'



The biggest fish in the sea could be almost 25 per cent smaller by 2050 because of global warming, according to a new study.

Warmer oceans will carry less dissolved oxygen, causing fish to grow to smaller sizes and forcing them to move to cooler waters, the research published in the journal Nature Climate Change claims.

Scientists predict that a rise in global temperatures over the coming decades will cause the average body size of sea fish to

decline by between 14 and 24 per cent.

The predication is based on a study of more than 600 species of saltwater fish, including the Atlantic cod and the North Sea haddock.

About half of the shrinkage will be due to changes in the distribution and abundance of fish caused by changes to their environment, and half will be the direct result of living in oxygen-poor water.

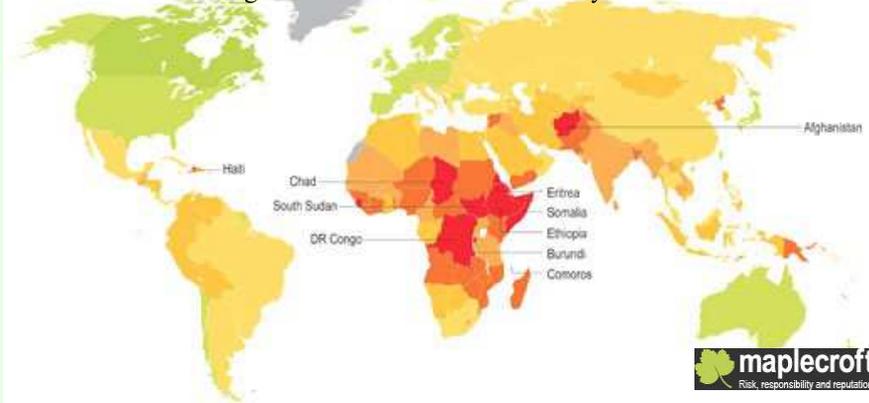
Species living in tropical and intermediate-latitude oceans will suffer the most, with an average reduction in weight of more than 20 per cent, according to the study by William Cheung and colleagues at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada.

While changes in distribution were expected, "we were surprised to see such a large decrease in fish size", Dr Cheung said. "The unexpectedly big effect that climate change could have on body size suggests that we may be missing a big piece of the puzzle

Food security: which countries are most at risk?

Despite strong economic growth, food security remains an issue of primary importance for Africa, according to a new study by risk analysis company Maplecroft, which classifies 75% of the continent's countries at 'high' or 'extreme risk.' In the light of recent

food price spikes, the findings are especially significant for areas of sub-Saharan Africa where poverty, armed conflict, civil unrest, drought, displacement and poor governance can combine to create conditions where a food crisis may take hold.



Lack of leisure time takes toll on workers

Chinese people have seen a decrease in leisure time in the past three years, a new study shows.

Insight China, a State-run magazine that looks into Chinese people's welfare, polled 1,007 people nationwide in August and September and found that 70 percent said they are unsatisfied about the amount of leisure time they have.

Sixty percent of people surveyed were between 23 and 42 years old, more than 70 percent earn 3,000 to 10,000 yuan (\$480 to \$1,590) a month, and 60 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher qualification.

Nearly 70 percent said they are overworked. More than 40 percent said they work 40 to 50 hours a week, with 1.3 percent saying more than 80 hours a week.

Only 30 percent of those polled said they work 40 hours a week, the statutory working hours stipulated by Chinese law. The survey found that more than 40 percent spend less than 10 hours a week on leisure, and only 8 percent have more than 30 hours a week for leisure.

Chinese people have seen decreasing leisure time since 2010, and more than 40 percent of respondents said they have enjoyed less leisure time this year than last.



Chinese people commonly feel they have insufficient leisure time because of the country's stage of economic development, said Wei Xiang, director of the Beijing International Studies University's center for China leisure economic research.

"China is still very much a labor-intensive economy, and in such a situation it's hard to offer plenty of time for people to enjoy

leisure," he said. "Our study found that most Chinese people want to earn money instead of taking vacations," he said. "When China successfully reforms its income distribution and the overall social security system is built, the situation will change."

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