

# GLOBAL SOUTH

#13, Dec 2013, A development quarterly  
ISSN: 1799-0769, [www.gsdmagazine.org](http://www.gsdmagazine.org)

Development Magazine

Why Keep  
Investing in  
Education?



## Syria's Sickness

Beyond Chemical Weapons & Failed Diplomacy

Difficulties of  
Establishing  
Consensus in  
Development

Reproductive  
Health and Climate  
Change Impact in  
Bangladesh

No Welcome  
Mat for Syrians  
in Europe

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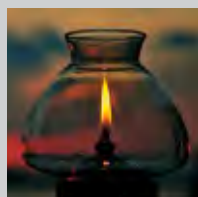
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BETTER WORLD INITIATIVES

### Published By

Silver Lining Creation ry-Finland  
Email: globalsouth@silcreation.org  
info@silcreation.org  
http://www.silcreation.org  
ISSN 1799-0769  
Subscribe the magazine for free at  
www.silcreation.org  
www.gsdmagazine.org

## Letter to the editor

### Need Unbiased Development Reporters

I have been following your magazine for a while and I think this type of initiative is unique and worth-appreciating.

It's great that you have come up with the idea of recruiting development reporters from the developing world, but since they are not financially dependent on GSDM, but to someone else, the danger of

being biased and promoting their own agenda is high.

I do not mean to say that all volunteers have hidden agenda, but there might be some who would just work as volunteers to spread their own agenda. Beware of that!  
**Suruchi**  
**New Delhi, India**



### What about Child Labourers?

I thank GSDM team for producing a covery story on child soldiers. The stories included are heartbreaking and produce a range of strong emotions. I particularly loved the Colombia analysis and stories from SriLanka and the DR Congo. I wish you could have included some stories from Liberia too, but maybe next time!

I was was going to say

that of course there are child soldiers in different parts of the world and they suffer a lot. They need society's acceptance, courage and

support, but there are a lot more child labourers who suffer on daily basis, like child soldiers, but they receive less attention and support, and their chance of progress seems to be slim.

This should be changed and all children in need should be treated equal, by governments, but by the media too.

**Wahde G, Liberia**



### Ganesh School in Nepal and Education in Bangladesh

The article on a public

school in Western Nepal - "Ganesh Secondary School" shows a new hope for the frustrating education system in countries like Bangladesh. I am surprised to know that in a school having tin shed infrastructure, the students play with laptop since they are in primary grade, and they can communicate well in English. Another "need of the present time" Ganesh could achieve through declaring the school as "Peace Zone".

In Bangladesh, there has been a mushroom growth of well-furnished and gorgeously

private schools in the recent years, mostly oriented in western education system. But the primary motive of the schools is "business" and



to make money, without much regard to moral and mental development of the students. The example of "Ganesh" should draw the attention of resource-rich people and development organizations in setting such an example in rural Bangladesh.

**Prof. Dr. Md. Abdus Siddique, Bangladesh**

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# Welcome to Syria Special Edition



By MANOJ BHUSAL

"We are not in the position to pinpoint who is right or who is wrong. We also do not know which side is really representing the majority of Syrians or what is best for Syria's future. What we know is that the scale of suffering has been tremendous"

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"Like in traditional fashion of war reporting, reports on the conflict in Syria mostly focus on death toll, physical devastation, chemical weapons and the derailed international diplomacy. In the hustle and bustle of war reporting, civilian suffering and the plight of the refugees somehow got dimmed or withered away"



Having seen horrendous pictures coming out of Syria on TV or on social media, we know Syria is suffering deeply. We are not in the position to pinpoint who is right or who is wrong. We also do not know which side is really representing the majority of Syrians or what is best for Syria's future. What we know is that the scale of suffering has been tremendous and thousands of innocent people have been killed, millions have been displaced and as there doesn't yet seem to be any sign of light at the end of the tunnel, civilian suffering is likely to continue.

The conflict in Syria has been widely reported in both Syrian and international media. More than 90 journalists, many of them citizen journalists, have lost their lives while reporting the crisis in Syria. However, like in traditional fashion of war reporting, reports on the conflict in Syria mostly focused on death toll, physical devastation, chemical weapons and derailed international diplomacy. In the hustle and bustle of war reporting, civilian suffering and the plight of the refugees somehow got dimmed or withered away.

Many people intend to remember events like war in terms of numbers, but for the ones who live through the suffering; it's their story, their life story. In this edition of Global South Development Magazine, our Latin America editor Diego Cupolo takes you

to the refugee camps of Turkey-Syria border and with the help of two thought-provoking stories; he portrays a different image of war- war as a distorter of human dreams, normalcy and everyday course of life.

We hope you enjoy reading through other stories too. Jenna Ke's piece on a Cambodian NGO's effort to support development through tourism is fascinating; so is Aparna Patankar's op-ed Why Keep Spending in Education.

GSDM's South Asia editor Khalid Hussain offers strong arguments on institutional incapacity in Pakistan in his piece Tragic Disasters and Confusing Troubles, whereas, our West Africa editor Edvin Arnby Machata talks about historical and theoretical issues surrounding consensus in development. Hriday Sarma, on the other hand, sees world politics through the prism of hydrocarbon energy and Tithe Farhana, as usual, focuses her reporting on climate change and maternal health in Bangladesh.

Finally, We wish all our readers, supporters and contributors a very Happy New Year 2014. Thank you all for being with us throughout the year 2013.

Happy reading!

(The editor can be reached at [manoj.bhusal@silcreation.org](mailto:manoj.bhusal@silcreation.org))



Girls wave and flash victory signs at a passing helicopter during a military parade in the western city of Zawiya, Libya, held to mark the anniversary of an uprising in 2011 that cleared the way for the anti-Qadhafi forces' march on Tripoli. Iason Founten/UN Photo

## Syrian Santa



A Free Syrian Army fighter dressed as Santa Claus directs a civilian. Anonymous/AP

# No welcome mat for Syrians in Europe



A new fence at the Greek/Turkish border has added to the obstacles for Syrian asylum seekers trying to reach Europe ©Kristy Siegfried/IRIN

Although the European Union (EU) has committed US\$1.75 billion to relief efforts in and around Syria, making it the largest international donor, it has shown little solidarity with countries like Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, in terms of helping to shoulder an increasingly unmanageable refugee burden.

September 2013 (IRIN) – The human exodus from Syria started with a trickle in the latter half of 2011 that became a steady stream in 2012, and turned into a flood in 2013. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimates that on average 5,000 Syrians flee their country every day and that by mid-September around 2.1 million were living as refugees, mainly in neighbouring countries. Lebanon alone has taken in 752,000, while Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt have also accepted hundreds of thousands.

The Turkish government says it has spent \$2 billion responding to the refugee influx from Syria while Jordan has spent a similar amount just during the first nine months of 2013. A recent World Bank report estimated that the conflict and the waves of refugees it has created has doubled unemployment in Lebanon, cut GDP growth and strained health, education, water and sanitation

systems to breaking point.

Although the European Union (EU) has committed US\$1.75 billion to relief efforts in and around Syria, making it the largest international donor, it has shown little solidarity with countries like Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, in terms of helping to shoulder an increasingly unmanageable refugee burden.

Despite its relative proximity to the conflict, Europe is hosting just 41,000 Syrian asylum seekers, the majority of them in two countries – Germany and Sweden.

Not only does the EU lack a joint policy to govern the treatment and protection of Syrian asylum seekers by its member states, Europe's fortress-like borders are making it extremely difficult for Syrians to reach EU territory.

A report released in September by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) notes: "Access to

Europe is increasingly difficult, and legal channels of entering the EU are almost non-existent, especially as Member States closed their embassies in Syria."

## Gaining entry to the EU

For many refugees the only option is to pay smugglers to help them enter EU territory irregularly, but even this has become more difficult. The 206km Greek/Turkish border used to be the main entry point to the EU for migrants and asylum seekers, but in August 2012, the Greek government, with assistance from the European border agency, Frontex, significantly tightened frontier security measures, including erecting a 12km stretch of fence along one of the most popular crossing points.

Most Syrian asylum seekers attempting to reach Europe now use much riskier sea routes between

Turkey and the Greek islands and between Egypt and the south coast of Italy. While a number of deaths from drowning and dehydration have been reported, UNHCR estimates that 4,600 Syrians arrived in Italy by sea between January and early September 2013, two-thirds of them in August.

Increasing numbers are also entering Europe via Bulgaria, where reception centres have reached capacity. An unknown number of asylum seekers are now being kept in two detention centres while their asylum applications are decided, which can take as long as a year.

“The EU has in the past urged Turkey to keep its borders open to Syrians wishing to seek asylum, while at the same time focusing resources on controlling irregular entry at its own external frontiers,” said Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, at a meeting of the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council in July.

“While the management of borders is a sovereign right and legitimate priority of states, the means must be found to ensure that Syrians seeking protection at EU frontiers can gain access to territory, procedures and safety,” Guterres noted. He also expressed concern about the lack of consistency among Member States in their adjudication of asylum claims from Syrians, and the types of protection being granted.

The EU still has a long way to go in implementing a Common European Asylum System, with some states much less likely to grant refugee status than others. Greece, for example, has a notoriously dysfunctional asylum system, and granted refugee status to only two out of 275 Syrians who applied in 2012, according to UNHCR. In the same year, nearly 8,000 Syrians were arrested and detained for irregularly entering or staying in Greece.

Although the Greek Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection has since ordered that Syrians only be detained for as long as it takes to verify their identity and then released, most of those with the means to do so move on to countries where they will have a better chance of receiving protection.

### Protection can vary

Recognition rates for Syrian asylum seekers are generally high elsewhere in Europe, but the ECRE report notes

that a number of countries are granting subsidiary or humanitarian protection rather than refugee status, despite the fact that, as Guterres put it, “people fleeing Syria fall squarely within the framework of the 1951 Refugee Convention, and should be granted protection accordingly”.

Syrians with subsidiary and humanitarian protection status are usually only given residence permits valid for one year (instead of three years for refugees) and may not be entitled to social welfare. Sweden recently set what refugee rights groups are hoping is a precedent by granting permanent residency to approximately 8,000 Syrian asylum seekers in the country on temporary residency permits.

Besides granting refugee status to Syrians, the other option being urged by UNHCR is for Member States to accept Syrian refugees for emergency resettlement or humanitarian admission (a more temporary form of protection than refugee status). In March, Germany announced a Humanitarian Admissions Programme that will host 5,000 Syrians for two years, with priority given to those already registered in Lebanon or who have family in Germany.

UNHCR announced in June that it was seeking humanitarian admission for 10,000 Syrian refugees, and resettlement for an additional 2,000 in acute need. So far, 10 countries (seven in Europe) have pledged a total of 1,650 resettlement places, but besides Germany only Austria has agreed to the humanitarian admission of 500 Syrians.

In the context of a conflict that it is creating 5,000 new refugees every day, rights groups have been critical of such minimal commitments. The figures also seem meagre compared to the tens of thousands of refugees that individual countries took in during the Kosovo and Bosnian conflicts.

Julia Zelvenskaya, of ECRE, attributed the disappointing response to a generally negative political climate for migrants and refugees in Europe at the moment. “Few European leaders are saying they welcome refugees,” she told IRIN. “Some countries are only willing to resettle 30 people, and when you compare the numbers being hosted by neighbouring countries [such as Jordan and Lebanon], it doesn’t really

show a sharing of responsibility.”

**“Some countries are only willing to resettle 30 people, and when you compare the numbers being hosted by neighbouring countries [such as Jordan and Lebanon], it doesn’t really show a sharing of responsibility”**

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Group, a political party in the European Parliament, has called for a humanitarian conference to address the issue of facilitating temporary access to the EU for those fleeing the conflict.

An EU-wide temporary protection regime could be implemented using a directive adopted in 2001 following the Kosovo conflict, but would require the approval of all Member States. “We have instruments we could use if we chose to deploy them, but you



need the political will to do so,” said Guillaume McLaughlin, an ALDE policy advisor. “We’ve had a lot of rhetoric [on this issue], but no action.”

Zelvenskaya said it may be too soon to implement the EU directive on temporary protection, given that the numbers of Syrian asylum seekers reaching Europe are still relatively small. Measures could instead be taken to open legal channels to the EU, for example, by relaxing current visa restrictions and family reunification rules for Syrians, and issuing humanitarian visas through embassies in neighbouring countries.

# African migrants pay high prices to send money home



Africans sent nearly \$60 billion in remittances in 2012, according to the World Bank. Photo: Edgar Mwakaba

Kristy Siegfried/IRIN

New data from the World Bank has revealed that African migrants pay more to send money home to their families than any other migrant group in the world.

While South Asians pay an average of US\$6 for every \$100 they send home, Africans often pay more than twice that – and in South Africa, which has the highest remittance costs on the continent, nearly 21 percent of money set aside for family members back home is spent on getting it there.

With an estimated 120 million Africans depending on remittances from family members abroad for their survival, health and education, the World Bank argues that high transaction costs are cutting into the impact remittances can have on poverty levels.

To address this, the Bank is partnering with the African Union Commission and member states to establish the African Institute for Remittances, which will work towards lowering the transaction costs of remittances to and within Africa. It will also leverage the potential of remittances to influence economic and social development.

“The World Bank’s approach supports regulatory and policy reforms that promote transparency and market competition and the creation of an enabling environment that promotes innovative payment and remittance products,” said Marco Nicoli, a finance analyst at the Bank who specializes in remittances.

## Costly and difficult

Owen Maromo, a 33-year-old farmworker who lives in De Doorns, a

grape-growing region in South Africa’s Western Cape Province, told IRIN that his family in Zimbabwe relies on the money he sends home every month.

“I’ve got a house there and I need to pay rent. I’m also taking care of my youngest brother – since my mum died four years ago – and my wife’s family.

“Almost every Zimbabwean here is budgeting to send money back home,” he added. “If they could, they would send money home on a weekly basis.”

In a 2012 report by the Cape Town-based NGO People Against Suffering Oppression and Poverty (PASSOP), interviews with 350 Zimbabwean migrants revealed some of the reasons sending money home from South Africa is both costly and difficult.

A key impediment is the stringent regulatory framework that governs cross-border transfers from South Africa. Exchange control legislation, for example, requires money transfer operators (MTOs) to partner with a bank. According to PASSOP, this has had the effect of stifling competition that would likely reduce transaction costs.

Legislation intending to counter money laundering and terrorist financing requires that customers provide proof of residence and proof of the source of their funds before they can access financial services. This effectively excludes the many migrants living in informal settlements and those who are paid in cash.

PASSOP found that even among migrants who do have access to banks and MTOs like Western Union and MoneyGram, many lack the financial literacy to make use of them.

## Global hunger falling, index shows



Among the top 10 in terms of progress are Angola, Ethiopia, Malawi and Niger, along with Bangladesh, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam

(IRIN) Every year for the past eight years, the Global Hunger Index has mapped the world’s nutrition. Over time, the maps demonstrate progress: The dark red splashes across Africa that signified “extremely alarming” levels of hunger have mostly faded to orange, and much of the orange is now yellow, meaning “serious” but not “alarming”. Ghana is now light green, meaning it has “moderate” hunger, an improvement from the “serious” level of 2006. Similarly, many countries in Asia have shown great improvement.

The 2013 Index, launched in October this year, shows yet further improvement. The organizations that compile the Index – the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Concern Worldwide and Welt Hunger Hilfe – say that 23 out of the 120 countries they track have made significant progress, improving their scores by 50 percent or more over the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) baseline from 1990. Among the top 10 in terms of progress are Angola, Ethiopia, Malawi and Niger, along with Bangladesh, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam. Lawrence Haddad, the director of the Institute of Development Studies, who worked on this year’s Index, says the trends they have documented may overturn stereotypes. “An interesting twist on this,” he said, “is that in 2000 South Asia actually had a better score than sub-Saharan Africa, but now Sub-Saharan Africa has a better score than South Asia. We always default to thinking that bad news is coming out of Africa, but at a regional level Africa has been doing better than South Asia over the past 10 to 15 years. So that’s great.”



# Tourism for Change

One NGO's take on fundraising and communications



By JENNA KE  
Text & Photos



Over the past few years, the exploding voluntourism industry has come under intense criticism. Unskilled foreign volunteers deprive locals of jobs, tour operators focus on pleasing tourists instead of local communities, and short-term projects detract from long-term development. Good intentions do not necessarily lead to good outcomes. Is there a better way?

PEPY (“Promoting Education, emPowering Youth”) is an education-focused NGO based in Cambodia that is taking a noble approach towards communications and fundraising. In partnership with its sister social enterprise PEPY Tours, PEPY NGO communicates its philosophy on development and youth empowerment through educational tours.

PEPY Tours believes that educational tourism resolves many of the ethical traps posed by voluntourism. Its tours are a new type of travel, one centered on learning and engaging instead of merely observing and

giving things away. With “adventurous living, responsible giving” as its tagline, the organization aims to inspire people to become more responsible donors, travelers, and global citizens through educational tourism.

Educational tours are more than an opportunity for deep discussions on social issues; they are fundraising adventures through which tourists can leave a lasting impact on the places they visit. All PEPY Tours trips have a two-tiered pricing system: the trip fee and the compulsory fundraising element, all of which goes to the NGO. To date, PEPY Tours trips have raised in excess of \$400,000 for the PEPY NGO’s youth empowerment programs.

One example of how PEPY Tours combines both adventure and giving is PEPY Ride, a 1,000km fundraising cycling adventure across Cambodia. Now entering its 9th year, the ride has been named one of National Geographic Traveler’s “Top Tours

**“With “adventurous living, responsible giving” as its tagline, the organization aims to inspire people to become more responsible donors, travelers, and global citizens through educational tourism”**

Melissa learned that tourists giving money to child beggars were actually keeping the children in the streets and out of school. Sometimes, a sympathetic act can have unintended consequences.

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Educational tours help participants think deeply and see the world with new eyes.



of a Lifetime". On this three-week bicycle tour, participants get an intimate experience of the country by visiting heritage sites, cycling through the countryside, and eating at local restaurants. Education is a key part of the trip. The itinerary includes visits to social enterprises and NGO projects, as well as facilitated discussions on global development, responsible tourism, and aid.

Educational tours such as PEPY Ride have given PEPY some of its most staunch supporters. Long after their trips have ended, PEPY Tours participants are continuing to support PEPY in ways big and small.

Jeff Strachan is a past PEPY Tour trip participant and current PEPY board member. He first got involved with PEPY in 2009 through Dubai Cares, a government-sponsored charity. Dubai Cares funded the construction of three primary schools in the Chanleas Dai Commune, which Jeff spent six weeks helping to build. Jeff continued working with PEPY because he believed that just building schools was not enough; he wanted to support communities in a sustainable way. So he organized three customized tours with PEPY Tours, bringing friends and funds into Cambodia. He has helped build water collection units, renovate school buildings, and develop PEPY's Creative Learning Classes. The funds raised from his tours have gone to support PEPY's community programs.

"When you're passionate about something and you love something you do it. I felt responsible because I put my face in there at the start. The more responsible I felt, the more passionate I became about the subject. The people involved with PEPY felt I had a skill set that would help them achieve their goals for the organization from a board

perspective. That's why I stayed involved, it was something I cared about," says Jeff Strachan, PEPY board member.

When PEPY saw what an asset Jeff could be, the organization asked him to be on its board. He agreed. Armed with years of experience in sales, marketing, and management, Jeff brings a commercial perspective to PEPY's outreach efforts.

Melissa Chungfat is a past PEPY Ride participant who has just wrapped up her 7-month volunteering stint at PEPY and PEPY Tours. She credits PEPY Ride with shaping her views on philanthropy and development. On PEPY Ride, she did regular readings on responsible tourism, foreign aid, and international development. Her learning was enhanced by facilitated discussions and seeing real examples of NGOs and social enterprises in Cambodia. For example, Melissa learned that tourists giving money to child beggars were actually keeping the children in the streets and out of school. Sometimes, a sympathetic act can have unintended consequences.

"What I like about PEPY Tours is that we talk about issues, not just tourist attractions. What is important is talking about core and foundational issues in a country. PEPY Ride was life-changing because I felt like out of all the travel I'd done, it was the most 'local' experience. We got to hear stories from Cambodians, we ate at local restaurants, we learned a lot, and we got to really experience social enterprises that were successful and really experience the generosity of the people" says Melissa Chungfat, past PEPY Ride participant.

Three years after completing her life-changing tour of Cambodia, Melissa decided to volunteer with PEPY. Melissa used her experience in communications to manage PEPY's and PEPY Tours' social media presence. She has also served as a

trip leader on one of PEPY Tours' trips. On the same PEPY Ride as Melissa was Rakesh Mehta. After his initial bicycle ride across Cambodia in 2009, he returned the following year visit the country again. He loved Cambodia and the PEPY team, and felt compelled to help. Upon returning to the UK, Rakesh set up the Cambodia Development and Education Fund (CDEF), a charity that raises funds to support PEPY's work. Since CDEF is registered in the UK, employers in the UK can match donations by their employees. Furthermore, the UK tax relief scheme called Gift Aid allows charities to claim an additional 25% on individual donations. In 2012, CDEF raised over \$10,000 from sporting events, small fundraisers and donations.

"PEPY showed me how much of a difference a few committed people can make to thousands of lives. My experience there made me come alive to the possibility that I could also make a small difference. Now I try to do what I can to help people like my family, my friends, the community I live in, and the inspirational people I met in Cambodia," says Rakesh Mehta, founder of Cambodia Development and Education Fund.

Educational tours help participants think deeply and see the world with new eyes. Through practical immersion and reflective discussion, trip participants come away with a better understanding of their responsibility as global citizens. Change occurs not only during the tour, but endures long after the trip ends.

*(Jenna Ke is the Communications & Fundraising Officer for PEPY. She manages external communications and maintains donor relations. She was previously an investment banking analyst at Credit Suisse)*

# Syria's Sickness

Beyond Chemical Weapons & Failed Diplomacy



## Syria conflict timeline



Conflict timeline by Carolyn Look

It all started with a few graffiti savvy teens, their subsequent imprisonment and protests organized to demand their release. Inspired by the revolutions in neighboring countries, Syrian people started to improvise or rather to emulate their own version, but it got bloody. So bloody that in less than three years more than a hundred thousand people have been killed, many of them innocent civilians.

The popular protests that grew nationwide by April 2011 demanded the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad, whose family has held the presidency in Syria for more than forty years. Army tanks were mobilized to quell the largely peaceful protests and that sowed the seed to this complex civil war. By now the conflict has become rather fuzzy and there are multiple groups fighting against each other. The initial urge for freedom and democracy seems to be hijacked by extreme Islamist ideologies and by December 2013 Hezbollah is the major force fighting against the Assad regime.

### Deaths and Displacements

No matter who is fighting against whom, it's civilians that suffer most.

According to the United Nations, the Syrian conflict death toll reached 120,000 by September 2013 and tens of thousands of protesters have been imprisoned with frequent reports of torture and terror in state prisons. Both government and

opposition forces have been accused of severe human rights violations and according to Amnesty International vast majority of abuses are done by the Syrian government.

Similarly, more than four million Syrians have been displaced, more than two million fled the country and became refugees, and millions more were left in poor living conditions with shortage of food and drinking water. The situation is especially



bad in the town of Muadamiyat al-Sham, where 12,000 residents are predicted to die of starvation by the winter of 2013 from a Syrian army enforced blockade.

The United Nations recently confirmed that chemical weapons have also been used in Syria on more than one occasion along with other lethal practices such as cluster bombs, scud missile attacks, suicide bombings and thermobaric weapons.

### International Polarization

International community is deeply polarized over the conflict in Syria. Major Western powers led by the United States have been supporting the opposition forces with all political and logistical means while countries like Iran and Russia favor the Ba'ath party and the Assad

regime. Iran exports up to 800 tonnes of flour per day to Syria to support the Assad regime, a recent report claims.

Recently, when the Islamist rebels seem to dominate the driving seat of the movement, Western countries apparently seem to be in dilemma as to whom are they going to support in the long run. The regime is dictatorial while the opposition seems to be driven towards Islamist extremism.

### Prospects of Peace

After last summer's Geneva-I talks couldn't produce any concrete results, another peace conference has been organized in Geneva on January 22, but many say they are doubtful if the conference is going to take place at all and even if it takes place there is not much of utility as many influential groups have decided not to attend it.

It is not bad to be optimistic, but there are not many reasons to be optimistic in Syria's case. The country is fragmented more and more and it seems almost impossible to find a national consensus within Syria. Immediate military victory of any side is out of question at least for now.

The only hope is in the international community. If they all come together and prescribe a single solution concertedly, that might do the trick. If that doesn't happen anytime soon, what is in the box for Syria is more bloodshed, more suffering for ordinary Syrians and a devastated future for Syria's millions of children.



## Human Toll of the Conflict

### 120,000+ have been killed

This is a United Nations estimate. The UN believes the actual toll may be much higher as many deaths are not reported.

### 2 million+ have fled Syria

More than 2 million refugees who have registered — and tens of thousands more are waiting to register — with the office of the UN High Commissioner on Refugees. The actual number is feared to be much higher.

### 3/4 of refugees are women and children

Almost half of the refugees are girls and women, while another quarter are boys under 18.

### Another 4 million+ are displaced inside Syria

Aid agencies continue to increase their estimates of internally displaced people as the fighting rages through the country.

## Who is Bashar al-Assad?



As the PolicyMic reports, Assad spent most of his early 20s studying medicine at the University of Damascus, from which he graduated in 1988. While working towards becoming a doctor and conducting his residency in ophthalmology at the Tishreen military hospital outside of Damascus, Assad had no plans to become involved in politics. His older brother, Bassel, was next in line to take over for their father, former Syrian President Hafez al-Assad, but after Bassel tragically died in a car accident, Bashar was left as the successor to his father. Assad served as an army doctor in Damascus, then moved to London. He had no intention of immediately moving back to Syria, and had zero political aspirations at the time.



A team of UN chemical weapons inspectors have confirmed that the nerve agent sarin was used in an attack on the Ghouta agricultural belt around Damascus on the morning of 21 August. Photo: The Syrian.



Children lie among the dead outside of Damascus, Syria, on August 21 shortly after they succumbed to chemical weapon poisoning. Photo: Erbin News/DEMOTIX



The bodies of men killed during clashes between Syrian rebel fighters and government forces are seen lying on the road in Syria's restive northern city of Aleppo. Photo: Bulent Kilig



**Nearly 12,000 children have been killed since the conflict started in 2011. Nearly 1.2 million children are living as refugees.**

A Syrian man cries while holding the body of his son near Dar El Shifa hospital in Aleppo, Syria. The boy was killed by the Syrian army. Photo: Manu Brabo

# One Mile To Syria: War Accounts From Syrian Refugees in Turkey



By DIEGO CUPOLO  
Text & Photos

A voice is missing from the international debate on the Syrian War. As world leaders focus on chemical weapons and radical fundamentalists, the voice of the Syrian people, civilians and refugees remains nearly absent from discussions of intervention. The simple truth is Syrians are dying and, whether through bombs or sarin gas, a large portion of casualties are civilian.

The Syrian conflict, like similar uprisings that took root during the 2011 Arab Spring, began as a civil war between an oppressed population and their ruling dictator, Bashar al-Assad. Since then, fighting has become locked in an apparent stalemate, causing more than 100,000 casualties over a two year period with neither side gaining ground or significant advantage.

At the same time, the war has drawn involvement from neighboring countries, dividing the Middle East along Sunni-Shiite lines and morphing a national conflict for democracy into a proxy war with implications that could reshape regional and international politics. To further complicate the matter, foreign militias associated with Kurdish groups and Al-Qaeda networks have also entered the conflict with intentions of forming new nations for their own ethnic groups and followers.

Caught in the battlefield is the Syrian population. More than 2 million civilians have taken refuge in neighboring countries while an additional 4 million have been internally displaced. These migrations have created the largest refugee crisis since 1995 and the numbers continue to rise.

From beginning to end, it is the Syrian civilian who bears the weight of this conflict. On one shoulder stands the United States with Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar while the other holds Russia, Iran, China and Hezbollah. If and when these stacks fall and military intervention is undertaken in Syria, the question remains: Where will the Syrian civilian stand when the dust settles?

In an effort to give a voice to the Syrian people, GSDM Latin America Editor and photographer Diego Cupolo wrote *Seven Syrians: War Accounts From Syrian Refugees* a non-fiction book by 8th House Publishing released in November 2013. *Seven Syrians* presents the war as experienced through Syrian refugees living in Reyhanl, a Turkish town one mile north of the Syrian border that was bombed in May 2013 for hosting a burgeoning refugee population. The interviews were conducted between July and August 2013 and have been adapted as monologues to create seven flowing narratives.

The following is an excerpt of two personal accounts from *Seven Syrians* that were gathered while Diego Cupolo volunteered at Al Salam school for Syrian refugees in Reyhanl.

"Caught up in the battlefield is the Syrian population. More than 2 million civilians have taken refuge in neighboring countries while an additional 4 million have been internally displaced"

"To further complicate the matter, foreign militias associated with Kurdish groups and Al-Qaeda networks have also entered the conflict with intentions of forming new nations for their own ethnic groups and followers"



**Shelter in the Caves**  
**Hussein haj Ahmad – 33 years old,**  
**English teacher, Idlib region**

I went to the caves after the military post near my village was attacked by farmers. They weren't part of a militia then, no organization whatsoever, but they were armed and they managed to kill more than a hundred government soldiers.

It was a surprise attack. Their first response after the military started shooting protesters in the streets. Some celebrated, but I didn't. I knew the air raids would come shortly after and they did. Bombs landed on my village every single day for the next two months. It was the worst experience of my life.

I took cover in the caves, up there in the mountains, and saw the bombs fall on what used to be my home. All I could do was watch. Each bomb was strong enough to destroy twenty to twenty five houses.

Worse, each bomb produced a very high, horrible screeching sound when it exploded. I don't know what they're called officially, but we call them pressure bombs. They were one of the many gifts Bashar received from Russia.

Usually, the air raids started at one or two in the morning when everyone was sleeping. Many people died this way, mostly children. A midnight rocket.

I stayed in the caves a total of 45 days, just waiting for the bombs to stop falling. I had no choice. During the initial protests, I broke my leg in three places. I could barely

walk. I was on crutches this entire period. For food, for water I was completely dependent on other people. Fortunately, I was not alone.

There were many families in those caves, large groups of people I had never known before. As the time passed, we all became good friends, we all relied on each other.

It was a new experience for me because I was used to living alone. I would come home from work alone, watch TV alone and then go to sleep alone. There, in the caves, we did everything together. We took care of each other. Many had it worse than I did.

One older woman, she was blind. She was always terrified. She would hear the helicopters hovering above, but she couldn't see them and she had no idea if they could see her. Imagine.

In the day time, we would take her outside to get some fresh air, you know, to let her breath. We all tried to get out for air whenever possible and every time we went out we took the old blind lady with us. We'd sit her down on a good rock so she could relax, but she never relaxed.

The minute she heard the sound of helicopters or an explosion in a distance she'd start yelling, "Take me to the cave! Please take me to the cave! I don't want to die! Please! I don't want to die!" She'd swing her walking stick through the air as she yelled. "Take me to the cave!"

That's just one of the people I was with. There were many. Mostly women, children and the elderly. Men stayed in the village to

"I took cover in the caves, up there in the mountains, and saw the bombs fall on what used to be my home. All I could do was watch. Each bomb was strong enough to destroy twenty to twenty five houses"

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fight Bashar's army. I was injured, so I couldn't fight, but even if I was healthy I would have stayed away. I don't want to die. I'm still waiting to marry, you know, this is very important for Syrian men. After university we are supposed to get married and start a family. I'm still waiting for this to happen.

It could've happened. There were some younger women in the cave. Sometimes they would talk to me. They told me not to worry so much, that I would find a wife after the war, but it's not easy. The war doesn't look like it will end anytime soon and I'm only sitting here, waiting, getting older. I still hope for a family of my own some day.

The fear I have is an abnormal kind of fear. I fear the rockets and the bombs more than others because there is so much I haven't accomplished in life. Up there in the mountains, in the caves without food, it's just suffering ... just fearing ... just thinking about the future ... just crying sometimes.

There are questions, so many questions that you start asking yourself. Where can I go? What can I do? Will this war ever end? How long can I keep living like this? Should I keep living?

We all asked ourselves these questions in the caves. None of us knew whether we would make it to the next day or not, whether we would endure the next battle. All Syrians are terrified about the future. We have no idea what will happen to us and this is an unsettling thought.

My house was hit by a rocket. I have no place to go back to. The Syrian Army bombed our village to punish us. They said we allowed those farmers to attack the military post so everyone must pay the price, even the children. There is no place for civilians in Syria, only armed rebels and Bashar's army. I had to leave.

As soon as my leg got better, I crossed the Turkish border to see what I could find in Reyhanl. Many Syrians were going there

so I thought maybe I could find a job or start a new life while I wait for the war to end. This has also been difficult. Local landlords take advantage of refugees. They see us like money. They charge us Istanbul prices to rent apartments in a little farming town.

Employers also take advantage of us. They pay us less than Turks. Much less. I was being offered 20 Turkish Lira for 15 hours of work before I got a teaching job at a private school.

I'm just barely self-sufficient now, but still, nothing is easy. You know there was a terrorist attack here? I was having a tea in the town center when the first bomb went off. It couldn't have been more than 25 meters away from where I was sitting. I ran as fast as I could. I went so fast I lost my sandals and ran barefoot over broken glass. My feet were a bloody mess. I still have some scars. See?

The locals blamed us for the attack. They said Syrians brought the war across the border. Angry mobs destroyed every car with Syrian license plates. We received threats. Our neighbors told us to move to another town. I didn't leave my house for 10 days. I didn't eat and lost two kilos during that time.

Now Reyhanl is more or less back to normal. I work, I eat, I sleep, but I'm still looking for a way out of here. People say it's easy to reach Europe from Istanbul. First, I need to save up money. Then there's the paperwork. Always paperwork and I don't understand Turkish.

I just want to live without war again. I'm so tired of migrating. Of moving, changing apartments, being without friends. Being without family. I want to start a family. No one can understand our suffering.

"I don't want to die. I'm still waiting to marry, you know, this is very important for Syrian men. After university we are supposed to get married and start a family. I'm still waiting for this to happen"

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"There is no place for civilians in Syria, only armed rebels and Bashar's army"







**The Letter B**  
**Abir Hashem – 36 years old, Primary School Teacher, Aleppo region**

When my students write the letter “B,” they cross it out. Some stopped writing all together. For them, “B” stands for Bashar.

One day, I was teaching the alphabet and one of the boys said he hated this letter. Started yelling. He was so angry. Just six years old.

The influence of war has been too heavy on the smaller children. They are young and they relate everything to violence. When I draw pencils on the board, they see missiles. When I draw a cloud with rain drops, they see a plane dropping bombs.

It’s hard to talk about families because many children have been separated from their relatives. They lost their parents and live with their uncles, grandmothers, cousins. There is no stability in their lives so they always talk about their memories of Syria, wanting to go back to Syria. They talk about life before the war.

Yesterday, there was a lesson on “home” and “what is my home.” I gave them papers to draw their homes and some drew houses that were on fire, houses that were destroyed. One drew a tank next to his house.

I see it in my children as well. I am a mother of three girls and one boy. My youngest daughter also talks about our old house all the time. She always says it

was so big and so nice.

“What happened to our house?” she asks me. “What do you think happened to all my toys? Will they still be there when we go back?”

I just tell her not to worry. That she’ll get all her toys back after the war. What else can I say?

I am like any human being. Maybe I look strong when I stand in front of the classroom, but most of the time I am trying not to cry. The children tell me so many stories. How their fathers died, how they lost their friends, everything. They are so small.

I often go home depressed. Every day there is a new story about someone’s brother who did not come home. We all have relatives that are still in Syria and we always receive bad news.

At the beginning of the revolution, I was always out in the streets to protest. I was also a teacher then, but got fired when the school administrator found out I was part of the movement.

It didn’t matter. I was doing whatever I could to support the demonstrators. When the military started shooting people, I drove my car around with medical supplies to take care of the wounded. This was illegal, of course, and the police put my name on a list because of my actions.

They began searching for me in the streets and in my home. I had to move. I stopped going out during the day. I changed my clothes and covered my face, but I was still active. All the women in my

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## Cover Story | Syria's Sickness

neighborhood were scared. They told me to stop supporting the protestors. "It's too dangerous for a woman," they would say.

The men also. They would tell me to stay in my home, but I could not. This was too important. We needed to do whatever we could to get rid of Bashar and his regime. Egypt and Tunisia had done it and we really believed we could do the same in Syria.

With my car, I would also deliver food to the protestors. Keep them energized because we slept very little in those days. One night I bought ten kilos of meat and began driving to a house where revolutionary leaders held meetings.

I didn't know it, but the butcher was suspicious. "Why are you buying so much meat?" he asked me. I didn't answer. Then, when I left, he reported me to the police.

Ten minutes later, I was stopped by the military and they began interrogating me. I didn't know what to do so I forced myself to cry like I was confused or scared. Fortunately, they let me go that night, but it got worse after that.

I became known as a revolutionary in my town. There weren't many women in the movement and I stood out. Eventually, the military came looking for me in my apartment complex. I was home with my husband and children at the time. We watched them go from door to door, checking each apartment. There were men with rifles asking my neighbors where I was.

I was trapped. I couldn't go out of the house. The military had surrounded our apartment and I didn't know what to do. The soldiers knocked on every door, asked questions, repeated my name. Then I heard their footsteps coming up the

stairs, approaching our door. In that moment I asked my husband to divorce me.

I figured one of us should stay alive to care for our children. Maybe if he divorced me and told the soldiers I was acting alone, that I was crazy, maybe the military would only take me away and leave him with our kids. I was crying. I was begging him for a divorce. I wanted him to blame me for everything.

Then, somehow, I don't know what happened, but the soldiers skipped our door. I think they arrested one of my neighbors and took them away. I'm not sure, but they never knocked. Maybe it was a mistake, I can't say. They stayed in our building for a while longer and then left. I couldn't believe it. We had been spared.

I left Syria after that night. That was enough. I moved my family to Reyhanl. We came without food, without clothes, without anything.

At first, we weren't doing much, just waiting. In this period I began gathering the neighborhood children, all Syrian refugees, and I started giving informal classes in my backyard. I wanted to make the best of my time.

Then I was lucky enough to get a job at Al Salam School for Syrian Refugees. I have stayed there ever since. It's stable and I like to teach children. That's what I do.

Every week, the school receives more children that only recently left Syria. Many of them have been out of school for more than two years. It's a hard job, but I just try to keep them from thinking about the war. I focus there attention on the future.

They just need a safe place where they can play and be children again. They are so young.

"Yesterday, there was a lesson on "home" and "what is my home." I gave them papers to draw their homes and some drew houses that were on fire, houses that were destroyed. One drew a tank next to his house"



# Syria ايروس as a country



By CAROLYNN LOOK  
GSDM Editorial Assistant

As one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities, Syria's capitol Damascus has seen the rise and fall of many kingdoms, rulers and battles. From its first settlement in the second millennium BC, when it became the powerful and lively centre of the Umayyad Caliphate, to its decline in later eras and complete decay during Ottoman rule, the city played many roles before it became the capital of what is now known as the Syrian Arab Republic.

Syria became a French mandate after World War I and gained independence in 1946. After that, however, began a tumultuous period of on and off conflicts until the late 1960s, involving its participation in the Arab-Israeli War and various coup d'etats (in fact, in 1949 there were three in the same year). As a consequence of the Suez Crisis, Syria signed a pact with the Soviet Union in 1956, exchanging Communist influence in the government for military weapons. In 1958, Syrian and Egyptian leaders announced the merging of the two countries, creating the United Arab Republic. The Syrian Ba'athist Party, one of the many parties whose activities were terminated with the merge, was concerned about the fragility of the union and formed an undercover Military Committee. Amongst the founding members was Captain Hafez al-Assad, current President Bashar's father. When

Syria withdrew from the union in 1961, the ensuing instability made way the Ba'ath Party's 1963 coup d'etat. In spite of the party's efforts to direct the country after years of instability, in 1966 it split into two Syrian- and Iraqi-led factions, the former of which has ruled Syria for more than 40 years until the current day, first by Hafez and later, after an unrivaled election in 2000, by Bashal al-Assad, who was only his father's third favorite choice as successor as he had no practical political experience.

Throughout this time Syria faced several conflicts with Israel, starting with an argument over cultivation of disputed lands, leading to their involvement in Egypt's war with Israel, and later in 1973 to the Yom Kippur War. In 1976, Syria began a 30-year military occupation of Lebanon, fighting over control with Israel, that ended in 2005.

Various Islamist and non-Islamist uprisings took aim at the Syrian government prior to Bashar's rule with hopes of reform, but were always quickly suppressed and led to thousands of victims caused by both sides. It wasn't until the emergence of the Arab Spring that something began to change in the nature of these uprisings and their subsequent repression. Beginning as a chain of peaceful protests for the release of some teenage graffiti writers in 2011, these were followed by brutal crackdowns by the

"In 1958, Syrian and Egyptian leaders announced the merging of the two countries, creating the United Arab Republic"

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"Bashal al-Assad, was his father's third favorite choice as successor as he had no practical political experience"

## Country Profile | Syria

Syrian Army. Opposition forces soon formed the Free Syrian Army, which has been in a civil war with the government ever since, leading to over 100,000 deaths since the conflict began and a total of 2.1 million Syrian refugees who have fled to

neighbouring Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq. As the violence escalates, more and more people die every day as the country becomes evermore fragmented and unstable.

### KEY INDICATORS



**Population:** 22,457,336 (July 2013 est.)

**Area:** 185,180 sq km (includes 1,295 sq km of Israeli-occupied territory)

**Geography:** located in the Middle East, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, as well as Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey. Mostly desert with mountains in the west, as well as two inactive volcanoes.

**Languages:** Arabic (official), Kurdish, Armenian, Aramaic, Circassian (widely understood)

**Ethnic groups:** Arab 90.3%, Kurds, Armenians, and other 9.7%. Also, large group of Palestinian refugees.

**Religion:** Sunni Muslim (Islam – official) 74%, other Muslim (includes Alawite, Druze) 16%, Christian (various denominations) 10%, Jewish (tiny communities in Damascus, Al Qamishli, and Aleppo)

**Human Development Index:** 0.648; rank 116 out of 187



### EDUCATION

–Literacy: 84.1% (male 90.3%, female 77.7%)

### WOMEN

–ongoing conflict has in many cases led to rape and other forms of violence against women  
–personal status laws and the penal code contain provisions that discriminate against women and girls, particularly in marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance, even though constitution guarantees “gender equality”

### CHILDREN

–11,470 children have died in conflict, 70% of which were killed by explosive weapons  
–1.1 million children are living as refugees and many have lost their parents and are unable to go to school

### FREEDOM

–civil war limits virtually all activities with daily threats of violence a fear permeating all aspects of life

### ECONOMY

–GDP growth: 3.4% (2010) down to 2.3% (2011)  
–GDP per capita: \$5,100 (2011; a tenth of per capita income in the US)  
–public debt makes up 52.2% of GDP (2012)  
–since outbreak of civil war, faces massive economic sanctions from US, EU, Arab League, and other countries

### ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

–deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion, desertification, water pollution from raw sewage and petroleum refining wastes, inadequate potable water

## The Post-MDG Agenda:

# Why Keep Investing in Education?



APARNA S PATANKAR  
GSDM Special Correspondent  
Global Education

When speaking at a special event at the United Nations this September, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon told the audience that aid for education had dropped for the first time in a decade. He urged them to see that although much progress has been made in spreading access to education since the adoption of the millennium development goals, there was still much more to be done. He pointed out that conflict ridden countries still remain unaffected by much of the work done to achieve the MDGs, explaining for these unstable countries house as much as half of all children lacking education.

The Secretary-General's message echoes what was written in "A New Global Partnership: Eradication Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development", the report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. This report also emphasizes that great progress has been made on each of the eight millennium development goals and that since their adoption, half billion fewer people are living in poverty, deaths from malaria have fallen by twenty-five percent, and 590 million children in developing countries – a record high – attended primary school. However, it stresses that much more must be done, as the work surrounding the MDGs has not done enough to lift all people out of poverty and in fact often missed the populations that were most in need.

In the report, the Panel urges the global community to keep faith in the original aims of the MDGs and

complete what they set out to accomplish by moving beyond reducing extreme poverty to ending it, in all its forms. The Panel believes that for the first time, the global community has the opportunity to end extreme poverty by 2030, by designing smart goals, properly sharing responsibility, and vowing to ensure that every person has basic economic opportunities and human rights. In deepening and expanding our efforts to fight poverty, continuing to invest in education is vital. In this report, the High Level Panel outlines twelve illustrative goals, and education is the first step towards progress on each:

### The twelve goals:

1. End poverty
2. Empower girls and women and achieve gender equality
3. Provide quality education and lifelong learning
4. Ensure healthy lives
5. Ensure food security and good nutrition
6. Achieve universal access to water and sanitation
7. Secure sustainable energy
8. Create jobs, sustainable livelihoods, and equitable growth
9. Manage natural resource assets sustainably
10. Ensure good governance and effective institutions.
11. Ensure stable and peaceful societies
12. Create a global enabling environment and catalyze long-term finance

"Since the adoption of MDGs, half billion fewer people are living in poverty, deaths from malaria have fallen by twenty-five percent, and 590 million children in developing countries – a record high – attended primary school. However, much more must be done"



The third goal directly addresses education, advocating for widespread access to not only primary but also pre-primary and lower secondary education and setting the target that children worldwide are meeting minimum learning standards. Though seemingly disconnected, the Panel explains how this education centered goal and all the others are actually intertwined. Providing widespread access to education will also contribute to each of the other goals, such as ending poverty by teaching children the skills they need to earn a livelihood and provide for their families. Education also fights the discrimination that leads to violence against women and informs girls of their rights and empowers them to exercise them. Formal and informal education also teaches people how to keep their water sources clean, fight malnutrition, use health services effectively, and prevent and treat disease. Focused education programs can also teach sustainable agriculture practices, demonstrate how to survive natural disasters, and encourage people to phase out fossil fuels. Together, each of these benefits of education cultivate more stable and peaceful societies. Strong education systems are the foundations upon which we can build the structures and programs to eradicate poverty.

Despite its recognized importance in achieving any and all of the goals outlined in the MDGs and by the High Level Panel, aid to education systems' is in decline. Many people around the world seem to be crossing it off the list, now that the MDGs

have provided millions of children around the world with education, but there is so much more to be done.

As the Secretary-General, and the report explain, conflict-ridden zones have not been reached by the education programs and services created following the adoption of the MDGs. The post-2015 development agenda must do much more to reach these children and communities, as "28 million children in countries emerging from conflict are still not in school, and in twenty countries, at least one in five children has never even been to school." The Panel urges the world to recognize this undelivered promise of the MDGs. With this investment in education, the global community can deliver on each of the other goals and targets outline in our shared development agenda. As UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Director-General, Irina Bokova stated, "Cutting back on education means cutting the most powerful investment a country can make. Reducing aid to education means undermining the sustainability of all development."

Ensuring that all children are receiving an education and actually learning the skills that they need for success and citizenship in today's interconnected world will unlock the possibility of ending poverty by the year 2030. The global community must come together and demand that we make this critical investment and continue providing necessary education aid to developing countries around the world.

"Education also fights the discrimination that leads to violence against women and informs girls of their rights and empowers them to exercise them. Formal and informal education also teaches people how to keep their water sources clean, fight malnutrition, use health services effectively, and prevent and treat disease"

...

"Strong education systems are the foundations upon which we can build the structures and programs to eradicate poverty"

# Tragic disasters and confusing troubles



By **KHALID HUSSAIN**  
GSDM South Asia Editor

Calamity is never welcome and trouble is best avoided. Tragedies burden families and test nations. However, there is no running away from national tragedies caused by natural disasters. The massive earthquake suffered by people in Dalbandin, Awaran, Nawaran, Panjgoor, Ketch, Makran, Turbat and Gawadar must get relief with assured rehabilitation.

When time tests nations, war front are formed by statesmen. We have a disaster at our hands also because most of our leaders are themselves naturally inclined disasters personified on their own. The Prime Minister, who is also the foreign minister and the defense minister, is out of the country on his American visit. Preparedness is insurance against disasters. The new government didn't think that way in abolishing the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) on August 21, earlier this year. This was the only federal institution with capacity to respond to an earthquake disaster. The provinces have little

authority as the ERRA had been run by serving army generals who were even less interested in provincial autonomy and local decision making than the federal finance minister or even the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The long and short of it is that we have no institutional assurance affected people in Balochistan are getting relief. We cannot even say with any degree of confidence as to what has been the exact death toll. Knowing the situation in that province and having seen the system working government there for the last many years, there cannot be an intact system to reliably tell us how many people have been injured in this natural disaster. The region borders Iran and is extremely sparsely populated. Scattered over many hundreds of square kilometers are some 337,000 citizens within the 100 kilometer radii from the epicenter in Awaran. Every one lives in mud houses in these desert like regions. These fragile structures are liable to collapse under the severity of a 7.8

"We have no institutional assurance affected people in Balochistan are getting relief. We cannot even say with any degree of confidence as to what has been the exact death toll"

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earthquake. The rising island off shore Gawadar is geological proof of extensive tarsands and shale underlying strata in this oil, gas and mineral rich region.

Reports suggest earthquake destroyed whole villages leaving hundreds of people waiting for relief under open skies in Awaran, Kech, Turbat and Gwadar districts of Balochistan. There are only four helicopters available in that province to carry relief goods and all they could do was to send out one team of doctors to the affected area. The Army is contributing most of the men and materials in this effort. One cannot imagine "19 trucks loaded with food packets, tents, blankets, medicines and other stuff" extending relief to more than a thousand or so affected people.

The tragedy is being more appreciated by foreign states and messages of sorrow and grief are pouring in along with offers to help in urgent relief activities. British Queen Elizabeth has directed her Prime Minister David Cameron to immediately contact the Pakistan government and inquire about providing relief supplies to the quake hit people. There is an institutional vacuum in state preparedness with committees of bureaucrats – Secretary Cabinet, Secretary Finance, Secretary Planning and Development, Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Chief Secretary Azad Kashmir—still out trying to work out modalities for winding up ERRA. The Chinese are talking relief using their regular civilian as well as military channels. Other friendly countries also want to help the earthquake people.

As one ERRA professional said last month, "This is unfortunate the government is going to close down ERRA, where I spent 8 years and acquired training and knowledge to deal with natural calamities such as earthquakes, which have become a common feature in the country during the last eight years. ERRA has completed about 9,500 projects from 2005 to 2013 and has also constructed 600,000 earthquake resistance houses for which it has won United Nations' SASAKAWA award".

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) – the institutional winner in the sorry battle over relief money and jurisdiction in disaster over ERRA—is itself on record acknowledging provincial governments lack support for

disaster management. "At the federal level the system enjoys political support, but at the provincial level the situation is not encouraging. The fact that the meetings of Provincial Disaster Management Committees (PDMCs) in Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan have not been convened, reflects a lack of political support to the disaster management system, leading to ad hoc policies to deal with disaster situations with a 'fire-fighting' approach which undermines the evolutionary process of the newly established system," an NDMA report recently said.

However, it is not about the existence of parallel laws or duality of institutional responsibilities but the simple confusion and apparent inability of our politicians to understand the complexity that is their mandate to govern in our state. An accountant's approach to debt management cannot substitute for the guidance of a seasoned statesman guided by astute advisors towards alternatives that look at challenges in terms of opportunities to find effective ways forward in social life and national economy. Statesmanship demands agreeing to the terms of agreements and rule making cannot substitute for implementation intent or accountability. Disaster relief at the federal level is now with the Cabinet Division under Rules of Business. In the provinces, Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMA) operate under archaic Relief Commissions established using the legal instrument of the Calamities Act, 1958.

The NDMA versus ERRA sorry scene and tragic story is but a mere reflection of our larger confusion and utter mismanagement in governance across Pakistan. Confusion defines a politics in which rumor has currency because actions are based upon imaginations seldom allowed to be challenged by anyone.

The new government is using the "civil society" vocabulary in its confused efforts to join global currents without realizing it is their own home that needs to be set in order which is not an order that comes with international conventions but from respecting local needs. These confusions certainly cannot help at a time of national disaster. In other words, the poor, as always, suffer the most!

"The new government is using the "civil society" vocabulary in its confused efforts to join global currents without realizing it is their own home that needs to be set in order which is not an order that comes with international conventions but from respecting local needs. These confusions certainly cannot help at a time of national disaster.

In other words, the poor, as always, suffer the most!"



# The Difficulties of Establishing Consensus in Development



By EDVIN ARNBY MACHATA  
GSDM West Africa Editor

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Over the last half millennia, our species has made enormous progress in medicine, industry, economics and virtually every other field of human pursuit. Global average life expectancy has increased from around 25 in the early 1800 to 70 today. However, when attempting to explain this development – that is, broad, sustainable and practically irreversible change in the political and economical structures of society – our knowledge has not progressed at all as impressively.

The 1930s and 40s did see some breakthrough developments: John Maynard Keynes (1936) creating the field of macroeconomics, Ronald Coase (1937) explaining the reason for the existence of firms, Karl Polanyi (1944) showing the deep connections between market and society, and F.A. Hayek (1945) explaining prices as a mechanism that transfers information on the scarcity or abundance of goods.

Since then however, the debate has been going back and forth, mostly recycling and re-formatting old ideas – humorously and rather accurately portrayed by an Econstories rap. Few revolutionary discoveries have been made.

## The lack of consensus – is it really a problem?

As to the larger historical debate of what first caused or laid the groundwork for the industrial revolution and/or the revolution in the sciences – and which was caused by which – we may be content with not coming to agreement. After all, the implications would seem to be more philosophical than practical.

However, when it comes to the problem of why some countries still lag

behind others – why economic and social developments worldwide are less equal than they have ever been – the lack of consensus does provide policy-makers with real dilemmas regarding how to proceed with their development strategies.

Over the last five decades, civil servants in low- and middle- income countries have watched in frustration as ideological leaders and donor countries have put upon them new conditions and requirements for policy, largely depending on what would be the current trend in the many think tanks of international development.

## A Marxist-Statist post-independence period

Through both violent and non-violent independence struggles, Marxism had often been an inspiration for many independence movements with its imagery of fighting for the oppressed. As their economies had been subservient for the western centre for more than 70 years, many post-independence leaders made their economic autonomy a national priority.

Inspired by the initial successes of interwar state-driven industrialization in the Soviet Union, many post-independence governments prioritized their own through a strategy called import substitution industrialization (ISI) – too often to the detriment of their agricultural sectors. As a consequence, food prices changed little, and poverty rates remained stagnant.

Furthermore, without increased agricultural production and the revenue that would have come with it, they had difficulties in paying for industrial and infrastructural investments. So they

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"Through both violent and non-violent independence struggles, Marxism had often been an inspiration for many independence movements with its imagery of fighting for the oppressed"

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" The Washington Consensus was typically implemented through Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), which cut or abolished tariffs, and cut government spending on infrastructure and social services alike. However, most of the economies 'set free' by the SAPs were not dynamic enough to provide development without a purpose and vision coming from central government"



moved away from taxation towards external creditors in order to secure the necessary financing.

Worse, as populations grew, food prices instead raised, sometimes lowering living standards. As a consequence, Marxist-Statist ideals fell out of favour, their governments lost popularity, and their states racked up unhealthy amounts of debt.

### The Liberal-Monetarist reaction

Coming to their aid were primarily international financial institutions like the World Bank and the IMF. They had money badly needed by many developing countries, and therefore the ability to make demands. In reaction to the statist failures, they advocated a new development paradigm, widely known as "the Washington Consensus" – a sign of the undisputed dominance of the USA. Embodying Milton Friedman's monetarist ideas, it sought to dismantle state power, balance public budgets, lower inflation and set the market free to distribute available resources as efficiently as possible.

Through Margaret Thatcher's talk of there being 'no alternative' to Thomas Friedman's idea of 'the golden strait-jacket', this narrative and agenda has gone hand in hand with western individualism and the neoliberal wave through much of Europe since the end of the Cold War.

The Washington Consensus was typically implemented through Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), which cut or abolished tariffs, and cut government spending on infrastructure and social

services alike. However, most of the economies 'set free' by the SAPs were not dynamic enough to provide development without a purpose and vision coming from central government.

Instead, marginalized farmers became even more marginalized, often losing access to markets and income generating opportunities due to failing infrastructure and weakened marketing boards. Many left for the cities, where they had to compete with a similar underprivileged urban underclass. As public funding contracted, little could be done to accommodate countryside migrants, who came to live in ever sprawling shantytowns.

Similar reforms had similar effects in developed countries alike. The shock-therapy programme of aggressive reforms in Russia almost destroyed the state, leading to increased crime, alcoholism as well as an unheard-of 5-year drop in male life expectancy (Notzon et al, 1998) – arguably history's greatest non-famine, non-war loss of life due to a policy failure.

### An institutionalist atonement

In searching for answers to why the SAPs hadn't worked as hoped, attention was brought back to society and the state, but to its quality rather than quantity. The new institutionalist paradigm, sometimes called the "post-Washington Consensus", did not seek to significantly strengthen the state or give it a significant economic role. Nevertheless, it recognized the central role of the state in establishing and enforcing the rule of law – in short to offer a venue for the peaceful, just and

"The task for civil servants and development professionals cannot be to find a magic bullet solution – because no such solutions exist. The question is rather one of how to establish continuous mechanisms with which problems can be detected, analysed, and solved"

relatively predictable resolution of disputes and conflicts. In practice, this meant that more specific requirements on governmental performance, accountability and transparency were added on top of the anti-statist SAPs.

However, the inner contradiction between discouraging states developmental roles and promoting 'good governance' meant unfortunately that state institutions often were not strong enough to effectively fill this function. Furthermore, the opportunities in government for bright, honest professionals paled in comparison to the private sector: those who could left governmental agencies for better prospects in the private sector – a domestic brain-drain.

### The return of Keynesianism from the global south?

This paradigm is now shifting towards a new Keynesianism, driven by the successes of India, China and to a lesser extent Brazil, where private companies drive growth together with governments.

Their models can partly be seen as a challenge to US and liberal economic hegemony – pungently symbolized in the attempt to found a BRICS development bank as an alternative to the IMF and the World Bank. While many obstacles exist, this institution could potentially drive this new paradigm in other developing countries across the globe.

While it is too early to tell how this new paradigm will be undermined, discredited and replaced, it is highly likely that this will happen sooner or later.

### The importance of context – the example of marketing boards

While we have been unable to find a universal truth of what works in development through these shifting paradigms, we have nevertheless been able to observe many success stories that occurred under any and each of these differing systems of economic thought. It thus appears that the determining factors of a successful project are highly contextual.

Take agricultural marketing boards for instance, an institution decried by laissez-faire economists as price-distorting and inefficient. In reality it had quite mixed results depending on the politico-economical context.

Agricultural marketing boards were first introduced in Europe in the 1930s to create greater economic security for farmers: they would be guaranteed a set price per volume delivered, and the board would keep any surplus in times of high prices in order to absorb the hit when market prices fell. In some cases, they would also use surpluses to make collective investments and or channel support like subsidized fertilizer or farm equipment to the farmers.

The largest such scheme is the EU Common Agricultural Policy, whose subsidies make up about half of the entire EU budget. In the EU, it successfully maintains an overproduction of food, while keeping the number of farmers roughly stagnant. While small, EU agriculturalists have a powerful lobby in Brussels that make loud protests as soon as the CAP is threatened. Whether the current form of the CAP is good for the EU as a whole is another question – but it is a resilient and functional institution that secures access to food for +500 million inhabitants.

In Tanzania during the 1980s however, marketing boards were not supporting the interests of farmers. The ruling party, the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) saw rural elites as competing centres of power, and thus the board became a potent tool with which to undermine their power. Consequently, they gave farmers a too low price for their goods and offered too few subsidies and development projects in return (Bates, 1995: 42–3).

In Kenya during the same time period, rural elites were integral to the national elite bargain. State marketing boards became a channel through which to award their constituents, the result being increased food production and a modernized agricultural sector (Bates, 1995: 43–4). This in turn paved the way for later successes in more lucrative horticultural production.

The social, political, and economical context is made up of so many different variables that it is virtually impossible to account for all of them satisfactorily – it is extremely difficult to predict the outcome of any given project beforehand. Thus, the task for civil servants and development professionals cannot be to find a magic bullet solution – because no such solutions exist. The question is rather one of how to establish continuous mechanisms with which problems can be detected, analysed, and solved.

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# Reproductive Health and Climate Change Impact in Bangladesh



By TITHE FARHANA  
GSDM Correspondent, Bangladesh

"Due to unavailability of contraceptive methods, she became pregnant at 17"

....

"Even next day of my delivery, I went for shrimp collection"

....

"Each year approximately 5,36,000 women die as result of complications during pregnancy and child birth in the 6 weeks following delivery "



Salma Banu , 23 years old, a worker of shrimp cultivation, Tafalbari village , Southkhali Union, Bagherhat Bangladesh expressed " while my husband's monthly income from his cultivated land was not enough to continue fundamental demand of 8 members family, I was bound to involve for extra income ". Due to her husband's incapability for running the extended family , Salma involved in shrimp fry collection regularly and started to spend three to four hours regularly.

She says, 'my husband's monthly income was Tk 5,000 (approximately) per month', the amount was not enough to keep up a joint family while her husband was the only earning member . "Even, it became hard to earn Tk 5,000 due to erratic rainfall and salinity affecting agriculture".

Consequently, she became involved in shrimp fry collection regularly in 2011 and started to spend three to four hours regularly.

"When I became pregnant for the first time, I could not endure this extra pressure of income generation and as a result I delivered a dead child." She further tells, "Even in the very next

day of my delivery I went for shrimp collection"

She considered, if they had any other options, they could have migrated to any other places.

Momtaj Begum , 29 years old and mother of 2 children from Razapur Village, Modhupur thana Barisal says, "just after AILA in 2009 , contraceptive methods remained unavailable due to damages of local shop and pharmacy . Shops remained closed for 15 days, communication and transportation system were interrupted, field health providers remained absent, and FWA were unreachable due to bad communication".

Due to unavailability of contraceptive method, she became pregnant at an age of 17.

As the communication system was disrupted, she could not go to ANC. Finally, she had to deliver her child with the assistance of a traditional birth attendant at home. Her baby is malnourished and has been suffering from different diseases.

The World Health Organization (WHO) refers to maternal health as the health of woman during pregnancy,

"Unfortunately the poorest of society with no or limited access to proper healthcare, water and sanitation are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change"

"According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 11.6 million people were displaced last year in South Asia due to storms and floods."

"Prolonged exposure to filthy water during post disaster period cause severe skin diseases and gynecological problems to women"

"When a natural disaster occurs everyone focuses only on primary health care rather than availability of family planning, contraceptive commodities or pregnancy"

childbirth and the postpartum period. Each year approximately 5, 36,000 women die as result of complications during pregnancy, child birth in the 6 weeks following delivery.

One of the goals of the MDGs was to improve maternal health by reducing the maternal mortality ratio by 75 % and achieve universal access to reproductive health.

In countries like Bangladesh, some might find it strange though, Climate change is considered one of the biggest threats to achieving the MDG for maternal death, clearly emphasizing the need for better and geographically more specific knowledge of climate change and maternal health.

Statistically, almost 3 million neonatal deaths globally are attribute to maternal health condition, such as poor nutritional status, deprived living environment and infectious diseases.

There is growing evidence of the impacts of global environment changes on people, health and a renewed consciousness among people and nations of the need to act quickly to protect the health.

Environmental and health exposure is threatening the lives of millions in Bangladesh which is one of the most affected countries by climate change.

Illness and poor health means people are less able to carry on productive lives, and this undermines social and economic development. Unfortunately the poorest of society with no or limited access to proper healthcare, water and sanitation are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

It is estimated that BDT 500 crore is annually spent on physician fees, medicine and travel costs which means illness and ill health are also huge financial burdens.

The cyclones in Bangladesh in 1970 and 1991 were estimated to have caused 300,000 and 139,000 deaths respectively. In Global Climate Risk Ranking 2007 it is reported that Bangladesh had highest number of deaths (4729) due to extreme weather events (mostly) by storms, followed by floods and heat waves) in 2007.

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 11.6 million people were displaced last year in South Asia due to storms and floods. This comprises more than 9 million displaced in India, 1.9 million in Pakistan, and 600,000 in Bangladesh. Current cyclone Mahasen has destroyed crops worth millions of dollars, severely hurting farmers of coastal areas.

Saroj Das , Technical Coordinator , Program Coordinator , Climate Change , Concern world Wide says, "There is now an emerging debate and interest about the links between population dynamics, sexual and reproductive health rights and climate change".

"After disaster danger of women becoming victims of sexual violence

increases".

Even, relief efforts don't take into consideration health needs of women like obstetrical care.

Prolonged exposure to filthy water during post disaster period cause severe skin diseases and gynecological problems to women.

Dr.Salamat Khandaker, Senior Consultant, Environment Health , WHO comments " the situation is even worse in coastal areas where a number of women are facing pre- eclampsia , eclampsia as well as the prevalence of pregnancy induced systolic and diastolic hypertension has highly increased than before".

"Both prenatal and maternal mortality is persistently high in the coastal areas : both in hypertension and pre-eclampsia the expecting mother encounters impaired liver function and both are risk of death". He further says, "During the dry season in saline prone areas, women and adolescent girls, even pregnant mothers are forced to fetch water which causes various health , gynecological problems like premature death of foetus , abortion and still birth", he argues.

"The link between gender and climate change straightforwardly influence over negative aspects on RH."

Dr.Zainul Abedin, Former International Rice Research Institute ( IRRI ) Country representative for Bangladesh observes, "Shrimp cultivation has rapidly increased on coastal areas, that is going to be a threat especially for women health".

He also claims, "increasing salinity level also increased incidents of hypertensions in the coastal areas and is a major problem for expecting women that causes abortion."

Saroj says, "The government has already set up 1,38,000 community clinics in villages, costal belts and remote areas which are playing important role for community health as well as reproductive health."

"Lack of policies and implementation of existing policies are major drawback", argues, Dr. Atiq Rahman , Executive Director , Bangladesh Center for Advanced Studies .

"To state the relationship between climate change and reproductive health", he argues that there is a close association between climate change and abortion which should be more studied.

Meanwhile, Reproductive health facilities are missing in the shelter centers: when a natural disaster occurs everyone focuses only on primary health care rather than availability of family planning, contraceptive commodities or pregnancy.

He stated that "for emergency packages during disaster emergency contraceptives should be included". Climate has been destabilizing the population change dynamics. In this regard, each of the primary, secondary and connecting links between climate change and reproductive health should be

"Saline tolerant rice , robi crops and cultivation of horticulture can have strong impact on income generation activities on rural and coastal areas that can reduce migration from rural to urban areas"

"through proper understanding of climate change issue and its impending effects on health, timely initiation of preparedness activities with thorough participation of community, Bangladesh has the potential to be successful once again in combating health effects of climate change"

taken into account.

"After Aila and Sider high salinity intrusion affected coastal areas people, especially women, we are thinking on this issue seriously," said Mr. Atiq.

Women are the best agent to overcome this situation and climate smart development is necessary.

Advocacy is very important: advocate with policy makers on RH and gender in climate change adaption policies can be effective expressed Dr. Salamat. Morshed Noman a Senior Health Journalist says, "Advocacy with support of community media, health and population service providers, policy actions for integration of relevant policies in order to focus the population health issues included RH". Income generation can be a major issue, whereas, women empowerment is very important too. Capacity building of women famers is very important, for this perspective land rights, programs for rural women, technology transfers, gender sensitive issues will be prioritized.

Dr. Abedin considered "Saline tolerant rice , robi crops and cultivation of horticulture can have strong impact on income generation activities on rural and coastal areas that can reduce migration from rural to urban areas. These practices will also ensure food security, nutrition and balance diet to women and children as well as to local communities".

Dr. Md. Sirajul Islam, Associate Professor and Chairman , Department of Environmental Science and Management (DESM) and Faculty Advisor, Earth Club , North South University Bangladesh considers, "Population contributes to green house gas emission that impact on climate change. In this regard, minimizing high consuming population is a challenge."

Every feature is internally linked, economically population control and poverty alleviation are major issues which has vitally influenced over RH issues. Especially, debates over climate change already raised questions for sustainable development for developing and under developing countries .We should consider the population management which manages birth control , death control and mother-child mortality rates.

Women focused programs are urgent which can be driving force for women empowerment. Development partners, Govt, NGOs and other development consortium stakes should consider the facts.

### Threats for Public Health

It has been reported that drought is increasing in some areas of Bangladesh due to changes of rainfall pattern as a result of climate change. The effect of drought on health include death, malnutrition, infectious diseases and respiratory maladies. Draught and lack of food were associated with an increased risk of mortality from diaphragic illness . The transmission of mosquito borne diseases

may be affected by drought events.

Dr. Atiq Rahman indicated on his study Climate Change and it's impact on Health in Bangladesh, Regional Health Forum that "impacts associated with heat waves are heat stroke, dehydration and aggravation of cardiovascular diseases in elderly people."

Vector Borne diseases infections are transmitted by the bite of infected arthropod species, such as mosquitoes, ticks, bugs, sand flies and black flies . In the same study he mentioned that changes in precipitation patterns are likely to compromise the supply of water, thus increasing the risk of water borne diseases.

Impact of adaptation and vulnerability contribution of working group II to the fourth assessment report of the intergovernmental panel on climate change indicated that climate change is expected to quality problems. Coastal water and it's saline environment have close association with cholera diseases. Outbreaks of cholera often after occur after flooding, because the water supply becomes contaminated.

Another pollutant of concern is "particulate matter," also known as particle pollution or PM. Particulate matter is a complex mixture of extremely small particles and liquid droplets. When breathed in, these particles can reach the deepest regions of the lungs.

Experts are considering that pragmatic policy and intuitional and financial management for climate change and health sector will definitely and energetically work out.

The Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (2009) recognizes the importance of adaptation in health sector by including it in the first pillar of the plan. The health chapter of the ten years' perspective plan for 2010-2021 of the government with respect to climate change.

However, The Sixth Five Year (FY 2011-2015) of the government recognizes possible health impacts of degraded environment including due to climate change, and wants to "build capacity in the area of environmental health through both public and private sectors."

Similarly, the Health Population and Nutrition Sector Strategic Plan (HPNSSP) categorizes the key interventions required to accelerate the pace of the Health, Population and Nutrition sector in Bangladesh.

Dr. Md. Sirajul Islam considers "through proper understanding of climate change issue and its impending effects on health, timely initiation of preparedness activities with thorough participation of community, Bangladesh has the potential to be successful once again in combating health effects of climate change".

"For that policy makers and program designers must act with proper implementation of the planned activities with full cooperation of community and health work-forces at all levels."

# The World Through The Prism Of (Hydrocarbon) Energy



By HRIDAY SHARMA  
GSDM, South-South Cooperation

" First World War, the first of its kind to have occurred at a global level, was primarily driven by petrol or what has come to be popularly known as liquid-gold"

"It is important for countries in the South to realize the importance of acting in a synchronized way among themselves to get the real-price for the most valued commodity present in the planet, i.e. hydrocarbon energy"

We know, since the very time when the big-bang occurred there has been an unceasing race between all animate and inanimate matter in this universe, and the putative symmetrical universe if at all it exists, for securing energy that was released out of the explosion. The homo sapiens, a recent entrant to the mystifying dynamics of the compound universe, seem to have taken over the energy-show in the beautiful life-sustaining planet Earth. We, the homo sapiens, since our very beginning have tried to exploit the existing but subdued forms of energy in Earth for our self-interests, i.e. nothing but enhanced sustenance of our race. During the historic and pre-historic era, we tried to do this in a rudimentary way. However, from the time of inception of the modern-era we have progressively intensified the pace and magnitude of exploitation of energy, in particular the hydrocarbon based energy, in manifold terms for enhancing the quality of our living.

The actual showman of the World

War I were not the politicians/ diplomats and other heroes and villains that are repeatedly mentioned in history books. They were, in fact, the global capitalists of the time, like the U.S. natives, John Davison Rockefeller, Sr. Walter William Fondren, etc.; Swedish Nobel Brothers; Armenian Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian; French Rothchilds and perhaps this list may include a few very selected influential international businessmen belonging to the same genre of the time. They were the early oil magnates who were then endeavoring to realize the value of the hydrocarbon energy to mankind, which would define its destiny in the coming time. Ron Chernow rightly mentions in his book 'Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller, Sr.', which is a biography of Rockefeller, that- this very young man controls what is not only a national but an international monopoly in a commodity that is about to become the most important strategic commodity in the world economy (oil). Within a few years, he will control 90 percent of the

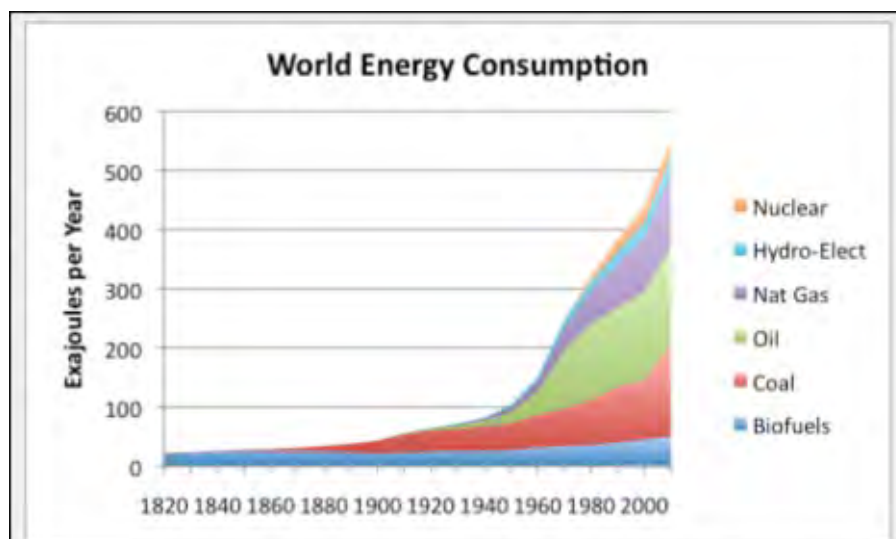


Figure 1. World Energy Consumption by Source, Based on Vaclav Smil estimates from Energy Transitions: History, Requirements and Prospects together with BP Statistical Data for 1965 and subsequent

"At the end of the WW II, the new superpowers of the world, i.e. the US and USSR, demarcated large parts of the world whereby they would have privileged rights of exploiting hydrocarbon resources for catering to their self-interests"

"The Cold War was, in fact, a race between the two superpowers to gain control of the (hydrocarbon) energy-rich undemarcated grounds around the world"

marketing of oil and a third of all of the oil wells.

This disastrous war, the first of its kind to have occurred at a global level, was primarily driven by petrol or what has come to be popularly known as liquid-gold. The end of war without the end of our race and with mere gory scars of humiliation on the face of the losing side imputed in them the zeal to produce and capture more sources of hydrocarbon energy that would enable them to take righteous vengeance the next time such a war happens. However as a measure of self-defense the winning side as well augmented their attempts to tread in the same direction to that of the former.

Beyond anyone's expectation, the unexpected did happen, i.e. World War II! It is because the enormous profits the international energy entrepreneurs could garner during the inter-war period, which further enamored them to intensify the existing competition between them by now using either their native or patronized states as weapons in their armory for expansion of their own global businesses. E.g. many credible sources point leads of U.S. based automobile entrepreneur Henry Ford of supporting the Nazi party campaign against Jews in Germany. Another cause of the outbreak of the WW II is the fact that the winning parties to the WW I, i.e. the state actors, on their part considerably fell short of achieving the minimum energy-deterrence level, which would have prevented their rival states from again taking on the (mis)-adventurous challenge. In fact, the fate of this greatest ever disastrous war in the course of human history finally swung in favor of the Allies for they had sovereign control over large hydrocarbon reserves and support of the leading global energy entrepreneurs of the time vis-a-vis Hitler & Co. who actually waged the war with the objective of securing both of that.

At the end of the WW II, the new superpowers of the world, i.e. the US and USSR, demarcated large parts of the world whereby they would have privileged rights of exploiting hydrocarbon resources for catering to their self-interests. However, large parts of the world, like Africa etc., still remained to be precisely demarcated between them, which subsequently became 'playground for superpower rivalry'. Hence, the Cold War was, in fact, a race between the two superpowers to gain control of the (hydrocarbon) energy-rich undemarcated grounds around the world. This rivalrous game was played under the pretext of propagating their respective ideologies in the very regions, while tacitly each of them let the other to engage in energy trade with one's allies geographically located under its sphere of influence to meet the latter's energy

needs. For instance, the Soviet Union supplied Western European countries with energy throughout the Cold War era and it amounted upto 75 percent of their natural gas and 25 percent of their oil consumption, while the U.S. never created any major impediment to either completely stop or temporarily halt the flow of energy.

The unprecedented dissolution of the all-powerful and enormous Soviet Union, which marked the formal end of Cold War, has unfolded a new chapter in the evolution of energy scenario in the world. From the very early times of securing independence, the smaller energy rich/ producing states and even the energy transit states that succeeded USSR have intensely tried to break-free from the previously Russia-centric Soviet energy grid and supply their plentiful hydrocarbon reserves to the international markets both to the East and West. They continue to do this till today and are most likely to do so even in the future. While on the other hand, Russia, the main successor state to erstwhile Soviet Union that initially attempted to modestly engage in energy trade with energy-consuming European countries on market-based terms as well as let other NIS countries do the same, has with the progression of time and accumulation of power and petrodollars has tightened its stance of determining the rules for supply of Eurasian energy in an autocratic manner. Moreover, there has emerged an energy-consuming dragon in the East, i.e. China, which of late has been endeavoring hard and fast to gobble-up from all possible amounts of hydrocarbon energy from all possible sources for its self-survival and enlargement.

In this ongoing cut-throat competition between the different sovereign states around the world for securing hydrocarbon energy, a million-dollar question that calls for an imperative and objective study is whether each one of us- i.e. every homo sapiens that are now officially tucked within these constructed forms of superior political units of governance, will be able to secure sufficient amounts of energy that is needed for his/ her self-survival and individual development in the near-future? It is high-time for the traditionally deprived section of the international community, i.e. the South countries, to realize the importance of acting in a synchronized way among themselves to get the real-price for the most valued commodity present in the planet, i.e. hydrocarbon energy, which they possess in ample quantity and also save enough of it for the development of their respective nationals before a group of neo global energy entrepreneurs from the Developed or Fast-Developing countries get a chance to conspicuously drag humanity to the brink of another World War.



## East African nations agree on monetary union

Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi will merge currencies gradually over the next ten years to boost trade.

The leaders of five East African countries have signed a protocol laying the groundwork for a monetary union within 10 years that they expect will expand regional trade. Heads of state of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, which have already signed a common market and a single customs union, said on Saturday that the protocol would allow them to progressively converge their currencies.

In the run-up to achieving a common currency, the East African Community (EAC) nations aim to harmonise monetary and fiscal policies and establish a common central bank. Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda already present their budgets simultaneously every June.

The plan by the region of about 135

million people, a new frontier for oil and gas exploration, is also meant to draw foreign investment and wean EAC countries off external aid.

"The promise of economic development and prosperity hinges on our integration," said Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta.

"Businesses will find more freedom to trade and invest more widely, and foreign investors will find additional, irresistible reasons to pitch tent in our region," said



Kenyatta, leader of the biggest economy in east Africa.

Kenyatta, who is due to face trial at the International Criminal Court on crimes against humanity charges in February, took over the chairmanship of the bloc from Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, hosting the summit.

Kenya has launched a \$13.8 billion Chinese-built railway that aims to cut transport costs, part of regional plans that

also include building new ports and railways.

### Challenges ahead

Landlocked Uganda and Kenya have discovered oil, while Tanzania has vast natural gas reserves, which require improved infrastructure and foreign investment so they can be exploited.

Tanzania, where the bloc's secretariat is based, has complained that it has been sidelined in discussions to plan these projects, but Kenyatta said the EAC was still united.

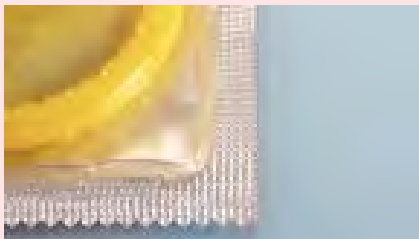
Kenneth Kitariko, chief executive officer at African Alliance Uganda, an investment advisory firm, said the monetary union would boost efficiency in the region's economy estimated at about \$85 billion in combined gross domestic product.

"In a monetary union, the absence of currency risk provides a greater incentive to trade," he said.

Kitariko said, however, that achieving a successful monetary union would require convergence of the union's economies, hinting that some challenges lay ahead.

"Adjusting to a single monetary and exchange rate policy is an inescapable feature of monetary union ... but this will take time and may be painful for some," he said, referring to the fact that some countries may struggle to meet agreed benchmarks. (Source Aljazeera)

## Indonesia cancels annual Condom Week



National Condom Week, an annual programme designed to raise awareness of HIV/Aids, has been cancelled this year after protesting students from an Islamic group burned condoms outside the Health Ministry, the Jakarta Post newspaper reports. The programme, a joint effort by the country's Aids Prevention Commission (KPA) and condom maker DKT Indonesia has been held for the past six years. But this time, it appears some have been offended by a campaign bus apparently showing a "vulgar" picture of local artist Julia Perez as a condom ambassador, Antara News says. The bus has since been withdrawn due to "public uproar", a ministry official says.

## North-South Experience Sharing For Food Security

William L. Campbell, an American Potato Disease Control Specialist working in the Department of Natural Resources of the State of Alaska, recently visited Bangladesh under the "Farmer-to-Farmer for Food Security Program" of Winrock International.

Mr. Campbell visited the two Seed Potato Villages (SPV) established at Sherpur and Shajahanpur areas of Bogra. Establishment of SPVs is an on-going activity under the PRICE-RDA program, and is a new approach of improving the quality of farmers' seed potatoes. Farmers' seed potatoes are those, which are not produced as seed potatoes, but are saved by the farmers from the potatoes produced for consumption purpose. The quality of such planting materials is not expected to be even of minimum standard, and obviously do not give a good yield. In Bangladesh, about 6 lakh tonnes of potatoes are planted every season, and more or less 80-90% of those are farmers' seed potatoes. Mr. Campbell appreciated the SPV idea, and suggested to promote the program reinforced with the idea of "Positive



Selection" technique of seed potato improvement.

Mr. Campbell's general recommendations for the potato workers of RDA, in addition to the recommendation for continuation of Seed Potato Village program, include :

- Investigating suitability of hydroponic or nutrient film technique in mini-tuber production;
- Investigating the performance of alternate pathogen testing method such as RT-PCR leading to reduction of cost compared to the cost involved in currently used ELISA method;
- Improvement of the potato seed certification system of Bangladesh;
- Experimenting with planting "green sprouted" or "chitting" seed tubers for earlier maturity of potato crop. Mr. Campbell gave a seminar on "Seed Potato Production - Bangladesh and Alaskan Context" in a Faculty Meeting of RDA.

## UK aid to Uganda halted after officials steal £1.3m

EXPRESS



The scheduled package of £37.5million cash over two years is now to go directly to charities working with the country's poor.

It is the first time that Britain has cut grants to a government after corruption but the decision by Tory International Development Secretary Justine Greening is unlikely to placate opponents of overseas aid.

Ms Greening said: "Swift action by Britain and Uganda ensured our funds were returned in full, but we cannot return to business as usual."

The theft was detected by the Ugandan auditor general working with Whitehall officials.

Prime minister Amama Mbabazi said security has been improved. "Police have undertaken extensive investigations in the affected ministries," he said. David Cameron has angered many voters by increasing foreign aid to nearly £12billion a year while cutting other budgets.

Robert Oxley of the TaxPayers' Alliance said: "Cancelling aid to a government after the fact simply isn't good enough. Cash from taxpayers pockets has already ended up in the wrong hands."

CHINADAILY Europe

## China: plans to tackle brain drain

**2.64 million** estimated number of Chinese that have moved overseas to study since 1978

**272,900 students** returned to China in 2012, according to the Ministry of Education

Government provides generous salaries and incentives to lure the best talent, but obstacles remain on their way home, reports Zhang Yuchen.

Faced with a shrinking pool of high-level talent in recent years, China has established a number of programs to tackle the "brain drain", while simultaneously encouraging a "brain gain". While some have produced encouraging results, others have encountered setbacks.

The number of Chinese studying abroad has increased from fewer than 120,000 in 2003 to about 400,000 now.

Last year, 272,900 students, holding a variety of qualifications, returned to China. But of the 2.64 million Chinese who have studied overseas since 1978, only 1.09 million have returned.

"The longer these talented individuals stay overseas, the less willing they are to

come back. Many of them fear that they may have to start all over again when they return," said Wang Yaohui, director of the Center for China & Globalization, a Beijing think tank that advises the government on the recruitment of talent. Chinese people with a PhD who have lived overseas for three to five years seldom choose to return, according to a report by the Blue Book of Global Talent, which was released in September by the Social Sciences Academic Press, a publisher affiliated with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

In 2008, the government launched the "Thousand Talents Plan" to tempt the well-educated Chinese back to their homeland after studying and working abroad. The program also embarked on a headhunting exercise to pinpoint and actively encourage the very best talent to return.

The stated goal of the plan was to attract 2,000 established academics and entrepreneurs with overseas PhDs and research experience to return to China within 10 years. It provides generous salaries and start-up packages, along with tax and housing incentives to lure the best talent.

Although the country is attempting to balance its human resources problem, described by some observers as the "worst" brain drain in the world, few top specialists in science and engineering plan to return.

## Yemeni Nobel laureate gives away \$500,000 prize money

Nobel Peace laureate Tawakkol Karman has decided that the best use of her half million dollars in prize money is to give it all away.

Karman, the Yemeni activist who in 2011 became the first Arab woman to be awarded the peace prize, says she has donated the \$500,000 prize

money to a fund for the people wounded and the families of those killed in Yemen's Arab Spring-



inspired uprising. "This is my duty to the youths who sacrificed for change and to build a Yemen founded on freedom, justice, equality and good governance," Karman, 34, said in a statement.

## Brazil develops 'superfoods' to combat hidden hunger

the guardian



In less than 10 years, consumers throughout Brazil will have access to eight biofortified "superfoods" being developed by the country's scientists. A pilot scheme is under way in 15 municipalities.

Biofortification uses conventional plant-breeding methods to enhance the concentration of micronutrients in food

crops through a combination of laboratory and agricultural techniques.

The goal is to combat micronutrient deficiencies, which can cause severe health problems such as anaemia, blindness, impaired immune response and development delays. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, micronutrient malnutrition affects 2 billion people globally.

These efforts in Brazil began a decade ago, when the government agricultural research agency, Embrapa, initiated the biofort project as part of an international alliance for the development of crop varieties with higher concentrations of essential micronutrients. Embrapa chose eight foods that are staples of the

Brazilian diet: rice, beans, cowpeas (black-eyed peas), cassava, sweet potatoes, corn, squash and wheat.

"We are working on increasing the iron, zinc and provitamin A content. These are the nutrients most lacking not only in Brazil, but in the rest of Latin America and the world as well, the cause of what we call hidden hunger," food engineer and a biofort co-ordinator, Mar! lia Nutti, told Tierram! rica\*. Iron is key. Half of Brazil's children suffer from some degree of iron deficiency, said Nutti.

The scientists are working on breeding plants of the same species, choosing seeds that exhibit the best traits in terms of micronutrient content.

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