

THE NEWS WE HEAR ABOUT THE DEVELOPING WORLD is usually bad – tales of war, famine or disaster. But for ten years the *Sustainable Times*, a CUSO magazine on environment and global issues, has published original articles about solutions to international development challenges.

Communities in every corner of the Third World are facing the future by developing alternatives to the way the world now does business. And Canadian volunteers are working in solidarity alongside their colleagues in the South as they re-define the term 'globalization.'

*Possible Worlds* is a collection of articles from the *Sustainable Times* internet edition ([www.sustainabletimes.ca](http://www.sustainabletimes.ca)) and profiles of volunteers looking beyond their borders taken from a sister site, CUSO's International Development and Environment Article Service ([www.cuso.org/ideas](http://www.cuso.org/ideas)). Topics include fair trade, alternative transportation, renewable energy, microcredit, human rights, ecotourism, HIV/AIDS and green economics.

These case studies remind us that against the odds change is possible, for the Third World, the First World, and all worlds in between.

CUSO is a non-profit Canadian organization that sends volunteers overseas to work for community development in Developing Countries. Since 1961, CUSO has recruited, trained and placed over 12,000 dedicated volunteers worldwide.

Published by CUSO  
1-888-434-2876  
[www.cuso.org](http://www.cuso.org)  
ISBN 1-896248-21-7

Edited by Sean Kelly

POSSIBLE WORLDS

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The analyses, views and opinions expressed in this collection are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions of CUSO, or contributors to CUSO. All articles and profiles have been previously published online in the *Sustainable Times*, CUSO's magazine on international development ([www.sustainabletimes.ca](http://www.sustainabletimes.ca)), or through CUSO's online story service ([www.cuso.org/ideas](http://www.cuso.org/ideas)). The writing of these stories was supported by the Government of Canada through the Canadian International Development Agency.

Published by:

CUSO

1657 Barrington Street, # 517

Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3J 2A1

Tel: 1-888-434-2876

Website: [www.cuso.org](http://www.cuso.org)

Cover Design and Layout: Paul Williams

Printed and bound in Canada by Hignell Book Printing on 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper.

National Library of Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Kelly, Sean (ed.), 1965-

Possible Worlds: A CUSO Reader on International Development

ISBN 1-896248-21-7

1. Community development—Developing Countries  
2. Sustainable development—Developing Countries—Case studies. 3. CUSO. 4. Volunteer workers in community development—Developing Countries. I. Kelly, Sean, 1965- II. CUSO.

HC60.P673 2004 338.91'7101724 C2004-902461-2

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## INTRODUCTION

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The images flicker out from the nightly news: footage of famine and war, shots of disaster and sorrow. The stories we usually hear about the so-called Third World can make you reach for the remote. And while many of us open our hearts and wallets when catastrophe occurs, once off the screen we often forget about the country in question until the next tragedy hits.

But each year hundreds of Canadians turn off the TV and go see for themselves. They have packed their skills into a suitcase to volunteer abroad with organizations such as CUSO, Canadian Crossroads International and Doctors Without Borders. What they see isn't a reality show, it's reality. And it's a more complex, sad yet hopeful picture than you could ever appreciate from a 30-second clip. These Canadians are witnessing firsthand the news that doesn't make it to air. Sometimes the news is good.

Communities in every corner of the Developing World are facing the future by starting co-ops, tending organic farms, signing fair trade deals and promoting human rights. Canadian volunteers are working with ordinary people there to achieve what ordinary people here want as well: meaningful employment that pays enough to support a family, a safe community, good health and a protected environment.

We usually hear the negative – what's wrong, not what's right. But for ten years, CUSO's *Sustainable Times* magazine has published original stories about the Third World that offer solutions. It's easy to be either a hard-nosed cynic or a naïve optimist; it's more difficult to take a clear-eyed, down-to-earth and cautiously hopeful look at international development. The magazine's slogan is "it's the best of times, it's the worst of times, it's the sustainable times."

The *Sustainable Times* ([www.sustainabletimes.ca](http://www.sustainabletimes.ca)) has covered many topics including fair trade, green economics, sustainable forestry, ecotourism, transportation, health and sustainable lifestyles. A sister site, CUSO's International Development and Environment Article Service ([www.cuso.org/ideas](http://www.cuso.org/ideas)) features profiles of Canadian volunteers looking beyond their borders.



These Canadians and their colleagues in the South are attempting to re-define the term ‘globalization.’ It is not a globalization of unfettered free trade where corporations seek out the lowest wages and least restrictive labour and environmental standards, but rather a global economy where all workers can earn a decent wage and the environment is protected for future generations. Compared to the reach and magnitude of transnational trade, these initiatives are drops in the ocean of economics, but they do show there are alternatives to the way the world does business.

This book is not an expansive exploration of international development, but rather a collection of case studies about solutions. The stories that follow remind us that against the odds change is possible, for the Third World, the First World, and all worlds in between.

Sean Kelly  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
June, 2004

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*Sean Kelly is a communications staff with CUSO, a non-profit international development agency. He edits the Sustainable Times, an online magazine on environment and global issues, and writes profiles of Canadians volunteering overseas for CUSO’s story service.*

## ABOUT CUSO

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CUSO is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that sends Canadian volunteers overseas to fill community development jobs developed by partner groups in the Developing World. Since 1961, CUSO has recruited, trained and placed over 12,000 dedicated volunteers worldwide.

CUSO's early volunteers distributed food aid, worked as doctors, nurses and teachers, and built infrastructure. It was thought that the Third World simply lacked the things that we take for granted here in the First World. But while there were scattered successes, after decades of 'development' poverty continued to grind away at the foundations of the Third World. Canadian development workers then asked the same question their Southern counterparts were asking – is the global economy fair to all countries?

Their answer was no, so CUSO shifted from charity to solidarity. While emergency relief and meeting basic needs are still important, ideas such as community economics, sustainable development, ethical trade, gender equity and appropriate technology have taken root. By the 1980's, CUSO no longer stood for Canadian University Services Overseas, and adopted instead a broader development mandate.

CUSO's work is informed by the values of social justice and solidarity with groups and individuals in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific. CUSO's development partners continue to welcome the strategic assistance of Canadians sent overseas each year. These global citizens are building relationships person to person, community to community, country to country.

For more information on CUSO, please call toll-free 1-888-434-2876, or visit the website at [www.cuso.org](http://www.cuso.org).

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

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The Third World, Developing Countries, the South...why so many names for the same concept? These terms were all coined to differentiate economically poorer countries from the smaller number of richer countries known collectively as the First World, Developed Countries, or the North.

The Third World tag originally meant a third way of doing things, an alternative to the Cold War division of Western capitalism (the First World) and East Bloc communism (the Second World). But in the New World Order that emerged, the promise of another way grew distant, and the term took on a negative connotation, as in third class.

Hence, the oft-used term Developing World. But you could argue that some Third World nations are now worse off than before they began to 'develop.' And what does developing mean anyway? Who defines progress?

Experts then began to talk of a global North and South. The problem is that it's geographically inaccurate. For example, the relatively rich nations of Australia and New Zealand are considered part of the conceptual North, but are located, inconveniently, in the actual South.

The phrases "Majority World" and "Two-Thirds World" have also been suggested, since the people of the Third World/South/Developing World represent about two-thirds of the globe's population. Accurate descriptions perhaps, but they are designations that have not caught on.

Ultimately, all terms are misleading: they suggest everyone on their respective side of the economic equator is floating around in the same boat. In truth, there is usually an elite minority in Third World countries that has more in common with the wealthy of the First World – in terms of standard of living, at least – than with the majority of people in their own countries. And vice-versa. There are those in the North who have been left out in the economic cold.

While acknowledging that it's too simplistic to slap one label on so many distinct countries – and distinct histories and realities – this book has chosen to use the phrase Third World interchangeably with Developing World and the South. And to keep searching for a third way.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The articles in this collection come from the pages of the *Sustainable Times*, a CUSO magazine on international development and environment issues. First published in 1994, the magazine switched in 2001 from offline pages of paper and ink to online bytes of internet information. The webzine can be viewed at [www.sustainabletimes.ca](http://www.sustainabletimes.ca).

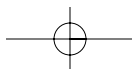
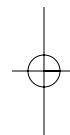
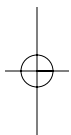
I would like to thank the writers I have commissioned over the years, for their dedication in the face of low freelancing fees. Thanks as well to the designers with whom I have had the pleasure of pouring over proofs: Heather Macmillan, Susan Warr, Brenda Conroy, and on the internet edition, Paul Williams.

I wish to thank Michael Wile, who sold ads for the print edition and worked hard to make the magazine, well, sustainable. I gratefully acknowledge the financial support of CUSO, the Canadian International Development Agency and our many subscribers.

Thank you to former CUSO staff and early supporters Linda Snyder, Cindy Moriarty, Debbie Martinello, Carla Harder, Theresa Bagnall, Duncan Burrill and the late (and always missed) Betty Smith. Thanks also to my current colleagues, particularly Atlantic staff Donna Malone, Tatjana Vukoja, Anne Webb and Marian White, national communications coordinator Carole Ouellette, and CUSO staff across Canada and the South, too many to mention here.

The profiles in the book come from CUSO's International Development and Environment Article Service, which can be found at [www.cuso.org/ideas](http://www.cuso.org/ideas). I am indebted to the people and organizations who shared their stories and perspectives.

Finally, my gratitude to Emily Burton, who has survived years of me asking, "If you have a few minutes could you read this over?"



## A GOOD CUP OF COFFEE

By David Redwood and Murray MacAdam

COFFEE IS A VERY PROFITABLE BUSINESS, YET MANY COFFEE FARMERS LIVE IN POVERTY. THANKS TO A GROWING FAIR TRADE MOVEMENT, CONSUMERS CAN NOW PUT THEIR ETHICS WHERE THEIR TASTEBUDS ARE.

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Genaro Jimenez Hernandez, not Juan Valdez, is the face behind your morning fix. The Mexican farmer grows coffee in the lush jungles of Chiapas. It's a hard life, and hard to make a living. The next time you savour a cup of joe, consider this: the farmer who grew those beans may have received less than one-tenth of the price you paid. But thanks to a coffee-selling co-operative in Nova Scotia, Hernandez is harvesting a better life for his family.

Nestled in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley, business is booming at the Just Us Coffee Roasters Co-op. Debbie and Jeff Moore, David and Jane Mangle, and Ria March formed the co-operative in 1996. They buy organic, unroasted beans directly from Mexico, roast it themselves, and sell it throughout Atlantic Canada.

Just Us began after Jeff Moore travelled to Mexico in 1995 where he visited several coffee farmer co-ops. On his return to Canada he decided to sell organic coffee purchased from Third World farmers at a fair price. After contacting Union de Ejidos de la Selva (Union of the Forest), a 1,350-member co-op already supplying European 'fair-traders' with green organic coffee beans, the match was made. Over ten tons of beans followed.

All five members of Just Us invested much of their life savings – the Moores even mortgaged their house. They also received a loan from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, a federal development funding body. The money allowed them to pay for the coffee and a roasting machine, and to set up a small cafe and roastery.

So far the risk has been worth it. The members of the coffee co-op probably need the caffeine just to keep up. Two years ago, the co-op's sales to wholesale and retail markets throughout the Atlantic Provinces averaged Cdn\$55,000 per month. Today they are serving up over \$100,000 in business monthly. You can now buy their fairly traded, organically grown

coffee throughout the region at cafés and supermarkets.

Making shrewd use of guerrilla media tactics has helped offset a small advertising budget, says Moore. Sponsoring a tour of coffee farmers from Mexico [including Genaro Jimenez Hernandez] to Canada sparked media interest “that was just magical,” he recalls. “It really put us on the map.” Yet Moore credits an insistence on quality and hard-nosed business smarts as key factors behind the success of Just Us. “We take a business approach to fair trade, not because we’re greedy, but because if you don’t make money, in the long run you’re not going to do anybody any good,” he says. The co-op cracked the supermarket market because it offered top-quality coffee at a competitive price. “We’ve focused on the best product we can put out.”

Back at the co-op, David Mangle watches the roaster’s temperature gauge closely. 340 degrees...350...360. Mangle checks his clipboard on when to ease the flame. “If you go too quickly you’ll lose flavour,” he explains. He waits until 390 degrees and adjusts the flame. The temperature stabilizes. Twelve minutes and 40 seconds after the beans were dropped in, Mangle releases them, steaming, into a large pan. A few degrees hotter and they would have been scorched. “Brown, with just a hint of smoke,” he says, “it’s a good batch.”

Just Us customers certainly like the taste of the coffee, but they also appreciate the fact that it’s pesticide-free. “We know where our beans come from,” explains Mangle. And because the co-op buys directly from the farmers, a greater share of their coffee’s retail price reaches the people who actually pick, peel and dry the beans.

While the four or five dollars a day that farmers like Hernandez and his family get paid is not a lot for picking and preparing raw coffee – exhausting work in hot, humid weather and difficult terrain – it’s often ten times as much as what their neighbours make working for the pesticide-intensive coffee plantations.

It’s also a better deal than what other independent growers can receive when they sell to brokers out to profit from fluctuating world markets. Commodities markets are notoriously volatile – speculation leads to wild price swings, and drought or frost in any of the major coffee-producing countries (Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia and Mexico are the biggest) can dramatically affect global prices for the US\$16-billion industry. But throughout the ups and downs, the cost of a cup at Tim Horton’s doesn’t change much.

“The fact that we trade directly with buyers is very important to us,” says Hernandez. “This helps us skip the intermediaries, the ‘coyotes’ – the brokers that resell the coffee and take such a profit.” Fifty-five percent of the money made from coffee goes to shippers and roasters, 25 percent to retailers, 10 percent to exporters and 10 percent to the actual growers. A fall in commodity prices hits farmers hard. A Dutch community worker who helped the Chiapas farmers says price drops combined with poverty drives many into the arms of the coyotes. “Brokers try to get into the community and deal directly with individuals,” says Jeronimo Pruijn. “They are taking advantage of the [sometimes desperate] needs of a family.”

For many years, the market price for green coffee hovered around 90 cents US a pound. Today, the price of coffee is at its lowest level in decades – about 50 cents a pound. With development bodies such as the World Bank pushing coffee as a quick fix for Third World poverty (or to pay interest on debt), over-supply has caused prices to tank.

But farmers selling coffee to businesses licensed by Transfair Canada, an Ottawa-based company supported by labour and church groups, have always received, and continue to receive, a minimum of US\$1.26 per pound. Most big players in the coffee business – for example Nestle, which buys 12 percent of the world’s unroasted beans – refuse to pay the fair trade price, instead relying solely on world commodity markets to set payment.

And coffee companies are making big bucks. Nestle netted over US\$1-billion in profit from its beverage division in 2001, and predicts continued profit growth. As they said to their shareholders: “Profits increased and margins improved thanks to favourable commodity prices.” There’s a lot of money being made, but it’s not trickling down to the estimated 20 million Third World households dependant on coffee production, many who live in absolute poverty.

That’s why Just Us, a Transfair Canada partner, pays the Union de Ejidos de la Selva co-op a minimum price of \$1.26 a pound, even when coffee prices drop. Farmers are also protected if the price goes up; Just Us

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Because the Just Us co-op  
buys direct from farmers, a  
greater share of the  
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reaches the people who  
actually pick the beans.

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commits to paying \$0.05 per pound more than the world price – \$0.15 per pound more for organically grown beans. That price difference adds up.

This does mean Just Us coffee can cost a bit more in Nova Scotia. (The co-op also has to struggle with a lower Canadian dollar.) But that's one of the accepted principles in fair trade: when they do business with Chiapas, the grower is placed on an equal footing with the consumer.

Fair trade is still only a small fraction of the overall global trade, but it can have a big impact on the lives of farmers on the ground. The alternative trade movement is creating a buzz the world over. Groups such as Equal Exchange and Peace Coffee are brewing up sustainable coffee in the U.S., while many fair traders have set up shop in Europe. In Switzerland, fair trade coffee has captured 5 percent of the market. It's 3 percent in England, and 2 percent in Holland.

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Fair trade is only a small fraction of the overall global trade in coffee, but it can have a big impact on the lives of coffee bean growers.

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In Canada, you can't yet walk into just any supermarket and pick up fairly traded coffee along with the rest of your groceries. But it could happen soon – a growing number of Canadians consider themselves ethical shoppers and are willing to pay more so producers can enjoy a living wage. A 1998 survey by the CROP polling firm found that 55 percent of the 3,000 consumers questioned said they would pay 15 percent more for a package of coffee if it carried a label saying it

was produced under conditions respecting human rights.

Transfair already licenses 30 fair trade suppliers, which together sell 100,000 kilograms of coffee. While that's only one-tenth of 1 percent of the overall market share, this figure is rising. A harsh truth remains, however: fair trade, despite impressive growth, is but a bit player in an unequal global economy. "Fair trade reflects all the contradictions of the societies we live in," says Bob Thomson, former managing director of Transfair Canada.

"Fair trade makes a concrete difference and is one very small way of showing that there are alternatives that are viable. It is constructive in the eyes of many consumers. But because it doesn't tackle the root causes of global economic inequity, it can only be a 'necessary but not sufficient' condition for change."

But fair trade businesses are helping consumers put their ethics where their wallets are. “People in Canada need to understand the real costs of what they purchase, both ecologically and socially,” says Dwayne Hodgson, a Canadian who has worked in community development in Tanzania. “The notion that we can’t afford to buy fair trade products needs to be turned on its head. By preferring ‘unfair’ products, we are contributing to injustice and ecological degradation. That’s a tough message to market, but it gets to the root of the issue.” And that’s definitely something to chat about over coffee.

Perhaps Just Us is a success story because Nova Scotians love good coffee, even if it means spending a little more. Or perhaps it’s also because an increasing number of Canadians want to spend their hard-earned dollars on sustainable and ethical products.

Hudson Shotwell, owner of the Trident café in Halifax, says he bought Just Us coffee for an espresso blend when he first learned of it. After a trip to the co-op to see the operation, he has worked Just Us coffee into five other blends he serves. While he initially switched over for business reasons, he says the coffee’s taste and fairly traded, organic nature has grown on him – and his customers. “It’s almost like a win, win, win, win situation,” he says. For many reasons, Just Us makes a good cup of coffee.

(January 2002)

*The Just Us Co-op ([www.justuscoffee.com](http://www.justuscoffee.com)) has opened a new café in downtown Wolfville, Nova Scotia, and is expanding its production facility to meet growing demand. The co-op is also planning a Fair Trade Museum that will provide information on ethical trade and the scoop on coffee. TransFair ([www.transfair.ca](http://www.transfair.ca)) lists where you can buy fairly traded products in Canada.*

## SMALL CHANGE, BIG DREAMS

By Murray MacAdam

FOR THE WORLD'S POOREST CITIZENS, GETTING A BUSINESS LOAN CAN BE NEXT TO IMPOSSIBLE. BUT A GROWING 'MICROCREDIT' MOVEMENT IS GIVING THEM A HAND-UP, NOT A HAND-OUT.

In 1976, Bangladeshi economist Muhammad Yunnus lent a group of 42 artisans 62 cents each, so they could buy the craft supplies they needed to eke out a living. At the time, he didn't know he was starting a movement. "When we started giving out tiny loans, we never imagined that one day we would be reaching hundreds of thousands, let alone two million, borrowers," says Yunnus, two-and-a-half decades later.

At less than a dollar each, they were 'tiny loans' indeed. But they helped, allowing the artisans to expand, however modestly, their businesses and improve their lives. And the loans were paid back. From that humble start has grown something called the Grameen Bank, the world's best-known microcredit enterprise.

In a nutshell, microcredit is the provision of small loans to people too poor to qualify for traditional bank loans. Small groups get together and act as each other's collateral – if one fails, the collective carries the loss. It's a deceptively simple but powerful idea. Without access to capital, it's difficult to start or grow a business, even tiny mom & pop operations. Millions of people worldwide do not have the collateral banks demand.

The inability to borrow cripples the ability of poor people to get the money they need to improve their lives. Less than 2 percent of impoverished citizens have access to credit from reliable sources – moneylenders who demand exorbitant interest don't count. Informal and small-scale lending arrangements have long existed in many parts of the world, especially in rural areas. However, in the past two decades, considerable more attention – and resources – have been shifted toward microcredit lending. It is seen as a way to encourage self-reliance, create employment and, particularly, help women better their lives by generating some income.

Microcredit (also called peer lending) is increasingly seen as an effective tool in the struggle against poverty, enabling those without access to lending

institutions to borrow at normal bank rates and start small businesses. Microcredit schemes vary, but they usually share several key features:

- They are geared to people with no land or assets; that is, people who don't have what a bank calls collateral.
- Borrowers become part of a small group of people who meet regularly to support each other.
- The majority of those taking part are women, because they are usually the poorest of the poor, with little hope of getting loans.
- Borrowers can receive further loans, as long as earlier ones are paid, on the understanding that the poor need to have access to credit for a number of years to accumulate enough assets and savings to escape poverty.
- Borrowers are free to choose the activity to be funded with their loan, with most loans going toward small businesses such as farming, handicrafts and shopkeeping.

It is estimated that 13 million poor people around the world are being helped by loans from more than 7,000 microfinance institutions, with over US\$7-billion in total loans. And the loan repayment rate is very impressive, at 97 percent. Due to this success, microcredit has been gathering momentum worldwide, growing 30 percent annually.

Many different players are behind this attractively workable development tool: non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donor agencies, international financial institutions and development advocates. Governments are also embracing microcredit as a key economic development strategy among low-income people. The United Nations even has a special unit for microfinance.

The Canadian International Development Agency, (CIDA, the foreign aid branch of the federal government), has long supported microcredit. Each year it devotes more than Cdn\$100-million toward microfinance and microenterprise development in Developing Nations. CIDA is also part of an international consortium of 29 bilateral and multilateral donor agencies that support microfinance, called the Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest. It works to improve the services and strength of the microfinance "industry."

Bangladesh's Grameen Bank is by far the biggest microfinance

institution, widely admired as microcredit's shining success story. As with many small credit schemes, women benefit most, making up 95 percent of Grameen's 2.4 million borrowers. It is built on person-to-person solidarity, through the voluntary formation of groups of five people to provide mutual group guarantees, instead of the individual collateral required by conventional banks.

The small-group structure creates an atmosphere in which debtors know and care about each other, and ensure that they all meet their obligations. If one person fails, the group has to pick up the slack. It's a system that works.

The Grameen Bank remains the best-known case study of microcredit, but there are many other projects out there. Some, like Grameen, are fairly large: Profund, for example, is a for-profit investment fund that helps over 300,000 small entrepreneurs in Latin America. A similar fund is underway in Africa, the AfriCap Microfinance Fund, with US\$15-million in start-up funding. The money is coming from the International Finance Corporation and a number of financial institutions including Canada's Calmeadow, which will manage the fund.

(While many Canadian NGOs have promoted microcredit in the Third World, Calmeadow is unique in that it has helped fund and operate microcredit initiatives in Canada as well as in Latin America and Asia. In the 'Developed Nation' of Canada, the focus is on Aboriginal and low-income people. Canada's largest credit union, Vancouver City Savings Credit Union (VanCity), also has a Peer Lending Program for people who normally could not get business loans. It operates much like the loan circle model made famous by Grameen. Four or more business owners who need loans join forces to support each other. In addition, VanCity offers International Community Investment Deposits that let its members invest in community loan funds that benefit low-income communities abroad.)

A typical microcredit loan of \$100 or \$200 may not seem like much, especially for safe passage through the shoals of business. But in a Developing Nation, a sum that small can transform a low-income person's life.

Blanca Rosa Cruz, a Nicaraguan mother of two, got a \$200 loan from Opportunity International Canada to start a pizza business. She became part of a neighbourhood loan circle of 19 women and one man. Cruz started making pizzas in her one-room, dirt floor home. Now, two years

later, she employs six people, has fixed up her home and even has a savings account. “I couldn’t believe anyone would give me a loan without any collateral,” says Cruz. “I am thankful to God that they trusted in me and gave me a loan.”

She’s one of over 260,000 people helped worldwide by Opportunity International, a Christian-based non-profit organization working to combat global poverty through microenterprise development. With average loans of \$298 and a repayment record of 98 percent, women are helped the most (85 percent of borrowers), because they tend to be the poorest.

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Microcredit schemes  
provide small loans to  
people too poor to  
qualify for traditional  
bank credit.

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This is all well and good. But what is the real impact of the Grameen Bank and similar microcredit programs? Do they make a difference in lessening the poverty that keeps over a billion people around the world struggling to survive on less than a dollar a day?

Grameen’s Muhammad Yunus has no doubts. He believes that if financial resources are provided to poor people on reasonable terms, “...these millions of small people with their millions of small pursuits can add up to create the biggest development wonder.”

Indeed, the facts bear him out – to a degree. The average household income of Grameen Bank members is about 25 percent higher than for non-members in villages with Grameen branches. Only 20 percent of Grameen members live below the poverty line, compared with 56 percent for comparable non-Grameen members. “If we can come up with a system that allows everybody access to credit while ensuring excellent repayment, I can guarantee that poverty will not last long,” claims Yunus.

Yet uplifting the world’s poor to a state where their basic needs are met is not that simple. Lack of credit is by no means the only cause of Third World poverty. It arises from a range of causes, including poor prices for the crops grown by farmers, illiteracy, crippling debt burdens, poor wages, lack of land, poor training and much more.

As a UN report on microcredit’s role in eradicating poverty says, “In some of the lowest-income countries, lack of access to land is the most critical single cause of rural poverty...Yet few countries have substantial land reform programs.”

Specific anti-poverty strategies have to be considered and developed in the social, political and economic contexts of the communities and countries involved. An Oxfam report notes that “Poverty alleviation is rarely an issue of simply improving access to financial resources. Poverty is more than a lack of material resources – it also concerns the denial of basic rights, control, access and power.”

Even the World Bank has admitted that microcredit alone is no cure-all for poverty reduction. Only people with the ability to run a business can borrow, leaving out those people without the necessary skills and training. So other development efforts such as literacy promotion, training and job creation are needed to complement microcredit projects.

And although the ability of microcredit to uplift women has been widely praised, a debate is now simmering over the impact of peer lending on the lives of women. The United Nations holds the view that microcredit has been positive. “We have learned that when women gain economic autonomy, the health, nutrition and education of other members of the household, especially children, improve at the same time,” says Noeleen Heyzer, executive director of the UN Development Fund for Women.

Alemnesh Geressu, a member of the Women’s Poverty Lending Program of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Ethiopia, serves as an example of that improvement. She lives with her husband, a poor farmer with no land, and their six children. For years she survived by doing a bit of trading. But local moneylenders skimmed off much of her earnings, charging her 10 percent interest or more per month on loans.

That bare-bones existence changed after receiving her first loan from CRS in 1995. She expanded her business of selling grain in the local market, and is also growing vegetables and ploughing a plot of land in co-operation with other members of her solidarity group. Geressu sees a real improvement in her living conditions – and in her attitude. She now has enough money to buy things for her family and is sending two of her children to school. “I have more confidence in myself and I wish the program could accommodate more women to improve their lives.”

Geressu’s story illustrates the three main ways in which microcredit can help poor women:

1. By providing independent sources of income outside the home, it can reduce women’s economic dependence on their husbands and

thus increase their autonomy.

2. Those independent sources of income, together with the exposure to new ideas and social support can, in theory, make women more assertive of their rights.
3. By providing control over material resources, microcredit programs can raise women's prestige and status in the eyes of their husbands, opening up new possibilities within families.

Many people are confident that microcredit does indeed bring about these positive changes. Abdul Bayes, co-author of a microcredit study in Bangladesh, concluded, "NGO credit programs in rural Bangladesh are not only likely to bring about rapid economic improvement in the situation of women but also hasten their empowerment. The NGO credit members are reported to be more confident, assertive, intelligent, self-reliant and conscious of their rights."

Yet others in the development field are not so sure. They worry that loans, by themselves, cannot uplift women from their difficult situations. Aminur Rahman, a Canadian doctoral student, uncovered some disturbing findings when he returned to his native Bangladesh to examine how the Grameen Bank has improved the lives of women.

Of the 120 female borrowers in his study, 70 percent admitted they endured increased verbal or physical violence from male relatives after taking out loans. And while the loans were supposed to help them earn income, more than 60 percent of the loans were actually used by men. "It was a shock," says Rahman. "The Bank has a really good objective, but there is a gulf between its philosophy and its field realities."

Similarly, a 1996 study of four Bangladeshi microcredit programs found that 39 percent of the women who received loans said they had little or no control over their loans. Part of the problem involves women's lack of access to formal education, says Peter Noteboom, a Canadian development consultant who has worked in community-based microcredit programs in Bangladesh and Haiti.

It's not uncommon in Bangladeshi villages, says Noteboom, for no women in a loan circle to have the skills needed to do the group's bookkeeping, since they have not been able to go to school. So a local man who has been able to acquire those bookkeeping skills is invited to take on that critical role. And he assumes the power that goes along with it.



Credit is only one piece of the puzzle when it comes to combating poverty. It needs to be linked to capacity-building and the skills that individuals and communities need to transform their lives.

Others agree that it's unrealistic to expect that microcredit, by itself, can act as a panacea for poverty alleviation. "For example, we've got to be careful that we don't put everything we have in microcredit programs and

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A loan of \$100 or \$200 may not seem like much, but a sum that small can transform a low-income person's life.

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neglect the fact that children in Developing Countries need to be immunized as well," says CIDA president Huguette LaBelle. "And you still need, for example, [improved] rural roads – otherwise the poor will increase their agricultural yield, but they won't be able to take it to market."

Grameen Bank boasts that it contributes more than 1 percent to the GDP of Bangladesh.

Yet a quarter-century and several million loans later, Bangladesh remains one of the poorest, least-developed countries in the world. Three out of every five adults can't read or write, average life expectancy is only 59, and GDP per capita is just US\$350. Clearly, its impoverished citizens need a lot more than microcredit.

But the movement is growing nonetheless, and will continue to grow in the foreseeable future. There are enough good news stories to endorse the concept of microcredit, and support for the poorest of the poor is desperately needed. But only time will tell if micro-lending is a band-aid solution or a broader movement giving the world's impoverished the boost they need – and the chance they deserve – to make it on their own.

(May 2002)

*The Grameen Bank ([www.grameen-info.org](http://www.grameen-info.org)) of Bangladesh remains the best-known and most-debated of microcredit schemes. The AfriCap Microfinance Fund ([www.africapfund.com](http://www.africapfund.com)) has been launched, operating out of Dakar, Senegal. In 2002, Results International, one of the world's leading microcredit promoters, sponsored a major international summit ([www.microcreditsummit.org](http://www.microcreditsummit.org)) in New York, and reports are available online. Another microcredit summit is planned for 2006.*

## POWER TO THE PEOPLE

By Paul Weinberg

‘WIND-UP’ RADIOS THAT REQUIRE NO BATTERIES HAVE PUT POWER IN THE HANDS OF CAMPERS IN CANADA – AND VILLAGERS IN AFRICA.

The wind-up, battery-free radios that can be found simultaneously in Rwandan villages and the great Canadian outdoors might never have been invented if a rather colourful Englishman by the name of Trevor Baylis was able to reach for his TV remote in time.

Comfortable, cozy and smoking a pipe in his home on a verdant island on the Thames in west London, this former circus stuntman found himself listening one evening to a depressing account about AIDS in Africa. He might have switched to a more cheerful program except that something the narrator said intrigued him about the power of radio to spread public health information. Or, more accurately, the lack of radios to take advantage of this power.

So Baylis thought about how the scarcity of radio receivers could be solved on a continent of six hundred million where few have access to electricity or can afford batteries, the cost of which is equivalent to a month's salary.

The inventive Brit imagined himself, somewhat ironically, back in colonial Africa with all the clichés of the time: the pith helmet, the monocle, the gin and tonic in one hand and the fly swatter in the other, all the while listening to a raunchy musical number by Nellie Melba on a wind-up gramophone circa 1890-1900. “I am saying to myself if you can make all of that noise by dragging a rusty nail over a piece of old Bakelite and by using a spring, then surely there is enough power in that spring to drive a small dynamo [to generate an electric current] which in turn would drive a small radio.”

That it takes considerable energy to produce that Melba tune made Baylis realize that a similar principle could be applied with greater effect to the modern transistor radio, which does not require a lot of electricity to power it. He also drew parallels to how telephone messages during the Second World War in Britain were sent by winding a handle – which in turn

caused the dynamo to send a message.

In his workshop, which Baylis describes as a “graveyard of a 1,000 domestic appliances,” he placed a small electric motor into the chuck of a hand brace, connected by two wires to a transistor radio. By rotating the brace, the motor (running in reverse and acting as the dynamo or generator) produced the “first bark” of radio sound. “It wasn’t requiring a great deal of effort to actually wind that handle,” recalls Baylis.

Unfortunately, that initial triumph would convert his personal energy into frustration as Baylis spent four years trying in vain to sell his concept of a wind-up radio that requires neither batteries (and the need to dispose of used ones), or a connection to the power grid, to large companies like Philips.

It was a chance appearance on the BBC program “Tomorrow’s World” in 1994 that won him national sympathy and interest in Britain. (“Way to go Trevor” was the kind of comments that greeted him now.) Eventually, he sold the rights to his technology to two South Africans – an outgoing businessman by the name of Rory Stear, and the quieter accountant Christopher Staines.

The latter brought his wife and children to Baylis’s island home to break the ice with the inventor. Stear and Staines conducted their own market research in South Africa by traveling the country and interviewing people about what features they wanted to see in the wind-up radios, which give about one minute of power for every second of elbow grease.

Further technical refinement of the wind-up product, which came to be known as the ‘Freeplay’ radio, was made possible with US\$320,000 from the British government’s Overseas Development Administration. One of the improvements was the addition of solar panels on the devices to augment the energy stored in the spring that people wound up by hand.

By 1995 there was a Cape Town factory making the radios on contract to a new company headed by Stear and Staines called BayGen Power Industries, headquartered in the same city. (BayGen would be renamed the Freeplay Energy Group in 1999.) A 1996 BBC science program on the story of the wind-up radio showed the very emotional inventor chatting with the disabled assembly workers on the job.

It then showed Baylis, Stear and Staines, along with William Rowland, the president of the South African Council for the Blind, meeting South African president Nelson Mandela who praised a “fantastic product that

can provide an opportunity for those people who have been despised by society.”

From the beginning it was the social appeal of the wind-up radio that attracted the initial financing from the South African-based Liberty Life Foundation to the tune of approximately US\$1.5-million. Its director and friend of Rory Stear, Hylton Appelbaum, offered to fund disabled organizations if they become business partners in the manufacture of the radios. It was Appelbaum’s idea that disabled workers be involved, recalls Stear.

Baylis’s dream had seen the light of day. Thousands of the radios from the Freeplay Energy Group have been purchased at a discount by NGOs, governments, aid agencies and the United Nations for development projects.

Organizing this distribution is the three-year-old Freeplay Foundation, a non-profit organization with an illustrious board that includes Appelbaum, former British politician Baroness Linda Chalker and renowned hostage negotiator – and former hostage – Terry Waite.

The foundation’s first project involved the shipping of 7,000 Freeplay radios to flood-stricken communities in Mozambique in 2000, in co-operation with the U.S.-based United Methodists. More recently, a United Nations peacekeeping mission building an FM and shortwave radio network in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is hoping to raise enough money to buy 100,000 wind-up radios from Freeplay. “Freeplay is a fabulous Africa story,” says Canadian UN worker David Smith, “made by Africans, for Africans, and to a large extent, made by handicapped Africans in Cape Town.”

But business – no matter how well-meaning – can be complicated and contradictory, as in politics and the world of international development. Smith may be disappointed to learn that except for its small research and development division, Freeplay has withdrawn almost completely out of South Africa, and it is not clear how many disabled workers are assembling Freeplay radios today. First to go was the company’s headquarters which moved to London in 1997.

After five years in operation, the Cape Town factory closed and the manufacturing was out-sourced to plants in China where labour costs are lower. Freeplay realized it could not survive selling wind-up radios to impoverished Africans, few of whom are able to afford the products even at a discount without heavy government or agency financial support.

It was only in the 2002 fiscal year that the company expected to make money for the first time – about US\$55-million, largely from sales in North America and the U.K. The General Electric pension fund and the Roddicks (of The Body Shop fame) are the largest investors in this privately held business.

But the company has had to fend off sharp criticism following the closure of the Cape Town plant. (Freeplay managed the Cape Town plant on behalf of disabled organizations, which were the actual owners.) The announcement was greeted by a demonstration of about 100 workers and an accusation by the National Union of Metal Workers that Freeplay had misled Nelson Mandela.

In the U.K. the most serious criticisms came from Trevor Baylis himself, who by now had distanced himself from Freeplay, even though he remains a shareholder in the company. “I wasn’t particularly happy because I do believe that South Africa is going through struggling times. It is rather crass to raise money on the back of disabled people in South Africa [via Liberty Life], the people that actually need the income.”

All of this exasperates Rory Stear, who was interviewed by telephone from a San Francisco hotel room and an office location in South Africa, and via email from a German trade show. Some hard decisions had to be made or the company – and the dream – would have died outright, he says.

Stear also says that a new company, Freecom, which refurbishes computers, rehired 60 of about 250 permanent staff who had been laid off after the Cape Town plant closed. The plant also employs hundreds more disabled people at peak seasonal periods. “I would hope that the majority of the rest would have found alternative employment,” he says. Stear helped to set up Freecom with the assistance of a New York City investment firm.

A man who seems to love wheeling and dealing, Stear is the main driving force behind Freeplay as he flies around the world negotiating deals with new distributors, suppliers and potential corporate partners. A self-described “serial entrepreneur” from the age of 18, he has managed at one point a restaurant, a home delivery pizza service and a disco music service for parties. Later, he gained valuable experience in the investment banking trade that has proven handy in getting investors to inject approximately US\$56-million into BayGen/Freeplay.

Stear admits that he has no idea if disabled workers are employed in the Chinese plants contracted to make Freeplay radios. “If there are, they are

not there because we have stipulated it.” But he says his company has very rigid criteria regarding working conditions and labour conditions wherever their products are made.

The move to China was primarily “a commercial decision,” says Stear. Freeplay was busy expanding sales of its product around the world, including North America, and he could not afford to rely upon a Cape Town factory facility that had to import all of its materials from Asia. “South Africa doesn’t have a consumer electronics infrastructure.”

But Larry Rooney, a former Canadian distributor for Freeplay products, says that Freeplay’s emphasis on targeting U.S. consumers with a splashy campaign ended up hurting the company’s bottom line from the beginning. He and Freeplay disagreed over the size and nature of the target market, which realistically consists of outdoor enthusiasts, people not connected to the power grid, and those concerned about emergency situations such as the Montreal ice storm or the September 11th attacks on the U.S.

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Too many in Africa have no access to electricity and can’t afford batteries that can cost a month’s salary

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Yet these internal dynamics in and around Freeplay are not particularly relevant for NGOs like War Child U.K. “It doesn’t matter as long as the radios are made,” says James Topham, a communications spokesperson for the London-based charity, which in a pilot project has organized the distribution of about 1,400 Freeplay radios to child-headed households in post-genocide Rwanda.

There are about 200,000 impoverished children living in small isolated villages across that central African country. He estimates there may be about six per household, with the oldest kids looking after the younger siblings. The children are taught how to maintain the sturdy radios.

Freeplay radios are used for a variety of purposes in Rwanda. (The ratio of listeners per radio is about 20-30 to one.) But news that the genocide, which took place in 1994, has actually ended for isolated and still fearful Tutsi children remains at the top of the list, says Kristine Pearson who heads the Freeplay Foundation. Speaking by telephone in a U.S. accent (she is half South African) she says she knows one girl “who is able to sleep because she has heard on the radio that the bad people will not be coming back.”

The Freeplay Foundation has developed a radio specifically for children

caught up in similar circumstances. Called the Lifeline, it is not for commercial sale, but it is available only to donor agencies, says Pearson. "It will look different: it will be colourful; it will be textured; it will have excellent reception; it will be robust."

Personally engaged in all of the details of each of the foundation's distribution projects, Pearson describes herself as "fiercely independent person with a business background." Like her husband Rory Stear, she is constantly on the move flying from country to country, except that her work takes her on separate trips to places like Mali, Rwanda and Niger. Pearson has a small staff of four to five people and operates on a modest budget.

"It is safe to say that we are quite stretched at the moment because so much is happening. Yes, I am involved in every project, especially at the beginning phases since the projects usually involve meetings with government ministers or heads of organizations, although other members of the team are involved behind the scenes."

"During the implementation other Freeplay Foundation personnel become more directly involved and it takes a bit of pressure off of me. So far, though (fingers crossed) we've been able to handle any projects to which we have committed. If I did not enjoy what I do so much and believe in what we are striving for, I probably would have burnt out a long time ago."

How Stear and Pearson maintain "their competing interests" is of professional fascination to Sharon Maeda, associate general secretary for the New York City-based General Board of the Global Ministries (GBGM) of the United Methodist Church. Maeda worked closely with Pearson and her foundation in the distribution of about 4,000 Freeplay radios in Mozambique during the devastating flooding of 2000.

The GBGM, which has developed HIV/AIDS education radio programming for Africa, had sought a more formalized partnership with Freeplay where the church organization would get involved in the actual production of the radios and thus ensure a ready access for other projects on the continent. Maeda says the year-long negotiations broke down over how much the GBGM would have to pay – about \$US50 per radio. "It didn't work because [an alliance] would have required a substantial outlay in the millions of dollars."

The GBGM spokesperson carefully couches her comments about Freeplay and the negotiations. But she reveals there was a definite culture clash between Rory Stear's "bottom line" approach in the negotiations and

senior United Methodist officials. Stear would probably argue that he is just trying to survive. Finding the money to pay for the radios appears to be a challenge for NGOs, especially when governments are not forthcoming with assistance.

“It is challenging from the point of view that donor agencies are not accustomed to funding hardware,” says Kristine Pearson. “They assume that everybody listens to the radio. Although the radio is the primary means of communication, particularly in Africa and in Developing Countries, the access issue is a real one that is not looked at.”

War Child has been helped by the generosity of a local disc jockey in the U.K., as well as fundraising events such as an all-night comedy session on the BBC. Pearson is pleased that significant amounts of money from major funders are being earmarked for radio-related HIV/AIDS education and other health related information projects.

Among the more interesting recent uses of the Freeplay radio involves a ‘guns for radios’ exchange in Niger, one of a number of West African countries struggling to maintain stability and peace amidst the overabundance of illicit arms following a civil war. Co-ordinating the effort is the Freeplay Foundation and the United Nations Development Programme.

A total of 12,445 Freeplay radios have been donated to the Niger government by Freeplay Energy. “A technician is going to Niger to train people on the radio’s repair and reconditioning. And we are going to be using unemployed youth and women offenders who have been rehabilitated under the government’s rehabilitation scheme,” says Pearson.

The old saying that the best form of flattery is imitation can now be applied to Freeplay. The BBC has reported that wind-up radios have been dropped into post-war Afghanistan by the U.S. military, but apparently they are not Freeplay-branded products. Stear is in the dark as to what actually happened, but he recalls that another load of non-Freeplay wind-up radios were purchased out of China by the United Nations for East Timor. Three months later, the radios were not working. “They came back and purchased ours.”

Freeplay is attempting to corner the market for self-power by also establishing co-branding alliances with Coleman (the famous camping goods company) in North America for the Freeplay radios and wind-up flashlights, and with Motorola for Freeplay cell phone chargers.



Stear is hesitant about going public on the stock market, but he sees it as necessary for further growth. And he does not rule out the possibility that Freeplay could eventually be bought if a larger corporate player with a similar philosophy came along. Would the work of the Freeplay Foundation survive a merger? “In the unlikely event of us selling the company, we would entrench [the Foundation’s status] in any deal much like Ben and Jerry’s did [with their good works] when they sold to Unilever.”

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Thousands of wind-up radios have been purchased at a discount by community groups, governments and aid agencies for development projects.

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Subsidizing the Freeplay Foundation may be “more than a company would normally give as part of its corporate giving program,” but Stear realizes that his commercial operation is married to its social reputation, even if it leads to a few contradictions at times. “We believe [the foundation’s work in Developing Countries] is the essence of the Freeplay brand.”

Time will tell if Freeplay can continue to put the power in the hands of those who need it most. Hopefully, Baylis’s dream will keep winding its way into the villages of Africa and the backwoods of Canada.

(July 2002)

*Freeplay (www.freeplay.net) offers a line of self-powered products including radios, flashlights and mobile phone chargers that can be purchased in North America, Europe and the Southern world. The Freeplay Foundation (www.freeplayfoundation.org) is using the Lifeline radio – not sold commercially – for education and humanitarian projects, primarily in Africa.*

## NO SWEAT

By Murray MacAdam

MANY PEOPLE WHO MAKE THE SHIRTS ON OUR BACKS DON'T MAKE ENOUGH TO PUT FOOD ON THEIR TABLES. SOME CUSTOMERS ARE STARTING TO LOOK BEHIND THE LABELS.

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The hip young models stare out seductively from the magazine ads, clad in the latest fashions from Gap or Club Monaco. But behind the glossy photos, forgotten by most of us, are the people who actually make the clothes we wear.

People like Ana in El Salvador, who works in a maquiladora garment factory in a free trade zone outside capital city San Salvador. (Maquiladora is a common term for an export-oriented factory located in the Third World). Thirteen hours a day, six days a week – sometimes seven – she sews sleeves onto shirts. Ana doesn't like the long hours and weekend work, but her pay is so low that she and her children couldn't survive without the overtime.

The factory is hot and the ventilation is poor. Many of the women suffer respiratory problems from the fabric dust. They can only go to the washroom twice a day.

It's not a pretty picture. And yet for hundreds of thousands of workers, this is the reality of 'globalization,' as multinational corporations search for ways to make their clothes at a lower cost. Shareholders want profits, and consumers want bargains.

Impoverished countries, desperate for foreign cash and economic activity of any kind, compete for these factory jobs, offering bargain-basement wages and inexpensive health and safety standards.

If workers dare to organize unions, companies threaten to close down and move to greener pastures – green as in the colour of money. It's no idle threat. Hundreds of young women at one Guatemalan factory worked around the clock making Van Heusen dress shirts. They got tired of the 60-hour workweeks and poor wages, and tried to organize a union. Ten years later, they won – or thought they had. Van Heusen simply closed down and moved the work to nearby sweatshops that pay even lower wages.

‘Sweatshop’ may be a word that brings to mind near-slave labour conditions from a century ago. But if you check out popular stores such as The Bay, Club Monaco, Gap or Eddie Bauer, chances are you’ll find clothes made in Developing Countries that enticed corporations to their shores with promises of cheap labour.

Fortunately for Ana and the others like her, consumer awareness – and sometimes even outrage – has grown as more and more people learn of the miserable conditions endured by the workers who make our clothes. Some shoppers are thinking beyond their wallets and are asking questions about where and how their clothes are made.

“As business goes global, so is the movement against sweatshops,” notes the Toronto-based Maquila Solidarity Network (MSN), which serves as a major focal point for Canada’s growing anti-sweatshop movement. MSN promotes solidarity with groups in Mexico, Central America and Asia organizing in maquiladora factories and export processing zones to improve conditions and wages. Targeting specific companies like Disney and Nike are part of its work.

The Network is also lobbying the Canadian government to force companies to disclose where their clothes are made, using provisions under the Textile Labeling Act. The Act monitors what info should be put on labels of clothing. Currently, it only asks for washing instructions and fabric content, but sweatshop activists want the regulations revised so that consumers would know exactly where a piece of clothing is made.

This would not tell shoppers at a glance if the article was made in a sweatshop, but it would allow both activist groups and companies to better monitor their suppliers. So far, though, most companies have been reluctant to reveal what’s behind the label, and the federal government has not yet used its powers to force mandatory disclosure. But some companies, such as Roots, have publicly supported the concept.

Not surprisingly, labour is a major player in the anti-sweatshop movement. The Toronto-based Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) fights against sweatshops by promoting

corporate responsibility and consumer action against exploitative companies. On the national labour scene, the Canadian Labour Congress is promoting “No Sweat” clauses in collective agreements.

Church-goers are also helping to build the movement through Ten Days for Global Justice, a network of 180 local groups across Canada, now part of the Kairos justice coalition. As part of a campaign to close the rich-poor gap, Ten Days groups raised awareness about sweatshops by organizing “Wear Fair” fashion shows and by launching petition drives against sweatshops.

Activists do not want the sweatshops closed down. Factory closures that throw employees out of work only increase suffering and hardship among working people and their communities. Nor do factory closures do anything to alleviate the abuse of workers. If companies are allowed to ‘cut and run’ from sweatshops targeted by activists, the same exploitation will surface in new factories opened elsewhere.

Instead, students, trade unionists, churches and others moved by the suffering of sweatshop workers are joining forces to force companies to change. Fair Trade is the rallying cry. An Ethical Trading Action Group brings together Canadian Autoworkers, the Steelworkers Humanity Fund, Kairos, Oxfam Canada, Students Against Sweatshops and other groups to push for corporate codes of conduct among apparel companies.

A code of conduct includes promises that a company and its contractors will treat workers fairly by agreeing to:

- Pay a living wage that meets basic needs.
- Stop forced overtime.
- Ensure that workers have the right to form trade unions without harassment, threats or firings, and that they can engage in collective bargaining.
- Commit to not using child labour or prison labour.

In the States, groups such as the Workers Rights Consortium are also pushing to ensure that Codes of Conduct are enforced and workers’ rights respected. Europe’s “Clean Clothes” Campaign targets major retailers and major brands in ten European countries to promote decent wages and labour conditions for garment workers.

But a code doesn’t mean much without commitment – and inspection.

The issue of independent monitoring of workers' rights is crucial. A report on Wal-Mart sweatshops in Honduras found that no workers had ever heard of Wal-Mart's code of conduct.

"Going into these factories is like entering prison," says one Honduran priest. Teenagers and young women, often only 14 or 15-years-old, put in 10 to 12 hours of grueling labour each day. After a few years many are so exhausted that they can't work anymore.

These realities continue to fuel consumer action. When Nike moved into Toronto's Kensington Market neighbourhood in the summer of 2002 to launch its "Presto" sneakers, they weren't expecting to see a pair of sneakers dripping with red paint hung from a Presto sign. That 'greeting' was offered by local youth who, together with the Maquila Solidarity Network and UNITE, organized an anti-Nike street party to protest the company's labour practices. "Nike go home!" chanted the dancing youth.

By August Nike had had enough and pulled out of the Market. It was a very public defeat for a gigantic company that doesn't even have to mention its name because its trademark 'swoosh' is so recognizable around the world.

Nike has been targeted because of the treatment of the 500,000 workers, mostly women, who make Nike footwear (through local contractors) in China, Indonesia and Vietnam. The Nike Campaign has become an international movement demanding the company accept independent monitoring of working conditions at its contractors' factories, and that workers be paid a living wage.

Anger towards the company grew after news that on March 8, 1997 (ironically, International Women's Day), 56 women employed by a Nike contractor in Vietnam were forced to run around the factory in the hot sun until a dozen of them collapsed. They were being punished for not wearing regulation shoes to work.

In April 2002, 10,000 Indonesian workers took to the streets during a dispute about the minimum wage of US\$2.46 a day. Nike spokesperson Jim Small responded by saying "Indonesia could be reaching a point where it is pricing itself out of the market." Yet wages for Nike and Adidas workers in Indonesia are so paltry that some women workers are forced to send their children to live with relatives, according to a recent report. Full-time wages are as low as \$2 a day.

But solidarity efforts can have an impact, even on a huge company like

Nike. (For their part, Nike says that conditions are improving.) In September 2001, workers at Mexico's Mexmode factory, which makes sweatshirts for Nike, had their independent union recognized. It was a major breakthrough – the only independent union with a signed collective agreement in Mexico's 3,500-plus maquiladoras. Workers won pay increases and improved working conditions, after Nike was bombarded with thousands of letters from anti-sweatshop activists.

And many of those activists are students. Visitors strolling about the venerable stone buildings of the University of Toronto campus two years ago would have noticed something distinctly unusual: a banner hanging from a building demanding NO SWEATSHOPS.

Inside, a group of students had occupied the office of then-university president Robert Pritchard to demand that the university approve a code of conduct guaranteeing that workers producing university merchandise received a living wage and the right to organize. Ten days later, after Pritchard was flooded with emails and faxes supporting the students' demand, the university agreed.

The action was an early example of what has become a growing movement on Canadian campuses to ensure that university-identified clothes sold for students meet basic standards. U of T is just one of a number of campuses where students have banded together through Students Against Sweatshops to push for action. Students at 15 universities from one end of the country to another – Memorial in Newfoundland to Simon Fraser in B.C. – are campaigning for sweat-free campuses.

Their efforts are paying off. McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, recently became the eighth Canadian university to adopt a No Sweat policy to ensure its university apparel is not made under sweatshop conditions.

Nor are university students the only young Canadians galvanized into action. High school students and teachers across Canada are increasingly on board, promoting the adoption of No Sweat purchasing policies by their schools and school boards. In August 2002, as parents and students stood in line outside the R.J. McCarthy uniform store in Toronto, high school students handed them leaflets about sweatshops and how they could help

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Each of us, in how we  
choose to spend our  
dollars, can help reduce  
the demand for products  
made in sweatshops.

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ensure their school uniforms are made under human working conditions.

South of the border, a student anti-sweatshop movement has been woven together as well, with students at over 200 American campuses combating sweatshops under the banner of United Students Against Sweatshops. The New York Times called the student anti-sweatshop movement “the biggest surge in campus activism in nearly two decades.”

Kevin Thomas, an organizer for the Maquila Solidarity Network, says that students have plugged into the sweatshops campaign because of the direct connection to the clothes on their backs. They’ve also realized that pushing companies and university administrations to adopt sweat-free policies can actually make a difference.

“Here’s an issue where there’s something you can do,” says Thomas. “There’s been real wins. Students respond incredibly well because they can see that their actions have an effect on the industry.”

“I’m involved because of my interest in making links between my life and the lives of people around the world,” says Jennifer deGroot of Winnipeg, a sparkplug in Manitoba’s anti-sweatshop movement. It’s pushing the provincial government to adopt a No Sweat purchasing policy. “I can use the power I have as a northern consumer to demand fair treatment of workers around the world.”

Perhaps it’s the influence of youth, but the grim reality of sweatshops hasn’t drained this fair trade movement of creativity and fun. Few social justice campaigns have used such a wide array of tactics – petitions, government and corporate lobbying, demonstrations, sit-ins, even “fashion shows.”

And as Christmas approaches, harried shoppers at malls across Canada may again hear carolers sing:

*Door bell rings, are you listening?  
On your brow, sweat is glistening  
You’re working tonight; it just isn’t right,  
Slaving in a Sweatshop Wonderland.*

and:

*Shirts from Honduras  
and Nikes from China*

*clothes made in sweatshops  
in North Carolina  
all wrapped in packages  
and tied up with string,  
these are a few of my  
least favourite things.*

What, then, does the responsible shopper do? After all, we need clothes, and no one is suggesting drab, Soviet-style utilitarian clothing. The idea is simply to use your purchasing power to help others make a decent living. Info on responsible shopping is available from groups like Shop for Change and Global Exchange, which publishes the Responsible Shopping Guide.

Unfortunately, it's not yet possible to know whether that stylish shirt you've been eyeing in the local mall was made in a sweatshop or not. That could change if the disclosure campaign is successful. Meanwhile, *caveat emptor* – buyer beware.

And buyer, take action. The harsh truth is that most consumers go for the bargains; it's understandable that we try to make our hard earned dollars go further. Yet the lowest price isn't always the best one – not if it involves sweatshop labour. The movement against sweatshops has blossomed because many people now believe we need to think about more than just prices when we shop.

Each of us, in how we choose to spend our dollars, can help reduce the demand for products made in sweatshops. And that will give companies known to follow ethically based purchasing policies the competitive edge.

(December 2002)

*Many organizations are active in the anti-sweatshop cause, including the Maquila Solidarity Network ([www.maquilasolidarity.org](http://www.maquilasolidarity.org)) and Kairos Canada ([www.kairoscanada.org](http://www.kairoscanada.org)). The Maquila network has several campaigns on the go, including one pressuring the Olympic movement not to have its sportswear manufactured under sweatshop conditions.*



## BITTERSWEET CHOCOLATE

By Murray MacAdam

MANY THIRD WORLD FARMERS WHO GROW THE APPETIZING COCOA BEAN LIVE IN ABSOLUTE POVERTY. BUT 'FAIR TRADE' CAN MAKE CHOCOLATE TASTE BETTER FOR BOTH PRODUCER AND CONSUMER.

It is a simple but sublime culinary pleasure. Peel back the foil wrapper, take a bite and savour the potent sweetness of chocolate. Breathe in the 400 distinct smells that emanate from the cocoa bean, chocolate's key ingredient. A rose, in contrast, has only 14.

But don't think about how the cocoa was grown, or that chocolate bar might taste bittersweet. Many of the Third World farmers who pick the aromatic cocoa live in absolute poverty. An International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) study in 2002 found that the average wage for cocoa growers in West Africa ranged from US\$30 to \$110 – and that's for the entire year. These meagre earnings, the report concludes, make it very tough for families to meet their basic needs and for small businesses and communities to survive.

"The money we get from selling our cocoa beans...doesn't give us enough to buy materials or a pump for our own water supply," says Mana Osei Yawu, a village chief in Ghana. "We have no water in the village, we just have dirty water from rivers and streams. People spend a lot of time collecting water and there is always someone who is sick."

This reality persists in part because of a trade system slanted against the small farmers who grow 80 percent of the cocoa consumed in North America and Europe. The amount of cash that trickles down to them is set by commodity traders in London and New York. Cocoa prices fluctuate wildly, even as the pricetag on a chocolate bar stays the same. In the past two years the market price for cocoa has seesawed between a 27-year low and a 16-year high.

Low cocoa prices force farmers to cut labour costs. Or worse. One ingredient in the commerce of cocoa is a human rights tragedy thought to have been relegated to a harsher past – slavery. A 2000 U.S. State Department investigation unearthed evidence of slavery and child

trafficking in West Africa. A report by the IITA on 1,500 farms in the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon shed more light on this grim picture. It found 284,000 children undertaking hazardous tasks such as using machetes and applying pesticides and insecticides without protective equipment.

About 12,500 children working on large-scale cocoa farms had no relatives in the area, a sign that they had been sold into slavery. Some impoverished parents peddle their children to traffickers, in the desperate hope that a portion of their offspring's earnings will be sent home. Usually the children – and the promises of money – are never heard of again.

The child labourers are forced to pick the cocoa pods, slice them open and scoop out the cocoa beans. These kids work long, hard days, often from six in the morning until six at night. Beatings by farm owners and managers are common. "The beatings were a part of my life," then-14-year-old freed slave Aly Diabate told international reporters in 2001. "Anytime they loaded you with bags (of cocoa) and you fell while carrying them, nobody helped you. Instead, they beat you and beat you until you picked it up again." Even though he toiled many long days in hot fields picking cocoa – 400 pods are needed to make one pound of chocolate – Diabate never tasted the sweet result.

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Cocoa growers earn about one penny of the dollar we pay for a typical candy bar. Farmers and their children remain trapped in a pit of poverty.

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Life is not much better for independent, small-scale cocoa farmers. On average, growers earn about one penny of the dollar we pay for a typical candy bar. Farmers and their children are trapped in a pit of poverty, without the income or education needed to climb out.

Meanwhile, a few giant corporations earn considerably more than one cent per bar. Mars and Hershey's eat up three-quarters of U.S. chocolate sales, while Cadbury, Nestle and Mars devour the same proportion in Britain. These companies dominate retail sales of chocolate, the end product that consumes 80 percent of the world's cocoa.

While a trading field tilted away from cocoa farmers is not particularly appetizing to the Third World, some countries are hooked on chocolate, as previously profitable forests are cut down and factories close shop, unable to compete with cheap foreign goods flooding local markets. The six

biggest cocoa producing countries are the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Indonesia, Nigeria, Brazil and Cameroon.

The Ivory Coast, a geographically small country, is a global cocoa giant, producing 43 percent of the world's 6.6 billion pound annual crop. In neighbouring Ghana, two million farmers are employed in cocoa production and the plant accounts for 40 percent of total export revenues.

But for both countries, cocoa is a miserly king. Deregulation of agriculture in West Africa has led to the abolition of commodity boards, leaving small farmers at the mercy of the market. When cocoa prices drop, farmers are forced to cut labour costs or even rely on child labour.

In response to pressure from anti-slavery activists and development groups such as Save the Children and UNICEF, the international chocolate industry agreed in 2001 to a phased-in, four-year plan to eliminate child slavery in cocoa production by 2005. A monitored system will assure consumers that the chocolate they buy is not harvested from exploitative

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Some consumers are putting their ethics where their wallets are by purchasing 'fair trade' chocolate that gives farmers a better price for their harvests.

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forms of child labour. Though welcomed, "it's not enough, from our perspective," says Adrienne Clements, director of Save the Children Canada, "and it's not soon enough."

Nor does the deal guarantee fairer prices to cocoa farmers. That's why some consumers are putting their ethics where their wallets are by purchasing 'fair trade' chocolate. Fair trade is a growing international movement founded on greater equality and respect between Third World producers and First World consumers. The approach gives farmers a better price for their harvests.

Currently, the world market price for cocoa is up to over US\$1,600 a ton, largely due to the unstable situation in war-torn Ivory Coast, the world's largest producer. The fair trade rate paid to farmers is guaranteed to be \$1,750 per ton. For chemical-free cocoa, it's \$1,950, giving an extra boost to organic farmers – and to the environment. The best of the fair trade companies also provide funds for local development projects. They usually buy their cocoa from co-operatives, strengthening the position of individual farmers.

La Siembra, an Ottawa-based co-operative and Canada's largest fair trade

chocolate company, buys cocoa from the Conacado Co-op in the Dominican Republic, which sells on behalf of members. There are no middlemen, guaranteeing the small farmer not only a better price but also an end-of-the-year profit. Conacado also trains farmers how to grow cocoa organically.

“Fair trade provides a much-needed guaranteed price for organic cocoa,” says Jeff de Jong of La Siembra. “And each dollar spent...acts as a vote of support for more equitable trading relationships.” And, of course, fair trade chocolate is made without exploitative child labour. Farms are monitored each year to ensure that conditions are humane.

The fairer price gives a break to farmers, their families and their communities. As Craig Sams of Green and Black’s, a British fair trade chocolate company, told *New Internationalist* magazine, “We screw people to the wall for so little. By giving a 25 percent premium to growers, Green and Black’s adds only 4 percent to the cost of each bar, but for the farmers that makes a huge difference.”

Although alternative trade companies sell only a small fraction of the chocolate eaten in the world, the percentage is increasing. Britain’s Co-op supermarket chain, with 2,400 stores, announced in November 2002 that it would source all cocoa for its own brand of chocolate bars from the Kuapa Kokoo Fair Trade Farmers’ Co-op in Ghana. The move should double sales of fair trade chocolate in the U.K. over the next four years.

The 40,000 members of Kuapa Kokoo, people like Esther Amoah, consider this a sweet deal. While she has no electricity and there’s no medical care nearby, she feels well-off compared with other farmers. Speaking from the porch of her home, she says “You can see I’ve now managed to paint my walls and our village now has a water pump, which we didn’t have before.”

When details of the Co-op purchase plan were publicly unwrapped, Kuapo Kokoo’s director Kwabena Ohemeng-Tinyase said that this is a “...dream come true for us. It is a major humanitarian measure. This will really help our farmers who are living often with no basic facilities, in the poorest of conditions.” Kuapa Kokoo is living up to its name, which in Twi, the local language, means “Good Cocoa Farmers Company.”

Fair trade cocoa is also harvested in Belize, Bolivia, Cameroon, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua. Worldwide, more than 40,000 farmers benefit. While fair trade chocolate products are not yet on most Canadians’ shopping lists, you can already buy them at over 500

natural food stores, grocery chains and Ten Thousand Villages shops. Many outlets sell the 'Cocoa Camino' bars, cocoa powder and other products made by the La Siembra co-op.

La Siembra – which won the 2002 Socially Responsible Business Award, the first company in Canada to receive this U.S.-based honour – has secured agreements with Loblaw's supermarkets and the western-based Overwaitea Food Group, which includes the Save On Food chain, to start carrying its products. "Mass markets channels for fair trade are opening up," says the co-op's de Jong. "We're not operating in niche markets anymore, and that's the exciting thing."

So more Canadians can now enjoy their favourite chocolate indulgence without the bitter aftertaste.

(October 2003)

*The fair trading of products such as cocoa and coffee is expanding worldwide, and has become a major focus of groups including Oxfam ([www.maketradefair.com](http://www.maketradefair.com)). TransFair Canada ([www.transfair.ca](http://www.transfair.ca)) lists where you can buy ethically traded products. To indulge your sweet tooth guilt-free, visit La Siembra Co-op ([www.lasiembra.com](http://www.lasiembra.com)).*

## CURITIBA, BRAZIL: THE ROADS NOT TAKEN

By Stephen Leahy

STUCK IN A TRAFFIC JAM? CHOKING ON CAR FUMES? TAKE THE NEXT EXIT AND HEAD SOUTH TO THE CITY OF CURITIBA, BRAZIL, WHERE YOU CAN BOARD THE BUS TO A PUBLIC TRANSIT UTOPIA.

By the year 2025, two-thirds of the planet's population will live in cities, according to the United Nations. And almost all of this growth – a staggering 90 percent – will take place in countries of the Developing World.

Third World cities often conjure up images of traffic and pollution, poverty and shantytowns. But the remarkable city of Curitiba in southern Brazil is trying to paint a different picture. This mid-sized city of just over one-and-a-half million has become a mecca for urban planners, transit officials and environmentalists the world over.

Cities as far flung as Cape Town, Santiago, Lagos, New York, Toronto, Montreal, Amsterdam and Bogota have come to learn how Curitiba fought the car congestion and pollution nightmares that haunt most of the world's cities.

What's even more remarkable is that by most standards, Curitiba is a poor city. Its annual per capita annual income is under US\$3,000. Yet polls show that residents of Curitiba universally love their city and wouldn't want to live anywhere else. Visitors call it one of the most liveable cities in the world.

The story of Curitiba's transformation to self-styled 'Capital of Ecology' begins in the late 1960s when the city of then 360,000 faced a population growth boom, like other cities in Latin America. Curitiba was industrializing rapidly, levelling the old to make way for the modern. And like most cities, it was suffocating on its own traffic. The solution, of course, was to build more roads.

So in a scene repeated the world over, the main street and many of its magnificent turn-of-the-century buildings were to be obliterated by a modern expressway. But in 1971, a young architect and newly-minted mayor by the name of Jaime Lerner thought the unthinkable. He wanted

to stop the construction and instead create Brazil's first pedestrian mall. However, not even the shopkeepers on the old street were in favour; how would people shop if they couldn't drive their cars?

Lerner, who had trained in Paris, believed that once people experienced a pedestrian mall they'd love it. Over one weekend Lerner pushed the public works department to rip up the pavement and put in cobblestones and flowerbeds. By Monday afternoon the shopkeepers wanted the mall extended.

Today, Curitiba, with 1.6 million people, has car ownership levels comparable with similar-sized Toronto but has 49 city blocks closed to traffic. More startling is the fact that 75 percent of all city travel is done by transit – the world's highest usage. But Curitiba didn't ban cars. Over two decades it gradually made transit cheaper, faster and more convenient than driving.

Instead of spending money on that huge overpass, the Lerner administration invested in public transit. And in Curitiba, that meant buses. Modern transit usually means subways or light rail trains, but all Curitiba could afford was a short light rail line that would do little to solve the overall traffic problem. Buses were the only way to go – but they would only work if they weren't stuck in traffic.

So the local government set out to create a very fast transit system based on buses that has become known as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Planners decided that existing roads would work just fine and reallocated them in groups of three: one avenue for traffic into the city, one avenue for traffic out, and one avenue for a two-way bus-only road called a *canaleta*.

There are five groups of these three parallel avenues that radiate like spokes of a wheel from the city centre, extending over 20 kilometres. These main roads are connected to common bus lines called *interbairros* that run in four widening circles to form a spider's web that connects the entire city.

To minimize delays, bus stops are spaced no closer than three kilometres apart along much of this spider-web network. And to streamline the boarding process at the most crowded bus stops, attractive steel and acrylic tube stations are built level to the buses and designed to fit their doors. Fare is collected at the tube station's turnstile, rather than on the bus.

The tubes allow eight people to move in or out of the bus per second, four times the rate of conventional bus stops. Buses also have traffic-signal

priority. Signals remain green or turn green a few seconds early for them so they can run from station to station mostly without stopping – just like a subway. Finally, to handle the huge throngs of passengers riding Curitiba's BRT, the most popular routes use huge articulated buses with three coach cars that carry as many as 270 passengers. Inside and out they look and act like subway trains, carrying some 23,000 passengers per hour, better than the actual subway in Rio de Janeiro. This comfort and quickness have earned the express lines the nickname *ligeirinho* (swift ones) as well as national and international publicity.

Going one step further, many of these buses now run on a 'green' fuel made up of 89.4 percent diesel, 8 percent alcohol and 2.6 percent soybean. This has reduced particulate emissions by 43 percent and even created some local jobs in agriculture and processing.

At the opposite end of the scale, neighbourhood mini-vans feed conventional bus routes, which, in turn, feed the trunk lines. All transfers within the seamless system are free. Curitiba Transit offers one standard rate for all trips regardless of length, which benefits the poor who live on the fringes of the city and travel farther to make a living. Altogether, the system's 1,900 buses make 14,000 trips a day, serving more than 1.9 million riders – more than New York City.

To get that kind of passenger traffic, the city also changed its zoning laws to focus commercial and residential growth around these bus corridors, reducing the pressure to expand outward. High-density apartment buildings were encouraged along these main thoroughfares.

Stretches of land along rivers were put off-limits to builders and made into parks, a practical option that has also eliminated economic loss from flooding. This rezoning, together with other efforts to protect natural areas and build parks, increased the area of green space per person 100-fold over 20 years. All that green space also created room for 150 kilometres of bike trails that wind their way past parks and protected heritage buildings.

But perhaps the most practical aspect of the city's mass transit system – and the most surprising – is that it was relatively cheap. Most of it cost only about US\$200,000 per kilometre to install, one-five-hundredth the

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Leadership is key. It took a dynamic mayor to accelerate sustainable transit in Curitiba.

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cost of a subway, which internationally averages about \$100 million per kilometre.

As a result of the low cost, the city was able to create a dense transit network where passengers can travel anywhere in the system for about 35 cents. And before anyone dismisses Curitiba Transit as a grand public charity scheme, it should be pointed out that the system even makes a profit. Fast, comfortable – no bus is older than three years – this mass transit system receives no subsidies and actually makes money.

Private companies buy the buses and the city assigns the routes, sets fares and pays each contractor by kilometre travelled. The city has paid only for the roads, lighting, bus stops and staff to monitor the bus companies. It's a public-private partnership that works. Commuting by transit has risen from 7 percent in the 70s to about 75 percent today. Air pollution has declined, and overall fuel consumption dropped by 25 percent even as the city tripled in population.

Curitiba isn't a perfect 'eco-city.' It has urban sprawl problems including *favelas* – shantytowns of 300,000 poor inhabitants ringing the city. But the city enjoys a quality of life that is the envy of much of Brazil. Industry, including ironically, foreign auto manufacturers BMW, Chrysler and Renault, are attracted to its excellent quality of life. Other cities are naturally following Curitiba's example.

Quito, Peru and Bogota, Colombia are just two examples, notes Lloyd Wright, a transit expert with The Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP). The ITDP promotes environmentally sustainable and equitable transportation policies and projects worldwide.

Bogota, a city of seven million, now has 41 kilometres of a TransMilenio BRT system. The articulated buses in dedicated lanes have become the world's busiest bus system in less than two years. Already car traffic has dropped 10 percent. Three hundred kilometres of dedicated bike lanes – the most in the world – has led to a 900 percent increase in bike ridership. And as Bogota weans itself off the automobile, they've started car-free days on Sundays, holidays and even selected workdays.

The beautiful, historic city of Cuenca, Ecuador, also plans to follow Curitiba's example. Cuenca has a population of 250,000 people nestled in the Andes, and like many urban areas in Developing Countries, transportation was unregulated with private operators fighting for passengers with old and often unsafe buses and taxis. So Cuenca developed

an urban transportation master plan with a modified BRT system on 24 kilometres of principal trunk lines and approximately 100 kilometres of feeder routes.

Making the transition from unregulated private operations has been difficult in other cities, says Wright, because private bus drivers, taxis and others have protested the changes. Cuenca avoided this by involving all parties in the decision-making process, and by phasing in the plan.

The city maintains overall quality control of the system but the private sector will own and operate the buses. Private sector operators have already enjoyed financial benefits from the formal distribution of routes. Financing has been the biggest hurdle for the small city, even at the modest price of US\$15-million, earmarked mainly for the initial infrastructure. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is helping the municipality develop a financing plan that already includes the support of a local commercial bank. The private sector will be investing an additional \$50-million, primarily in the form of new buses.

Leadership is key. It has taken a dynamic mayor to make this happen in Curitiba and Cuenca. The excellent economics of bus rapid transit in conjunction with strong political will is proving to be a successful combination in Latin America. But could it happen in the First World?

In fits and starts, several North American cities are applying some of Curitiba's transportation innovations. Pittsburgh now has a short BRT line connecting downtown to the airport. Car-paralysed Los Angeles recently announced its first BRT line, a modest 20 kilometres that will replace some existing buses and cut travel time in half when fully operational by 2005.

In car-capital Detroit, local anti-sprawl activists are pushing for a BRT system called SpeedLink that is "modelled after the real-world experience of Curitiba." Ottawa-Carleton Region has had a successful 15 kilometres BRT system for many years that carries approximately 200,000 passengers daily.

One of the reasons for Curitiba's amazing transit success story is that Curitibaanos weren't already wedded to the automobile in the 1970s, says Todd Litman, Director of the Victoria Transport Policy Institute, one of Canada's leading research centres for sustainable transportation.

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Urban planners from around the world have travelled to Curitiba to see how it tackled the car congestion and pollution nightmares that haunt most cities.

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Curitiba's public officials managed to convince the middle class that transit was safe, fast and pleasant – and better for them than driving their cars. In North America, 75 percent of the cost of automobile travel is owning a car; once people have one, you can't get them out of it because it's a cheap form of transportation. "We created a very successful and efficient automobile transportation system – as long as you're not in rush hour," says Litman.

Although transit – especially buses – have a poor image in North America, people will use them given sufficient incentive, maintains Litman. And one of the big incentives is to avoid being stuck in those traffic jams.

No one place is doing all the right things in terms of sustainable transportation, says Litman. "It's a matter of taking ideas from here and there. Europe is a decade ahead of North America in re-structuring their transportation systems." That mix includes transit, bike lanes and wiser urban planning. Public officials in North America seem reluctant to tackle our heavily subsidized auto lifestyle directly through 'full-cost pricing' of fuel, roads or parking says Litman. Moreover, in Europe, the people planning transit changes intend to use it themselves. "Here, transit or other transportation options are for people who can't afford a car."

There are those who argue that just as an individual can't afford that car, cities can't afford fancy new mass transit systems. But the lesson to be learned from Curitiba is that creativity can substitute for financial resources, says Jonas Rabinovitch, Senior Urban Development Advisor for the United Nations Development Programme.

Any city, rich or poor, can draw on the skills of its residents to tackle urban environmental problems. "But what may not be as easily transferable is the will to change, the political commitment, and the leadership that Curitiba has enjoyed over the past 25 years."

(April 2002)

*The lessons of Curitiba are spreading: Jakarta, Indonesia has built Asia's first Bus Rapid Transit corridor and Mexico City has opened the first five kilometres of a 90-kilometre bike network. To keep up with these and other sustainable transportation initiatives, visit the Institute for Transportation & Development Policy ([www.itdp.org](http://www.itdp.org)).*

## THE FOGGIEST IDEA

By David Napier

A CANADIAN-LED PROGRAM TO COLLECT FRESH WATER FROM CLOUDS  
QUENCHES THE THIRST OF A SMALL CHILEAN FISHING VILLAGE.

Navigating the narrow dirt road that winds its way through the coastal mountains of north central Chile toward Chungungo is like riding a giant snake. Driving this route at night is simply frightening.

The absence of guard-rails between my tiny rental car and the pitch-black abyss is unnerving, but it's the small white crosses that light up like ghosts in front of the headlights that make me sweat. Having travelled before in Latin America, I immediately recognize these wooden roadside markers as rough but heartfelt memorials to those unfortunate drivers who lost control of their cars and trucks and plummeted to their deaths.

The steering wheel grows moist as I decelerate to a snail's pace. Eventually I pass El Tofo, an abandoned mining town at the 780-metre high summit, before descending to the fishing village of Chungungo. Only there do I breath a sigh of relief and wait for sunrise.

And daybreak illuminates a remarkable sight: the work of a Canadian-led team of "cloud physicists" who have adapted centuries-old technology and brought water to this rustic outpost, one of the driest places on earth.

The drought here ended when Bob Schemenauer, Emeritus Research Scientist with Environment Canada, teamed with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Pilar Cereceda, a professor at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, and Chile's national forestry department. Together they established the world's first modern fog collection program in this sleepy town 600 kilometres north of Santiago.

Residents of Chungungo survive on the fish they haul from the Pacific Ocean, and traditionally got their drinking water from a truck that made sporadic trips to the community. But it only left each person with a paltry daily ration of 15 litres – a scant amount compared with the 330 litres that the average Canadian uses each day.

"Up until 20 years ago, Chungungo received water from the iron mine

of El Tofo,” says Schemenauer. “But when the mine closed, water was trucked...from a well 40 kilometres away. The water delivery was irregular, the water not of the best quality, and the cost high.”

‘Cloud physicists’ have adapted centuries-old technology and brought water to one of the driest places on earth.

That changed in 1992. Building on principles of moisture collection that are thousands of years old, mesh nets, whose tops are six metres above the ground, are stretched between two posts on the hilltop overlooking the town. As clouds pass through what look like 94 oversized volleyball nets, beads of water run down the polypropylene nets into gutters. The net result is an inexpensive and abundant – as much as 15,000 litres of water a day – source of fresh water for both domestic and agricultural uses.

Fog collection is based on the centuries-old, simple tradition whereby the leaves of trees and plants trap droplets from coastal clouds for thirsty yet resourceful people. In Chungungo, the immediate results were striking, both in terms of the increase in water and its effect on the local community. The number of residents in Chungungo jumped to 400 after the fog collecting nets were raised on the nearby mountain.

“People used to leave the village and head for the big cities because there was no water and therefore no hope. Now people have a reason to stay,” says Schemenauer, who has helped set up similar operations in such arid spots as Oman, Nepal and the Baja Peninsula, Mexico.

“Before there were only a few trees, no plaza, no gardens and no one had crops,” says Professor Cereceda of the situation in Chungungo. These days villagers grow their own herbs and prepare meals that include fruits and vegetables rather than just seafood. Flowers have been planted, clothes are washed in clear water, and modernity hit the town in the form of a gas pump located near the central plaza.

But for all the promise of the project, based largely on international support from the federal government of Canada and a handful of generous Canadian citizens, the project at Chungungo has unfortunately faltered in recent years. Development doesn’t happen overnight. “We gave responsibility [for operating the collection program] to the town,” says Cereceda. However, the nets have not always been maintained nor the

water collection systems kept clear and clean. Leaves often clog the collection pipes.

The trouble started when the IDRC did what it always said it would do and turned off the tap on funding in the late 1990s. They didn't want to create a long-term dependency on external money.

At that point, interest on the part Chungungo residents seemed to run dry. The technology is relatively simple, but by local standards costly to operate. The major problem, though, is labour.

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People used to leave the village because there was no water and no hope. Now there is a reason to stay.

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Survival can be difficult here, like in most corners of the Third World. There isn't always free time for broader volunteering. "So if people don't get paid they don't come here to clean [the fog collectors]," says Pato Piñones, director of the Water Committee of Chungungo, standing beside a water tank that is dangerously close to empty.

He points to massive concrete water tanks with a capacity of 600 cubic metres that on this day holds less than 35 cubic metres. "Normally it would be full," says Piñones. "What's here is only enough for half the village, for two days."

Piñones single-handedly cares for the nets and four holding tanks where the water gets stored. He has been head of the Water Committee for four years (two years longer than he planned to hold the post) and a member of the Committee since it was conceived, seven years ago. He believes the project will survive, and that fog catching can be a solution for other communities suffering from drought.

When I ask if he'd rather live in Santiago and raise his three children there, Piñones admits it would be nice to make a decent wage and be appreciated for his labour, but quickly adds that this is his home. And he is needed here. 'Here' is a mountaintop overlooking a tiny maze of dirt roads that separate the ramshackle houses of Chungungo. The view is stunning. After the morning fog has lifted, one can see the blue-green Pacific Ocean dotted with a handful of fishing boats.

The crew on these distant vessels are men that Piñones knows well. They are hearty souls who will not break with tradition: they search the vast expanse of a salty sea for sustenance. They know where their next

meal will come from, but what about their next glass of water?

On the top of a mountain overlooking their village, Piñones just may have the foggiest idea.

(September 2001)

*The technology pioneered in Chungungo is being adopted in many Developing Countries, including Guatemala, Haiti and Nepal. Unfortunately, the Chilean prototype project has fallen into disrepair and disuse. The International Development Research Centre has explored why, and offers lessons that can be learned from this foggiest of notions ([web.idrc.ca/en/ev-30617-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://web.idrc.ca/en/ev-30617-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html)).*

## WISH YOU WERE HERE

By Sophie Watson

AN ECOTOURISM CAMP IN UGANDA SHOWS THAT TRAVEL CAN BE GOOD FOR THE HOST COMMUNITY AS WELL AS THE VISITOR'S SOUL.

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On this private patch of island in Africa, the view from the large green canvas tent is breathtaking: a lake of deep blue water framed by lushly flowered trees and swaying sorghum crops. Birds with names like Bou Bous, Robin-Chats and Weavers dart about, each speaking its own language.

Butterflies dance in the air, cats rustle in the foliage and spiders weave their webs on this 1.8-hectare island on Lake Bunyonyi in southwestern Uganda.

At Bushara Island Camp, you can start your day with breakfast at your tent or wake up by running the Eucalyptus trail a few times round the island. Later in the day you can take a birdwatching tour with Enosh – he'll give you a checklist that has hundreds of birds you might see or hear.

You can also take a tour of one of the nearby islands, visit a primary school, see some traditional dancers or just canoe for the thrill of the paddle.

Meals up at Swallows Restaurant include Crayfish Masala, Chicken Curry, Lemon Cinnamon scones and Banana Fritters topped with passion fruit. In the giftshop above the restaurant, you can choose from sarongs, baby rompers and ties in stunning African fabrics, or homemade baskets made from elephant grass and papyrus.

Of course, the views on vacations in the tropical Third World are supposed to be breathtaking, the food delicious, the atmosphere 'exotic.' That's what the brochures always say as they describe your 'vacation of a lifetime.'

But at Bushara Island Camp, an idyllic nature retreat for travellers in East Africa, there is both a view and a viewpoint. Tourism can be good for the host community as well as the visitor's soul. It should create jobs so people don't have to leave their communities. And it should promote development in a way that conserves the environment – and local cultures.

While at Bushara, you might not realize you are part of a community



development project, although the dry-pit latrines, candlelight and solar energy probably give it away that you are at an ecotourism hotspot in Uganda, often called the 'pearl of Africa.'

When you pay the bill (reasonably priced, it should be noted) for your stay at Bushara Island, in addition to the camp's operations costs your money goes towards school fees, agroforestry projects and an orphan-care program. As a 'fair travel' operation, Bushara is a pioneer in Uganda.

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Half of the people who  
holiday now do so in the  
Third World - in many  
countries tourism is a  
main source of money.

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And tourism has become vital to the local economy because the beautiful setting of Lake Bunyonyi is not sufficient to feed the community - home to roughly 47,000 people - beyond a point of subsistence farming. Soil erosion, over-farming and the decreasing size of land holdings are all barriers to a healthy standard of living.

Traditionally, in the Lake Bunyonyi area as in the rest of Uganda, agriculture is the most important sector of the economy, employing between 80 and 90 percent of the workforce. Women are responsible for up to 80 percent of the agricultural production, which involves both subsistence and cash crops.

Uganda's GNP per capita is US\$170 - the seventh lowest in the world. The average life expectancy is only 45.5 years. Stats like those spawned the creation of the Lake Bunyonyi Development Company (LBDC).

The Lake Bunyonyi Development Company was developed in partnership with the Church of Uganda, the Lake Bunyonyi community and the Africa Community Technical Service (ACTS), a Canadian Christian non-governmental organization (NGO). This coalition spent a good deal of time assessing the community's needs, and learned that the area desperately needed some kind of industry to create long-term jobs.

The people also needed immediate community development: orphan-care, better schools and an agroforestry program that would educate people about higher-yield farming techniques. But what could provide employment now and in the future? What would provide the money for community development?

One thing the area has always had going for it is sheer physical beauty. And Lake Bunyonyi is a rare swimmable lake - only two other lakes in

Uganda do not have beaver fever and other dangers. So in 1992 the LBDC rented Bushara island from the Church and made it the region's first ever tourist facility.

The camp quickly found its niche: NGO workers looking for a break, missionaries looking for spiritual tranquillity and big-time bird enthusiasts looking for the aforementioned Bou Bous and Robin-Chats.

In the beginning many of the staff were volunteers working for a meal a day. The company now provides jobs for 40 people, and revenue has grown from \$27,000 in 1997 to \$110,000 in 2001.

Bushara Island Camp has become the flagship for other camps in the area, and indeed for the whole country. There are now six other camps around the lake, each tailored to different clienteles, and a hotel is under construction.

The LBDC achieved success by tailoring projects to suit the environment and the community. Canadian involvement has come largely in the form of human investment. ACTS workers Tim and Joanne Specht arrived in Bushara in 1997. Their mission was to develop the camp, provide training to the staff and oversee local community projects.

After an assessment period, the Spechts and the staff focused on getting the camp up to tourism industry standards. Bushara added more menu items, safari tents and solar panels. Birdwatching and cultural tours were introduced, and new products were added to the giftshop. Staff were trained in customer service, market research and business development.

And a number of grassroots initiatives took root: a microcredit loan plan, the Bunyonyi Wear sewing co-operative, an orphan-care program and an agroforestry education project.

William Tibamwenda, from the Mukoni village on the mainland, has worked for the company since 1992. He started as a latrine digger and night watchman, but over the years has worked his way up to general manager. He had never before had the opportunity to use a phone, fax or email, nor had he ever travelled around his country. Now he is in charge of all Bushara Camp operations.

When I sit down with William he has two things on the table: a handwritten, stapled journal and a book on how to be a good manager. He is very proud of his company's history. He speaks of Tim and Joanne as being family, brothers and sisters in solidarity.

"This partnership between Ugandans and Canadians benefits the local

people here,” William tells me. “Before there was no development, no money, no education, no jobs, no agroforestry. This campground here is the mother of all campgrounds in the Kabale district. Others have copied us. The island was just used for cultivation before.”

“The Canadians who first came here saw how poor the people were and wanted to create some revenue. Tim started the orphan-care program and expanded the agroforestry program. We have never failed to pay the wages or taxes, and we have never failed to buy what we need.”

The LBDC is a leader in sustainable development on the lake. What makes this development company unique is that it is largely independent of foreign donors. This for-profit business model is fuelling the region’s economic growth, and funding these community development projects:

#### AGROFORESTRY

The hills around Lake Bunyonyi were losing their fertility due to over-farming and soil erosion, so the LBDC started an agroforestry program in 1994, training staff to carry out extension work. A tree nursery was set up on Bwama Island (directly opposite Bushara), with the Calliandra as the tree of choice due to its capacity to reduce soil erosion and replace nitrogen in the soil.

The LBDC provides local farmers with 60,000 trees a year through a seedling program. Farmers work in groups of four to six, each receiving 100 trees. Members of the group support each other in the planting and caring of the trees. Since its inception, the agroforestry program has aided hundreds of farmers around the lake.

#### ORPHAN-CARE PROGRAM

In 1998 Benon Mugisha, an employee of the LBDC, died and was survived by his wife Loid and their two children Penelope and Peterson. These sad circumstances inspired an orphan-care program.

The community decided on a milling machine business to raise money for an orphanage. The LBDC provided the revenue for the capital costs of the machine and its installation, and the community built a structure to house it. They fired up the machine in August 2000, and the LBDC is now initiating similar orphan-care programs in other communities.

### BUNYONYI WEAR

Sarongs, dresses, hats, baby rompers and ties are some of the items sold at the camp giftshop. When you make a purchase, you receive a brochure explaining that Bunyonyi Wear comes from a co-operative of women who sew on foot treadle machines. They come from various villages around Lake Bunyonyi and have been chosen due to their inability to fulfill traditional roles within their families – roles that include heavy physical labour.

Each of these women has a health problem or disability, making them economic burdens to their families or labelling them as “unmarryable.” Joanne Specht developed the co-operative with Maudah, William Tibamwenda’s wife, when she could no longer work the family field.

The co-operative now trains women in sewing, style and pattern-making. Joanne is also teaching the women bookkeeping and marketing so they can run their business independently. The proceeds from tourists’ purchases go directly back into the co-operative.

### CRAFTS FOR EXPORT: FAIR TRADE PRODUCTS

In association with the Uganda Community Tourism Association (UCOTA), the LBDC started a program to teach the art of craft-making. The LBDC coordinates the community project and UCOTA provides training in basket-weaving, handmade paper products and other products. UCOTA then exports the products to local and international ‘fair trade’ markets.

### MICROCREDIT PROGRAM

Like other microcredit programs worldwide, small groups of people who are willing to support each other apply collectively for loans. Each participant receives a share of these small loans to start or expand a microenterprise, and the LBDC provides training in business.

“It’s very exciting,” explains Tim Specht, “the micro-loans have a really significant impact. You’re dealing with \$100 for one person. They’re allowed to pursue anything that involves trade – they can buy sorghum, sell it, buy chickens and sell eggs. The thing with ventures like buying sorghum in the harvest season and selling it in the high season is they can realize 60 - 80 percent on their investment. That has a substantial impact

on the community if they can take \$100 and get back an extra \$80.”

Bushara Island Camp is just one small player in a huge international travel industry. Half of the people who holiday now do so in the Third World – in many countries tourism is a main source of money. But while tourism does create employment, too often the jobs are in the low-wage service sector.

And much of the travel industry is based on the all-inclusive resort, walled off from the surrounding country while importing food and furniture. Owned by foreign companies, very little of the money spent by tourists is left behind in the host communities.

This sets Bushara Island Camp apart as a destination that’s good for you, and good for them. The Lake Bunyonyi Development Company is not dependent on foreign donors, but on international solidarity and support. So if you are in East Africa on your way to see the mountain gorillas or just looking for a unique retreat, consider a visit to Bushara Island.

William Tibamwenda will be waiting with a torch to lead you to your tent and a cup of strong African tea. You can sleep in the clear African air content in the knowledge that your dollars will benefit both the local environment and community.

(March 2003)

*Bushara Island Camp (<http://acts.ca/lbdc/bushara>) in Uganda is still open year-round, and remains a unique eco-tourism destination offering natural getaways, bird watching, hiking and swimming.*

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At Uganda’s Bushara Island Camp, ecotourism creates jobs so people don’t have to leave the community.

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## THE FOREST FOR THE TREES

By Stephen Leahy

MORE THAN ONE TREE HAS FALLEN IN THE WORLD'S FORESTS, BUT MANY PEOPLE HEARD. CONSUMERS CAN NOW BUY WOOD PRODUCTS FROM SUSTAINABLY MANAGED 'COMMUNITY FORESTS' IN THE THIRD WORLD.

Imagine you are walking through a hectare of forest – it doesn't matter what kind of forest. Take your time and look around. A hectare is a sizeable piece of land – 2.5 acres for those of us who don't think metrically. How many trees do you see? The number would vary depending on the terrain you're hiking in, but let's agree there'd be a lot of trees.

Keep that 'lots-of-trees' image in mind. Every year, 15 million hectares of forest – an area twice the size of New Brunswick – are clear-cut. This annual harvest cuts deeply into the 20 to 30 percent of original forest that remains in large tracts on the planet. Forests have all but vanished in 87 countries.

Satellite photos confirm what we know from our walk in the woods: forests are vanishing. Eight thousand years ago trees dominated the Earth's landscape. Today's great deserts – the Sahara and the Gobi for example – were once temperate forests. Even the barren, rocky soils of the Middle East were famous for their magnificent cedar forests.

But wood was a necessity for survival and after local trees were consumed, empires fell unless they were powerful enough to exploit far-flung forests. For a thousand years Egypt's pharaohs imported huge cedar logs from Lebanon to make their barges and ships, their temples and palaces.

'Cut and run' forestry hasn't changed much other than an immense increase in scale and global reach. International trade in wood fibre has quadrupled in the past 40 years. Japan uses 11 percent of the world's paper, none of which comes from its own trees. With only 5 percent of the population, the United States consumes 20 percent of the world's wood.

While many countries have enacted laws to protect their forests, regulations are simply not enforced, according to the World Resources Institute's Global Forest Watch (GFW). By combining on-the-ground local

knowledge with digital and satellite technology, GFW is tracking what's happening to the world's remaining forests. The news isn't good:

- In Indonesia, about 70 percent of timber production is from illegal logging.
- In Central Africa, logging concessions cover more than half of the world's second largest tropical rainforest.
- In Chile, government policies encourage people to clear native forests that are thousands of years old to make way for plantations of exotic (and more lucrative) species. As a result, the prehistoric araucaria forests, and the alerce, the second oldest living tree in the world, are endangered.
- In Venezuela, logging and mining practices threaten one of the most pristine forests on the planet.

"Much of the threats facing the remaining intact forests boil down to bad economics, bad management and corruption," said Dirk Bryant, founder and co-director of GFW. Even in the world-renown 'once threatened but now supposedly saved' Amazon, deforestation is getting worse.

Brazil's Amazon forest could vanish by the year 2020, according to the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. Despite worldwide attention and its importance as a centre of biodiversity, the Amazon still has the world's highest rate of forest destruction – averaging almost two million hectares a year from 1995 to 2000. And it will get worse as the Brazilian government goes forward with its "Advance Brazil" plan to invest over US\$40-billion in new highways, railroads, hydroelectric reservoirs, power lines and gas lines in the Amazon over the next few years.

Brazilians and their government are concerned about conservation and have enacted strict conservation laws, acknowledges Thomas Lovejoy, Chief Biodiversity Advisor to the World Bank. But Brazil suffers from the seemingly universal dilemma of semi-independent government departments doing their own thing – road building, economic development – without considering the long-term impacts, says Lovejoy, a pioneering tropical biologist who has worked in the Amazon since 1965. "We have the same kind of problems in America."

The history of the Amazon clearly shows that new roads lead to

colonization, logging, hunting and land speculation. Third World countries will continue to develop in this way – who are we in the First World to say they can't do what we've done – but the impacts on the environment can be worse than expected. "Cutting up the forests into fragments, even large ones, increases their vulnerability to fires and edge development that creates ongoing degradation of the forest," Lovejoy says. The people moving into the Amazon should be encouraged to live in urban areas, not in forest areas as homesteaders, he adds. And there must be more thoughtful and integrated forms of sustainable development.

But the root of the problem of the planet's disappearing forests remains a global economy built on the foundation (some might say fantasy) of an endless and relatively cheap supply of natural resources. This economic system fuels a demand for wood and wood products such as paper that's expected to double in the next 50 years.

The World Commission on Forests estimates that the current rate of global deforestation results in 15,000 species becoming extinct each year. The Commission was formed after the 1992 United Nation's Rio Earth Summit when world leaders finally acknowledged that forests were in trouble.

The chopping down of an area twice the size of the province of New Brunswick every year has profound implications for us all. "It could change the very character of the planet and of the human enterprise within a few years unless we make some choices," a 1999 World Commission report concludes.

And the consumption of wood and paper products in the First World is largely what fuels the chainsaws of the Third World. Reducing our consumption will take the pressure off forests and allow time to make the transition to more sustainable forestry practices. While reducing and reusing are preferable to energy-intensive recycling of paper and wood, all efforts are necessary.

Reducing the North's overall consumption of the South's natural resources and assisting the poor must also happen if there are to be any

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At the root of the planet's disappearing forests is a global economy built on the fantasy of an endless and cheap supply of natural resources.

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tropical forests left. Illegal logging of tropical hardwoods is often the only way impoverished people can feed their families.

A tree did indeed fall in the forest, but fortunately somebody heard. We can now buy wood products from forests that are managed in balance with the environment. There is rising consumer awareness that wood products ought to come from well-managed forests. Many big forest companies now claim to be sustainable and slap 'green' labels on their products. But how do you know if the claims are true? Can you truly judge a tree by its label?

The strongest and most reliable system of certification is from an accredited body called the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). FSC is the only system that globally tracks products from the forest floor all the way to the retail shelf, a process known as "chain of custody" monitoring. An FSC logo on a wood product means it came from a forest that meets the highest environmental and social standards. Done right, for example through careful 'selection logging,' timber production can support important conservation values such as biodiversity, water quality and the rights of indigenous peoples.

The appeal of the FSC logo program has prompted companies including Home Depot, DIY and IKEA to adopt policies preferring FSC-certified products. The Council has also earned the endorsement of mainstream environmental organizations including the World Wide Fund for Nature, Greenpeace and the Sierra Club.

While significant, only 25 million hectares are currently FSC forests. (Bolivia is the world leader in certified tropical forest with one million hectares, because of the strong support of the country's forestry sector.) However, 30 large corporations hold 120 million hectares of the world's best remaining forests, little of which is FSC-certified. But consumer demand for FSC products is increasing worldwide. In the Netherlands for example, 68 percent of the timber purchased is already FSC-certified.

Many of the sustainable forests the Council certifies are in the Third World, and are community-owned and operated. For example, the forests of the Sierra Norte mountains in the southwest Mexican state of Oaxaca, which are home to a unique mix of trees. Pine-oak forests, cloud forests and mossy tropical forests blanket the region. "It's a very beautiful area," says Caitlyn Vernon of the Falls Brook Centre, a New Brunswick-based sustainable development organization active in the Sierra Norte.

But like many natural areas, it was falling to the cutting edge of mass

logging. Fábricas de Papel Tuxtepec S.A., a Canadian pulp company in partnership with the Mexican government, owned the timber rights in the region from 1957 to 1983. Deplorable logging practices left valleys filled with unwanted logs, eroded hillsides and ruined watersheds. There was no reforestation and little of the millions of dollars earned remained with local people. It took a prolonged struggle by indigenous communities to get the timber licenses overthrown so they could take control of their own forests in 1983.

They formed a co-operative called UZACHI to manage their forests for the long-term, and to keep the money in the community. “People are already seeing the benefits,” says the Falls Brook Centre’s Vernon. “They have clean water again. They’re happy and proud of what they managed to accomplish.”

Local people are trained as forest technicians, forest engineers and biologists. Logging is only done on 40 percent of the total 26,000 hectares. There are tree nurseries of local species for reforestation. Conservation and preservation of biodiversity are high priorities.

The Forest Stewardship Council certifies these forest practices as sustainable. There is no illegal cutting to speak of and everyone shares in the natural wealth of the forest. Responsibility for protection and management is shared widely and official roles rotate through different members of the community every three years.

They’re also looking beyond timber, adds Vernon, including the planting and harvesting of forest-grown mushrooms, orchids and other epiphytes. Finished wood products such as children’s toys are being made to increase the ‘value-added’ of the forest to the community. Ecotourism is also part of the push for diversification. In just a few short years, the area has become something of a mecca for people around the world wanting to learn how to do sustainable community-based forestry the right way.

Based on their work with UZACHI, the Falls Brook Centre is now developing guidelines for sustainable harvests of ground hemlock and balsam fir for Canada’s forests. Falls Brook also has a shiitake mushroom growing demonstration site in their New Brunswick forest. “UZACHI is an inspiring example that can be successfully replicated throughout the world,” says Vernon.

Another inspirational case study can be found on the island of Chiloé, a couple of thousand kilometres south of Mexico’s Sierra Norte. Lying off

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You can now buy wood products from community forests that are managed in balance with the environment.

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the southern coast of Chile, Chiloé is home to 150,000 people in an area approximately 180 by 50 kilometres. The island is known for its wooden churches, some more than 150-years-old.

Once entirely forested, only 50 percent of the diverse temperate rainforest (similar to the coastal forests of British Columbia) remains.

Unlike mainland Chile, which exports huge volumes of lumber and pulp, all of the wood here is used domestically. It's a cool temperate climate, so most wood goes to cooking and heating. The citizens of Chiloé are small landholders who farm, fish and log to survive. Without proper management, the remaining forest is slowly being eaten away.

In an effort to reverse this decline, the Chilean government invited Canada to bring its successful 'Model Forest' program to Chiloé. The Model Forest (MF) is a process for getting everyone in a forest area onboard to develop a consensus-driven partnership to achieve social, environmental and economic sustainability. It's a Canadian idea being put into practice in a number of countries.

Sixty Chiloé communities are now involved, covering nearly the entire island. "The people have a very good knowledge of their forest but don't know enough about ecosystem functioning," says Sylvain Legault, a former CUSO cooperant involved in the Chiloé project. For hundreds of years people cut whatever they needed, assuming there'd always be enough, explains Legault. The first thing was to bring awareness that their lands need to be managed sustainably in order to have a forest for the future. Communities are learning how to plan and manage their forests for the long-term.

Financial incentives from the Chilean government help put these ideas into practice. Experts are brought in to teach forest management techniques. There is a new emphasis on non-wood products such as honey and hazelnuts. "Local groups also see ecotourism as an income source," adds Legault.

There has been an increase in both the community's income and the area covered by forest. International funding has also helped integrate the indigenous community into the Chiloé National Park Management. The

model forest idea has taken root on the island. As Legault says, “Communities are very strong here. They’ve resisted offers from multinational companies.”

Some community forests in the Third World have even been re-grown on lands long deforested. Tropical forests grow in relatively poor soils and once the trees are cut, the strong sunlight turns the land into hard-packed earth. Once the forests are gone, it is very hard to bring productivity back to the land, says Jean Arnold, also with New Brunswick’s Falls Brook Centre.

In Sri Lanka, there is a process at work helping to restore degraded and even disappeared forests. Called “analog forestry,” the idea is to restore the diversity and ecological functions of original forests by using a combination of planting, natural regeneration and reintroduction of flora and fauna. The end result is (hopefully) a healthy forest and a wide range of marketable products.

Developed more than 25 years ago by the Neo Synthesis Research Centre, there are now analog forests throughout the world. The main resources needed are land, time and knowledge. The investment in plants and trees is relatively low, as most species used are indigenous and locally available. As an analog forest matures to resemble a forest of the past, biodiversity increases, which in turn helps soil conservation and water quality.

A healthy environment is not just important for Mother Nature. When communities can no longer depend on the forest for survival, their children drift to urban areas, further impoverishing and isolating rural areas. Lack of interest and commitment to the land leads to more environmental degradation, says Arnold of the Falls Brook Centre.

But restoration is only possible when local people can get some immediate benefit for their efforts – survival depends on it. Fruit, berries, nuts and spices are usually the first things planted. These ‘forest gardens’ often support production of 20-30 different crops, and farmers can access fuelwood and local building materials. There is also a certification process for products such as teas, coffees, nuts, spices and syrups that are sold in health food stores in Europe and elsewhere.

Ranil Senanyake of Neo Synthesis believes sustainability will only be achieved through local land tenure. Local communities need to have ownership over the agricultural and forest lands in their area. Instead of

governments developing industrial pine or eucalyptus plantations to meet wood needs, they should encourage communities to plant and manage multi-species forest plantations that mix native tree species with environmentally appropriate exotic timber species.

The analog forest movement hopes to grow healthy, diverse ecosystems, which will then provide local economic opportunities and grow healthy, diverse communities.

That is the hope of community timber projects around the world. These forests of the future offer practical and inspirational examples of working with an ecosystem instead of merely exploiting it. And consumers can use their power to ensure sustainable forests remain a cut above.

(June 2002)

*The size and range of sustainably managed forests certified by the Forest Stewardship Council ([www.fsc.org](http://www.fsc.org)) is growing worldwide. The International Model Forest Network ([www.idrc.ca/imfn](http://www.idrc.ca/imfn)) is welcoming new model forests in many countries, including Costa Rica, Japan and the Dominican Republic. CUSO is still sending Canadian volunteers to the Chiloé model forest.*

## TRICKLE-DOWN THEORY

By Paul Weinberg

FOR POOR MOUNTAINOUS COMMUNITIES RICH WITH RIVERS AND STREAMS, 'MICRO-HYDRO' ENERGY MAY BE A SOLUTION TO THE POWER IMBALANCE BETWEEN CITY AND COUNTRYSIDE.

With upwards of seven kilograms of tools loaded in his knapsack, engineering consultant Ghanashyam Ranjitkar often found himself travelling by foot to remote villages in his native Nepal to repair small-scale hydro equipment used to generate electricity. He recalls one time when, after a long and gruelling trek, he had to hike all the way back for spare parts after the installation blew up.

Now living in Toronto, Ranjitkar was a "travelling trouble-shooter" for these micro-hydro projects because, like many Third World countries, only about 10 to 15 percent of Nepal's citizens are on the main power grid. And most of those are situated in large urban areas including the capital Kathmandu. The rural majority, scattered across the Himalayan Mountains, have little or no access to electricity. It is too expensive from a market perspective to expand the reach of the grid, says Ranjitkar.

That's why micro-hydro is billed as a renewable, off-the-grid alternative to this power imbalance between city and countryside. It has been described as the most practical, cleanest and cheapest form of energy for poor communities living in countries blessed with mountainous or hilly terrain – and the rivers and streams that flow downstream. Nepal certainly falls into that category, and more than one thousand small power plants have already been built.

Of course not all isolated communities in the Third World are bereft of electrical power. But in many rural areas of the South, electricity – such as that produced by diesel generators – is prohibitively expensive. Batteries can cost a week's wages. And lighting that comes from cheaper kerosene lamps is poor and the smoke causes respiratory problems.

"Rural citizens in places like Peru have to spend quite a bit on lighting, on things such as kerosene, wax candles or batteries," explains Teodoro Sánchez, the manager of the Latin American division of the U.K.-based

Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) a major promoter of micro-hydro in developing countries.

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Micro-hydro generates enough electricity to fill the needs of a rural village, and shouldn't be confused with the massive hydro-dams also found in the Third World.

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So if batteries are too expensive, kerosene too dangerous and the government power grid too far away, micro-hydro can fill the power void, proponents say. However, for micro-hydro it's all about 'location, location, location' – the best place to set up a facility is in the vicinity of a creek with some reasonable elevation of land. This makes the schemes particularly attractive to areas such as the Himalayas or the Andes of South America.

Micro-hydro generally consists of a stand-alone facility that generates enough electricity to fill the needs of a rural village – and nothing more. It is not to be confused with the massive hydro-dams also found in the Third World, destined to generate hundreds of megawatts for urban centres or for export. The people relocated – sometimes forcibly – to make way for these mega-projects rarely reap the benefits. The environmental costs of flooding entire ecosystems will not be fully known for generations.

Instead, a small-scale hydro project is designed to produce something in the range of six kilowatts of power, sufficient to drive a grinding mill for grain and to provide lighting. Robert Mathews, a Canadian consultant and hydro engineer, says a 16-kilowatt project can cost upwards of US\$100,000, but that this is a bargain compared to the more than half million dollars one might pay for a solar energy project offering an equivalent amount of power.

President of Appropriate Energy Systems, based in Chase, British Columbia, Mathews has helped set up micro-hydro installations with small non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Nicaragua. "The technology hasn't changed much in 40 years except for the electronic controllers, which boost performance and lower the price [for an installation]."

Basically, hydro power comes from water flowing downhill (via a stream or human-made pipe or channel) that turns a turbine connected to a generator, which in turn is connected by wire to people's homes and shops.

ITDG, an NGO whose motto is "Practical Answers to Poverty," is the granddaddy of micro-hydro. Founded in 1966 by the late British

economist Dr. E.F. Schumacher, author of the classic development tome *Small is Beautiful*, the organization takes a grassroots approach to alleviating poverty. Schumacher believed that the introduction of capital intensive and large-scale technologies into Developing Countries, where there is often a lack of money, technical expertise and sizeable consumer markets, made no sense. Better, he thought, are less expensive and more labour intensive technologies that are easier to run and fix. These 'appropriate technologies' also create more jobs, the thinking goes.

Micro-hydro fits in this category, and the electricity produced can raise the bar of what is possible in an impoverished community. The impact starts with something basic like the introduction of radio and television into people's homes, says Teodoro Sánchez, based in Lima. "It gives them access to information. They feel integrated with the country and the society."

Once electricity arrives, the community becomes almost unrecognizable from its previous incarnation, continues Sánchez. "If you visit the community three to four years after the installation what you find is lighting at each home and children furthering their education, and also small businesses like shops, welding machines, milling and carpentry. Instead of having to walk two to three hours to mill your grain, you can do it here in your village. You can also see social benefits like better education services and better health services."

For those who decry the impact of outside influences that are a by-product of micro-hydro, Sánchez counters that the results are more positive than negative. And besides, he says, "we can't say no to people if they want electricity."

Second to China in numbers of micro-hydro installations set up in rural communities, Nepal is a major laboratory for this technology. Unfortunately, many of the initial projects failed, says Ghanashyam Ranjekar, recalling his ten years in the field, including a stint with ITDG.

Often it is a case of insufficient support or no training for the rural villagers in the use and repair of the technology. Loath to criticize specific organizations, villages or individuals that may be at fault, he does say that some aid people "stay in their offices in Kathmandu with their Pentiums and four-wheel drives and never visit the villages."

Ranjekar says that the national Nepalese government has now cleaned up the process by saying it will only subsidize projects following proper procedures and offering sufficient support. And if it were not for a Maoist



insurgency in the countryside, which has frightened off many NGOs, he would be more optimistic about future micro-hydro projects in Nepal.

Groups like ITDG and Oregon-based Green Empowerment insist on several preliminary stages before setting up a micro-hydro project. These steps involve working closely with residents on a feasibility study, an assessment of local power needs, the establishment of cottage industries to boost local incomes, and the training of local people in the maintenance and operation of the installation. A facility can take from six months to three years to build, depending upon the circumstances and experiences of the individual community.

The spark for a micro-hydro project is usually financial assistance from a government or international aid agency, but in the long run the aim is to make the community and the project self-sustaining, explains Joseph Richards, a program manager for Green Empowerment. Among the sources of revenue is a modest charge for the electricity – determined by the community – paid from the boost in local incomes due to the various cottage industries such as knitting clothes, baking and craft-making.

One of the many challenges is that local people may not have the skills to market their products or have decent roads to transport them to larger towns, says Sánchez. “They also are not used to negotiating a sale [with sophisticated wholesalers and merchants].”

If ITDG is perceived as pragmatic and non-political, the newer and smaller Green Empowerment appears slightly more radical in its social justice approach to micro-hydro development. The organization is an offshoot of the Ben Linder Foundation, named after the American hydroelectric engineer who died at the hands of the U.S.-based Contra rebels in Nicaragua while working on an aid project in a remote area.

Green Empowerment has focused on building micro-hydro projects for the marginalized in Central America and Southeast Asia, and the organization waits to be approached by local people or an NGO before getting involved. The latest effort is a 10-kilowatt facility for a village of indigenous ‘Kenya’ people in the upper river region of Sarawak in Malaysian Borneo.

After being displaced, ironically, by a larger hydroelectric project, these villagers set up a new home in Long Lawen, which is part of their ancestral lands in Borneo. But they relied largely on diesel generators for such applications as lighting, rice milling and freezers for meat storage. Micro-

hydro, introduced this year, will cut energy costs by half and reduce the dependence on a polluting technology.

But on the matter of who actually owns and runs the micro-hydro facilities, some philosophical differences bubble up among the specialists. ITDG finds that micro-hydro works best if small private entrepreneurs are involved, even if the community technically owns the facility, says Teodoro Sanchez. “We find not only in Peru but also in other parts of the world that community-operated and managed schemes are difficult because it sort of becomes a bureaucratic thing [where] it is of everybody and of nobody.”

Richards agrees that the entrepreneurial approach has worked in some areas. But he says that Green Empowerment’s preference for a community-owned solution stems from a concern that the entire village should benefit from the money generated by the micro-hydro project, not a select few. But it takes more work to encourage a collective form of decision-making, he admits. “There is a lot more development that occurs when you are trying to work based on a community as opposed to just one person saying he is going to build a facility.”

What both ITDG and Green Empowerment share is a commitment to protecting the environment. The ITDG’s “run of the river” approach, where the diverted water flow is recycled back into the river or stream, has won praise from the Berkley, California-based International Rivers Networks. The IRN usually takes the position that both large and small dams can destroy fish habitat and displace local people. That is why “small dams that clog rivers are starting to be dismantled in the U.S.,” explains IRN campaigns director Patrick McCully. But micro-hydro projects of approximately five kilowatts spread sufficiently apart along a watercourse are generally harmless, he believes.

The only damming that occurs might involve a two to four foot mini-dam or weir that initially blocks the water and creates a pond before it goes down the pipe to the turbine. But this should not affect the underwater life because “within these steep streams, there are no fish,” explains Robert Mathews of Appropriate Energy Systems.

In a typical micro-hydro project, electricity is created by the diversion of water from an elevated stream or river that heads down a pipe into the turbine and generator in a constructed powerhouse. “It is important to know that in most cases the small hydro scheme only needs a small part of the water which flows into the river,” says Teodoro Sánchez.

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Sustainable, off-the-grid energy alternatives can help level power imbalances within the global society.

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Surprisingly, Canada's vast array of hydro expertise has not been at the forefront of overseas micro-hydro development – that honour goes to the Brits and the Danes. Perhaps it's because Canadian hydro projects tend to be very large in scale. The Alberta-based Pembina Institute, a leading environmental organization, is seeking to alter this Canadian legacy. By taking advantage of the climate change and clean energy funds now available, Pembina hopes to set up its own small-scale power projects.

However, Francois Vitez, a Sherbrooke engineer who spent three years working on small hydro projects in Nepal, warns that a change in attitudes must transpire at large international climate change funders. Often they will not bother with rural electrification efforts that are tiny and modest in terms of investment. "For them a \$100,000 [micro-hydro project] is so little that they won't look at it," he says.

But now is the time, with all this talk of climate change, that sustainable, off-the-grid energy alternatives can become more than just scattered success stories, and help level the power imbalances within our global society.

(September 2002)

*The Intermediate Technology Development Group ([www.itdg.org](http://www.itdg.org)) still thinks small is beautiful, and supports micro-hydro over large-scale hydro dam projects. The organization is working with communities in Nepal, Peru, Sri Lanka and Kenya. Green Empowerment ([www.greenempowerment.org](http://www.greenempowerment.org)) continues to be inspired by E.F. Schumacher as well, and is supporting micro-hydro in Guatemala and the Philippines. The Pembina Institute ([www.pembina.org](http://www.pembina.org)) has partnered with rural energy groups in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean to help meet energy needs sustainably.*

## MARITIME BEEKEEPERS MIGRATE SOUTH

By Sean Kelly

A CANADIAN COUPLE HAS FLOWN SOUTH TO PROMOTE HONEY PRODUCTION IN THE PACIFIC.

We don't seem to have a typical day," says Kathleen Cooper of Cap-Pelé, a small Acadian village on New Brunswick's Northumberland Strait, from her new home in the Solomon Islands. "One day we're sitting at a computer in an air-conditioned office, the next we're navigating open seas in a canoe to small villages of leaf huts on beaches straight off of a postcard. But then if I was expecting the familiar I should have stayed home."

Cooper and her partner Peter Hardie are halfway through a two-year posting with CUSO, a Canadian non-profit development agency that works in over 25 Developing Countries. They are volunteering in the Solomons to promote beekeeping as a way for rural communities to increase food self-sufficiency and earn a bit of money. Lying off the northeast coast of Australia, the nation called the Solomon Islands is a collection of over 900 islands, from large ones with active volcanoes to tiny atolls of sand held together by palm trees.

Cooper is originally from Corner Brook, Newfoundland, an interesting contrast. "I've come from a big island in the cold Atlantic to a small island in the warm South Pacific." Hardie, from Ottawa, made his way to the Maritimes to attend university and never left. Until now.

Together, the couple have embarked on a journey that will take them to most of those 900 Pacific islands, where a majority of the 480,000 citizens toil as subsistence farmers and speak one of 70 local idioms and dialects, including English, the official language.

Peter Hardie is a marine ecologist on leave from his job with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in Moncton researching Atlantic Salmon. Kathleen Cooper has a degree in marine biology, and was teaching at an elementary school in Moncton before embarking for the Solomons. Both are also long-time beekeepers, Peter for almost 30 years, Kathleen for 16. "My beekeeping experience has been as a hobbyist for 25 years," says

Hardie. "It's fluctuated from being a profitable hobby to a borderline commercial venture."

That experience in honey production is what attracted CUSO. Based on the island of Malaitia, the pair, who do not have children, will help run the Solomon Islands Honey Co-operative and train islanders in the sweet science of beekeeping. Cooper will also help develop curriculum. "Honey production may not contribute greatly to helping the Solomons get back on its feet economically, although I feel we may have lasting effects with small groups of people," says Cooper. For example, a rural women's group is hoping to use small-scale honey production as a way to earn money for things like school fees, kerosene and soap.

Beekeeping certainly contributes to local food security, but it is not yet known if it can become an export commodity and bigger income earner. Regardless, "bees make pretty good farmers and foresters," says Hardie, "able to be productive without destroying the land and in fact providing a service in exchange – pollination. I guess it's a bit like the 'teach a man to fish' model of development, with less of a risk that the resource will be exhausted."

The job has had its sticky moments, particularly when Peter and Kathleen visited Father David Galvin, a beekeeper of 30 years on the island of Guadalcanal. They were inspecting the remains of what had been a thriving beekeeping operation in the late 1990s before the Solomon's 'ethnic troubles' erupted.

"The hives were in serious decline with only a few weak colonies surviving. Kathleen's younger eyes picked up the small reddish brown creatures first, but once we had adjusted to the microscopic search we all started seeing them. Our fantasy of a disease-free beekeeping paradise crashed."

What they saw was the first report of the Varroa mite in the Solomon Islands, a bee-killing pest that has set up camp in many corners of North America's beekeeping community. A quarantine was quickly established by the Ministry of Agriculture, and so far no new mites have been found on other islands. Hopefully the risk will fade and the bees can continue to collect what the Canadian couple calls 'pacific dew.'

A larger pest in the form of human strife has plagued the islands, a complicated story of politics, paramilitaries, corruption and ethnic rivalries. In July 2003, an initial contingent of foreign peacekeepers led by

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“Bees make pretty good farmers and foresters, able to be productive without destroying the land, while providing a service in exchange – pollination.”

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Australia arrived to quell a conflict on the verge of civil breakdown; some government officials had already fled because of kidnapping rumours.

Cooper and Hardie knew it would be a challenge. “CUSO pulled no punches about the struggles we might face in the Solomons,” says Cooper, “but apart from a few tense moments I feel secure.” She recalls one night at an open-air fundraiser for a local church, which featured food and musicians. “Suddenly the very festive audience is up and moving toward

the darkness. There are muffled cries, mothers pick up their babies and head away from the lights at a quickened pace, and then I hear the shots. I get to my feet and start to move in the direction of the crowd, into the shadow of the church.”

“A woman who had smiled at me earlier as we sat near each other watching the performance emerges from the shadows and lays her shaking hand on my arm. With her quivering voice she reassures me [in Pidgin English] that, ‘Everything all rite. Solomon Island, hem all rite, little bit dangerous no moa. Ui safe.’”

A crowd of nervous women gathered around Cooper, scooping up their children in their skirts, scolding them if they wandered more than an arms length away. Calm returned and the fundraiser continued. That the women were concerned for Cooper’s safety – and perception of the country – in the midst of chaos was moving for the Canadian volunteer. “The memory of this stranger, who took the time and made the effort to try to comfort me in the middle of the bedlam and her own fear, that will stay with me for a long time.”

So why would Cooper and Hardie sign on for what some consider a hardship post? Kathleen had previously ventured to South America and Africa to volunteer in the summer months through the Canadian Teacher’s Federation. She had been bitten by both the travel and volunteer bugs. Peter says his decision to work in the Developing World was similarly inspired by a desire to travel, “not as a tourist, but to try and live in the world, not just on it, and to try to experience the exotic without exploiting it.”

And neither considers this a hardship post. “I continue to be surprised

and amazed by so many things on the Solomon Islands,” says Peter Hardie. “The depth and richness of colour and light, the torrential yet benign rains, the incredible diversity of reef and forest, the strength of family, the instant transformation from fierce to smiling, the wealth and richness of life amidst the poverty of a cash economy.”

“It really is beginning to feel like home,” adds Kathleen Cooper, “and the community is making us feel welcomed and appreciated. It really is a great place to be a beekeeper.”

(August 2003)

*Kathleen Cooper and Peter Hardie are scheduled to return to Canada from the Solomon Islands in January 2005.*

## THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

By Keane Shore

THE BEAT OF A BUTTERFLY'S WING CAN HELP SAVE THE WORLD'S VANISHING RAINFORESTS, BY OFFERING RURAL 'INSECT HARVESTERS' AN ALTERNATIVE TO LOGGING.

There's a hypothesis in chaos theory that tiny air currents rippling out from a single butterfly's wings can swell into a storm half-a-world away. If one wing beat could alter the atmosphere, what about clouds of the colourful insects?

Wild theories aside, butterflies can change the climate by helping to save the world's remaining tropical forests. These vast tracts of trees are often called the 'lungs of the planet.' Their foliage draws in the carbon dioxide that causes global warming and converts it to oxygen. Rainforests are home to approximately half of the world's plant, animal and insect species, including countless types of butterflies.

Tropical forests are also a habitat for butterfly farmers. Under net enclosures hung behind small wooden huts in rainforests ringing the earth's equator, rural residents are 'harvesting' crops of butterflies instead of chopping down trees to make a living. And every acre counts, because more than one tree has already fallen in the global forest. Many tropical stands are under intense pressure from commercial logging, cattle ranching and families clearing land just to survive. Each year, rainforests equalling the size of England are lost forever.

In the Brazilian Amazon, the world's largest rainforest, deforestation continues at an alarming rate. The Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute warns that the Amazon could vanish by the year 2020. Rare tropical plants have been sources for new medicines, but as unknown species are cleared away, so too are potentially life-saving drugs.

Logging concessions already cover half of the world's second largest tropical rainforest, located in Central Africa. Costa Rica, with its reputation as a leader in protecting rainforests, allows extensive logging in unprotected areas – four-fifths of its wood stands have been felled in the last century.

In contrast to cutting, a butterfly farm is a small island of rainforest



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Butterfly farms can create environmentally friendly employment in rural areas where opportunities and income are scarce.

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preserved for the captive breeding and growing of a few of the world's 20,000 butterfly species. The farmers sell mounted dead specimens and dried or 'papered' butterflies to collectors. They also supply butterfly pupae (cocoons ready to hatch) to live exhibits in Europe and North America.

The first live butterfly conservatory opened in Britain in the late 1970s. There are now about 250 similar exhibits in the world, mainly in Europe with about a dozen in North America. Most of the insects for these public butterfly houses are flown in from the Third World.

Twenty years ago, former American Peace Corps volunteer Joris Brinckerhoff and his wife Maria Sabido started Costa Rica's first butterfly farm, simply called La Finca de Mariposa or The Butterfly Farm. As their business has grown, becoming a tourist attraction and employing dozens, others have started looking at butterflies in a new light. Brinckerhoff has helped 70-odd families set up their own small farms, and started a company that exports nine-tenths of Costa Rica's farmed butterflies.

Brinckerhoff says the low-tech farms, as small as a quarter hectare, can be started over a year or two for about US\$1,000. The main equipment needed is a shed to feed caterpillars and package cocoons, and a house-sized net cage that covers the forest floor. In and around the cage, a farmer uses local host plants to feed the kinds of butterflies he or she raises.

Farmers collect the pinhead-sized eggs from the leaves where they are laid. They grow the eggs into caterpillars, feeding them plant cuttings. When the caterpillars hide themselves in chrysalises, or cocoons, farmers collect, pack and ship them to market, keeping some to lay new eggs in captivity and some for wild release.

Butterfly farms can create employment in rural areas where opportunities and income are scarce. It's one of the few industries where people living in and around forests can earn as much as they would in less environmentally friendly ways. Many butterfly harvesters in Costa Rica are women from low-income families. With good markets, common sense and a strong work ethic, a farmer can prosper. Those that supply Brinckerhoff's export company can make US\$700 per month, double to triple what they can earn elsewhere. This good money entices farmers to preserve their

existing forests, or to re-grow trees and indigenous plants on degraded land.

In Kenya, a study of butterfly farming in and around the Arabuko Sokoke Forest paints a similar picture. Butterfly farming can be done at home with a small investment in time, money and habitat. While it didn't directly reduce the illegal tree cutting common to the forest, butterfly farmers and other locals tended to view trees less as fodder for fires, and more as a valuable standing resource.

So why aren't all struggling African agriculturists and Central American *campesinos* trying to hatch similar schemes? There is a natural limit to this winged enterprise, says Brinckerhoff.

He already has a long waiting list of would-be butterfly farmers, but contracting them would badly dilute other farmers' earnings. For that reason, he thinks butterfly farms alone cannot save rainforests.

"In theory, butterfly farming is the perfect industry for preserving tropical forests," says Brinckerhoff. It is, after all, a pesticide-free, environmentally benign enterprise that provides local jobs and brings badly needed foreign currency into developing countries. "In practice, however, the market is so limited that only a few hundred farmers worldwide can really benefit." The global trade in butterflies can easily be flooded and financially cripple the industry.

"Right now, we're at a good level of production versus demand," says Colorado-based entomologist Mike Weissmann, executive director of the International Association of Butterfly Exhibitions. "But well-intentioned environmental groups that are trying to start new farms might be doing more damage than good, as far as the economics of butterfly farming go."

Butterfly farming is never going to be the latest get-rich-quick-while-saving-the-rainforest scheme. Weissmann believes farmed butterflies can best help the environment in the role of public relations 'star' of the bug world. Live butterfly exhibits can motivate customers to contribute to conservation, helping both the insects and their homes. Some people will go the ecotourism route, travelling to rainforests and opening their wallets to the local economy.

"Butterflies are great ambassadors," says Weissmann. "Even people who dislike insects will make an exception in the case of

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Many tropical forests are under intense pressure from commercial logging, cattle ranching and families clearing land just to survive.

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butterflies. No one is going to go to a cockroach zoo, but they'll come to a butterfly house. Once you get them in the door, you can introduce them to the rest of the [rainforest] world."

Once a visitor is caught in this net of interest, they can be told about the forest plants and animals that butterflies need to survive. The farms are home to orchids and other rare plants, ferns, fungi, monkeys, rodents and other small animals, lizards and reptiles, frogs and amphibians, parrots and numerous birds, and an unknowable number of less camera-friendly insects playing critical parts in their small ecosystems.

Among the world's live butterfly exhibits is the seven-year-old Niagara Park Butterfly Conservatory in Niagara Falls, Ontario. The Cdn\$15-million, 1,000-square-metre attraction is billed as one of North America's largest collections of free-flying butterflies. Assistant curator Cheryl Tyndall says the conservatory flies at least 40 species and about 2,000 individual butterflies at any time. The park breeds half of its own live butterflies, but buys the rest from tropical farms. "All of our butterflies are from farms either in the Philippines, Malaysia, Costa Rica or El Salvador," says Tyndall. "We don't accept anything that's wild-caught."

The butterfly trade, estimated at somewhere between US\$5-million and \$15-million per year, also deals in what's called 'dead stock.' Doug Curry, an entomologist at Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum, says the museum's souvenir shop sells mounted and framed butterflies, all farmed, for about Cdn\$60 each. He sees farmed butterflies as resources that renew far quicker than trees, with side benefits for other creatures. "There are a lot of other organisms that are less charismatic that get saved in the process," says Curry. "If the forest has to be maintained for [butterfly] propagation, then this is a good thing."

This is but one example of seeing the forest for the trees, a practical way of working with an ecosystem instead of merely exploiting it. And that's an idea as powerful as the beat of a single butterfly's wing.

(November 2003)

*La Finca de Mariposa, a.k.a. the Butterfly Farm ([www.butterflyfarm.co.cr](http://www.butterflyfarm.co.cr)), remains a top tourist attraction in Costa Rica, and continues to create rural employment. To see some of these tropical butterflies in Canada, you can visit the Butterfly Conservatory in Niagara Falls ([www.niagaraparks.com/nature/butterfly.php](http://www.niagaraparks.com/nature/butterfly.php)).*

## AN ECO-TOWN TAKES ROOT IN SOUTH AFRICA

By Stephen Leahy

IVORY PARK, A POOR COMMUNITY ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF JOHANNESBURG, PAINTS ITS FUTURE GREEN THROUGH ORGANIC FARMS, CO-OPS, ECOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTION AND ALTERNATIVE ENERGY.

By the year 2007, for the first time in history, humanity will be primarily an urban species – *homo sapiens urbanis*. Over 75 percent of all North Americans and Europeans already live in cities, and in a few years most Southern citizens will have joined them. Each week another million people either move to or are born into a city. By 2015, there will be at least 23 ‘mega-cities’ in the Developing World, each with more than 10 million people.

Can the planet carry the weight of this urban sprawl? The world’s cities take up just 2 percent of the Earth’s surface, yet account for 78 percent of the carbon emissions from human activities – the biggest source of the greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming, says the Worldwatch Institute, a Washington, DC-based research institute.

Many cities also fail to provide decent living conditions for all its residents. Some 600 million to one billion urbanites lack adequate shelter, and live without easy access to clean water, toilets or electricity.

The dilemma, however, is that for everyone to live at the same level of material wealth as North American city dwellers, we’d need another three or four planets. Since good planets are hard to find, cities and towns have to better balance the demands of people with nature. They must leave smaller ‘ecological footprints’ by using less water and generating less waste, boosting self-reliance in food and energy, and promoting sustainable transportation.

Perhaps the most unlikely place for such a green town to take root is in the brown dirt of a slum called Ivory Park in South Africa.

Ivory Park, home to 200,000 people living in shacks topped with corrugated tin roofs, lies within the town of Midrand on the outskirts of Johannesburg. It is also home to grinding poverty. As many as 50 percent of the adults are unemployed. Children play on pot-holed streets, dodging

streams of polluted water. A permanent cloud of hazy smoke from tin-drum coal fires used for cooking hangs heavy. Respiratory illnesses are common.

Emerging from the ruddy soil is hope in the form of brightly coloured buildings that make up the Ivory Park EcoCity village. Here, poverty eradication and sustainable development meet in a fusion of African and Western ideas to improve life for people and the planet.

At the edge of town is a market where farmers from six co-ops sell their organic produce. Within the village several

Many cities fail to provide decent living conditions for all its residents. Up to one billion urbanites lack adequate shelter, and live without easy access to clean water.

types of environmentally friendly houses are being showcased. The community centre, used for workshops and training, is a good example of the ecological construction common in Ivory Park. The centre is a round building of clay and concrete, with used polystyrene blocks as insulation and doors salvaged from a condemned building. It has a soil roof, with grass growing on the top and sloping sides so that children can play on it. The temperature inside is always comfortable, no matter what the season, because soil has insulating properties, keeping the centre warm in winter and cool in summer. "It's just like having air-conditioning," says Annie Sugrue, an EcoCity managing trustee.

The Ubuhle Bemvelo Eco-Construction Co-op is building 30 of the eco-houses. The 14 women working in the co-op use indigenous materials and environmental building techniques adapted to local conditions. For example, thick earthen walls absorb heat during the day and radiate it during the cool nights of winters.

The houses are purchased through a housing subsidy process, with preference given to those involved in the EcoCity. "We want people to live and work in the same place as it cuts down on transport and pollution," explains Sugrue.

The EcoCity was born as an experiment in alleviating poverty – and doing it without jeopardizing long-term ecological health. A non-governmental organization called Earthlife Africa first obtained a US\$1.7-million grant from the Danish government in 1999. Since then, there has been funding from Canada, Switzerland and Sweden, and partnerships have been struck with the World Wildlife Fund and the United Nations

Development Programme. The project is now 'owned' by the Johannesburg city council, and local and foreign businesses have come to the table, as have different South African government agencies.

The project is both a showcase demonstration and a training centre, but above all it's home for its residents. Mundane but pressing facets of life must be tackled. For instance, to cope with the endless smoke from cooking fires, an energy centre encourages people to buy cleaner liquid propane in canisters and alternative energy equipment such as solar cooking ovens. One vital development has been the so-called "smokeless umbhawula," an innovative tin-drum coal cooker that uses far less fuel than normal, and radically reduces the amount of unhealthy smoke.

Trash is another major problem in South Africa, but a successful Ivory Park waste recycling co-operative has offered an option. Now employing more than 40 people, bottles, glass, paper, plastics and tin are brought by waste collectors to a buy-back centre, which then sorts the waste and sells it to recycling companies.

A recycling project of a different kind is housed in a big metal shipping container. The Shova Lula (easy pedal) cycle co-operative imports second-hand bikes and parts from England, Germany and Switzerland, then bicycle mechanics repair and sell the working wheels to community members.

Involving youth has been key to the accomplishments of Ivory Park. Youth work at the bicycle co-op, serve as EcoCity guides and conduct environmental education workshops in schools and the community. A new project will train one hundred youth in eco-building techniques using earth bricks and passive thermal designs. Others will learn organic landscaping and farming techniques, and how to build biogas digesters that convert food and animal wastes into a clean fuel for cooking.

"The focus of the project is on self reliance," says Annie Sugrue. "South Africa has serious economic problems and at present cannot provide all the social services people need like electricity, clean water and sanitation. The poor feel they have little power to change things so they sit around and hope someone will come along and save them. That's not going to happen."

But community members do realize that a village needs to be sustainable and self-reliant – these are traditional African values. "The EcoCity concept has been very well received by local people," Sugrue says. However, the project is still dependent on outside support.

Despite this, Ivory Park's ecovillage is expanding. More homes are being

built, and initiatives such as large-scale biofuel production are on the horizon. Just as important, tens of thousands of people have visited the village, particularly during the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, held in Johannesburg. And good ideas travel – ecovillages are growing in Africa and beyond.

At Ivory Park, poverty eradication and sustainable development meet in a fusion of African and Western ideas to improve life for people and the planet.

In Senegal, for instance, 12 villages are being transformed into greener communities. Governed through community-based decision-making, the heart of these villages beat with organic agriculture, solar energy and microenterprise economic development.

Internationally, an informal collection called the Global Ecovillage Network encompasses hundreds of small communities in Europe, North America and Asia. Some of these started in the 1960s as communes, and all are pursuing the objective of creating a better quality of life while living lighter on the planet.

At the larger end of the scale, many cities are seeking a greener future as well. The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, with over 2,000 member municipalities, is active in helping cities become more sustainable.

One member, Melbourne, Australia, home to 3.4 million people, is on target to eliminate its contribution of greenhouse gases by 2020. With comprehensive energy reductions of 50 percent, the use of renewable energy and the absorption of local emissions in widely sowed native vegetation, Melbourne will likely be the first industrial city to achieve zero-net emissions.

Who knows what on earth Ivory Park will have accomplished by then.

(March 2004)

*Ivory Park's eco-city project ([www.ecocity.org.za](http://www.ecocity.org.za)) continues to expand, and is seeking further funding from international agencies. For news on green towns the world over, check out the Global Ecovillage Network (<http://gen.ecovillage.org>) and the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives ([www.iclei.org](http://www.iclei.org)).*

## PEACE OF MIND

By Sean Kelly

A NIGERIAN JOURNALIST AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST COMES TO CANADA  
TO HELP BUILD HIS PLAN FOR PEACE.

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If the story of Nigeria were published as a pulp fiction paperback, it would be a page-turner, full of action, international intrigue and nefarious plots by soulless corporations and strongman despots. The violence, however, is very real, which is why journalist and human rights activist Bayowa Adedeji wants Nigerians to keep turning the page and get to the chapter on peace.

Shortly after its independence from Britain, the West African country was embroiled in a bitter civil war, torn apart by ethnic and regional rivalries. The conflict lasted from 1967 to 1970, followed by a nearly unbroken chain of military coups. Democracy returned to Nigeria in 1999, but peace remains elusive. The country continues to be plagued by ethnic, religious and territorial violence, fuelled in part by profit from the petroleum found deep in its soil.

After decades of dictatorship, the Nigerian mind has become militarized, says Adedeji, a 50-year-old veteran reporter and father of three sons. So he is launching a project called “Educating for Peace Leadership.” It’s a peer education program that will target people from all walks of life – grassroots organizations, government, schools, businesses, churches, hospitals – and train them in conflict resolution.

These agents of change will go back to their workplaces and communities to set up similar programs. “By multiplicity we expect to train 2,000 peace teachers in just a few years,” says Adedeji. “There will be a domino effect. I think educating for peace can be a panacea for many of our problems, but Nigeria needs skills to change aggressive attitudes, to manage our ethnic and religious diversity, to reduce violence against women.”

And he is learning those skills in Canada, home to a “temperate people and a good place to study peace.” With the help of CUSO, a Canadian non-profit development agency, Adedeji is living in Calgary while finishing studies in conflict resolution at Mount Royal College.



A proud man who doesn't hide the hardships he faces because of his activism – it is a challenge providing for his family, he says – Adedeji is a leader in Nigeria's peace movement. During military rule, he was harassed and detained for speaking out against human rights abuses.

There were death threats too, in a time when journalists were killed. At one point he fled Nigeria for Cameroon when he knew his life was in danger. "I had done a story about corruption in my home state, so I knew

there was going to be trouble. But I have a curse: I keep sticking my nose into the business of people in high places!"

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"I think educating for peace can be a panacea for many of our problems, so Nigeria needs skills to change aggressive attitudes and to manage our ethnic and religious diversity."

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Adedeji is now a media advisor with the Center for Human Rights Research and Development, based in Ibadan, one of the largest cities in thickly populated Nigeria. The Center will take the lead on Adedeji's peace project, and the Nigeria non-profit has partnered with CUSO, which has already sent one Canadian cooperant to work with the group. More Canadian volunteers are expected to venture to West Africa to help with the Center's research and training work.

For his part, Adedeji crossed the ocean the other way as a 'South-to-North' volunteer. Several African community leaders and educators were invited to Canada after Prime Minister Jean Chrétien promised African issues would be front and centre at the 2002 G-8 meetings in Kananaskis, Alberta.

The Nigerian journalist travelled to seven provinces, offering Canadians a rare perspective on global issues. He urged the West to forgive sub-Saharan Africa's debilitating debt, drop trade barriers to African goods, and invest in the continent's future. "Africans want trade – fair trade that is – and it's in Canada's interest to do business with us."

But Adedeji knows that before there can be economic development, there must be peace and democracy. He acknowledges that Nigerians must take some responsibility for their history of hostility. "I come from a country embroiled in constant violence. I grew up in it. I was in second grade during the Biafran War, and I was told when I was young who I was to hate."

This culture of conflict is rooted in colonial times, when Britain employed the time-tainted tradition of ruling by dividing. Over 300 ethnic groups exist uneasily within the boundaries of what is called Nigeria, and Britain played one against the other while forging this complex country. After independence, these tensions erupted into the Biafran War. Some of the wounds haven't fully healed. "It's easy for one person to say to another 'I am against you because my grandfather fought your grandfather,'" says Adedeji.

As if geographic and tribal divides weren't enough, Nigeria also bears witness to religious conflict between Christians and Muslims. And to throw even more gasoline onto the fire, there is oil-related violence in the eastern areas of the country. Big gas companies make a lot of money from Nigerian 'black gold,' but local communities rarely do. Many live with the environmental consequences of oil exploration. Troops have been sent in to quell demonstrations demanding a fairer share of the petro pie.

Activist and writer Ken Saro Wiwa and nine other members of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People were hung in 1994 after what most observers assert was a sham trial. "Why did they kill Wiwa? It was insanity," Adedeji simply says. International outrage at the executions led to the isolation of the military regime, precipitating the collapse of army rule in 1999.

Violence may be embedded in Nigerian society, but Adedeji insists his plan for peace is not a quixotic quest. Travelling on the road of tolerance begins with a single step, he says. "We must build peace from the grassroots up, it is the only way." And he is hopeful for his country, because "many groups, even the government, are jumping on the peace bandwagon."

Bayowa Adedeji is determined to help write a different story for his people, a tale of tolerance and reconciliation to be enjoyed by his now college-aged sons. "My children have never lived in peace or under democracy. I want them to know what that feels like."

(November 2003)

*Bayowa Adedeji has completed his studies and is fundraising for the peace project. Donations can be made through the CUSO Prairies office: (403)283-2871; [cuso.prairies@cuso.ca](mailto:cuso.prairies@cuso.ca)*

## BEATING AIDS IN AFRICA

By Murray MacAdam

AIDS HAS DEVASTATED MANY AFRICAN COUNTRIES, AND SET BACK DEVELOPMENT BY DECADES. BUT UGANDA OFFERS HOPE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE DEADLY DISEASE.

**A**IDS. Africa. Disaster. That's the link most of us make when we hear the words AIDS and Africa. And no wonder. It's difficult to overestimate how AIDS has ravaged African societies. Of the 40 million people affected by AIDS around the world, three-quarters – over 30 million – live in sub-Saharan Africa. In a single year, 2001, AIDS claimed the lives of an estimated 2.3 million Africans.

The epidemic has dealt a body blow to many African nations, setting back development by decades. Because of AIDS, average life expectancy has plunged in over a dozen of the continent's countries, and more than 13 million children in Africa are AIDS orphans. "Let us not equivocate," warns former South African President Nelson Mandela, "AIDS today in Africa is claiming more lives than the sum total of all wars, famines and floods, and the ravages of such deadly diseases as malaria. It is devastating families and communities."

Uganda is one of the African countries hardest hit. According to a report from the Uganda AIDS Commission, 1.05 million Ugandans of a population of 22.7 million are infected with HIV, and about 120,000 have developed AIDS. More than 800,000 people have already lost their lives. An estimated two million children have been orphaned by the disease, losing one or both parents.

As in other African nations, the economic and social impacts of the pandemic in Uganda have been devastating. Nearly 80 percent of those infected with HIV are between 15 and 45-years-old, the most economically productive people in the country. The health system has been strained to the breaking point in a country where only half of its citizens have access to adequate health care. Half of the country's hospital beds are taken by AIDS patients. Life expectancy at birth has plunged to 44.

Although Uganda has only 0.4 percent of the world's population, it

bears 2.4 percent of the AIDS burden, “six times more than its proportionate share,” states the United Nations Development Programme. It sounds like a grim tale, fitting the stereotype of Africa as a “lost continent.” Thankfully it’s not all bad news.

Uganda is one of the few countries that has succeeded in reversing HIV rates, and the success is astounding. An HIV/AIDS rate of 31 percent in the early 1990s – the highest in sub-Saharan Africa – now stands at 6.3 percent. Rates have dropped most rapidly in the high-risk 15-24 age group. But how did an impoverished country like Uganda achieve this?

The first step was to simply talk about the disease. That may sound so obvious as to be not worth mentioning, but being honest and open is the key to combating AIDS. Leaders of some other hard-hit African countries, notably South Africa and Zimbabwe, have been reluctant to sound the warning. In contrast, the president of Uganda talks about AIDS constantly. “When a lion comes into your village, you must raise the alarm loudly,” says Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni. “This is what we did in Uganda; we took AIDS seriously and we achieved good results...If we raise awareness sufficiently, it will stop.”

Museveni’s example has inspired other leading Ugandans to speak out as well. This both helped spread the word and reduce the stigma and isolation experienced by people with HIV in Africa. Previously, many people shunned those who had contracted the deadly virus, refusing to shake hands with them or even talk to them. Some victims were thrown out of their homes.

The second step on Uganda’s path to confront AIDS was to involve as many elements of Ugandan society as possible, including churches, schools, community organizations, youth and traditional healers.

In 1990 Museveni’s government established the Ugandan National Task Force on AIDS, which a year later kicked off a massive country-wide campaign involving condom distribution and promotion through popular songs, drama groups, counselling and support services. More than 700 groups work with the Uganda AIDS Commission, which coordinates efforts to combat AIDS.

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The pandemic has dealt a body blow to many African nations. Life expectancy has plunged in over a dozen countries, and 13 million children are AIDS orphans.

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A nation-wide 'ABC' campaign was launched in 1995 to promote safe sex among young people: A stands for abstinence, B for being faithful and C for condoms. Condom use has since risen sharply among youth. Training health workers, creating counselling networks, treating sexually transmitted diseases and expanding HIV testing have also strengthened the country's efforts to combat AIDS.

Museveni has won two international awards in recognition of his fight against the disease, including the Commonwealth Award for Action on HIV/AIDS. His wife Janet Museveni established the Uganda Women's Effort to Save Orphans, an organization that cares for HIV/AIDS orphans.

And young people such as Anne Akia Fiedler have helped change people's attitudes and behaviour. She returned to Uganda in 1993 to find her sister wasting away with AIDS. Her sister eventually died. Fielder discovered that more than 30 of her friends had met the same fate.

"People were dying," she recalls. "There was great concern. Something had to be done and there had to be somebody to do it." Fiedler founded the Straight Talk Foundation and started a publication to educate people about AIDS, as well as cover other topics of interest to young people. The magazine now has a reading population of 1.5 million. And because many rural Ugandans cannot read, Straight Talk recently launched a radio show on health.

The third step was to embrace those most affected – the people living with HIV and AIDS. "We should be involved in the fight against HIV/AIDS," says Rev. Gideon Byamugisha, the first priest in Africa to declare he was HIV-positive. "We are best placed to seek and identify solutions to the problems that affect us and also ways of stopping the spread of the disease."

Byamugisha runs an HIV prevention program for the Protestant Church of Uganda, and was appointed to the board of the Uganda AIDS Commission, the first person living openly with HIV to be affirmed in this way. There are many others like Rev. Byamugisha who now receive the support they desperately need, and who as a consequence are playing a vital role in encouraging other people to take the HIV test, live positively and support the sick.

Six years ago Rosemary Kityo, 31, discovered she was HIV-positive. Her husband had already succumbed to the disease. Soon Kityo was sick too, and had to look after her remaining three children. Sometimes she

survived on just one meal a day. Then a relative introduced her to The AIDS Support Organization (TASO).

“At first I was hesitant,” she recalls. “I did not want anybody to know I had AIDS. I thought it was embarrassing. People would despise me.” But today she is a member of TASO, which supports people living with HIV/AIDS. Begun by 16 volunteers in 1987, it now has 67,000 members. “I am happy that I declared my HIV status early,” says Kityo. “I have received counselling and I think I can be useful to my family and community for a long time.”

“Both the Government and NGOs have done a lot of work, but you can’t discount the role of community-based organizations and people living with HIV/AIDS,” stresses Joyce Kadowe, a social scientist at the Uganda AIDS Commission.

Finally, the fourth step was to acknowledge the place women have in fighting AIDS, and to ensure they have a central role in combating the disease. Women are most affected by poverty in Africa and have been hard hit by AIDS. The face of AIDS is an increasingly female one, with women now making up the majority of victims. Of the 8.6 million people 15 to 24-years-old living with the disease in Africa, 67 percent are women and girls.

In Uganda’s male-dominated society, it can be difficult for women to say no to unsafe sex that leads to HIV. Women also do nearly all of the nursing and care-taking work involved in families. “We are the real experts in our communities about how HIV infection affects individuals and their families,” a group of 130 Ugandan women declared at an international conference on strategies for preventing HIV. “We should be trained as lay counsellors, trainers and program implementers.”

Women are increasingly on the frontlines in the fight against AIDS, and are benefiting from Uganda’s success in countering the disease. HIV rates among pregnant women in urban areas have dropped from a peak of 30 percent in 1992 to 6 percent in 2001.

And it is for the health of Uganda as a country – and as an economy – that the scourge of AIDS be confronted. A country that is poor to begin with, which then loses young workers and spends scarce resources caring for sick people, won’t be able to improve living standards. HIV/AIDS has been estimated to reduce GNP by up to 2 percent annually in hard-hit countries like Uganda. No wonder the 1999 Uganda Poverty Status Report states that “HIV/AIDS poses the most serious challenge to the future

success in reducing poverty.” With so many workers sick, food production has also been hard hit.

A UN Uganda Human Development Report for 2002 notes that some households with AIDS sufferers spend as much as 61 percent of their income on patient care. Deaths among parents and teachers are hurting the educational prospects for children. Growing numbers of those orphaned by AIDS drop out of school, spurring the government to make education free.

Ugandans have a long road ahead of them – there are still many steps to take to not only tackle the disease, but to also confront the conditions that give rise to it. Many were dismayed to hear President Museveni claim in 2002 that no gay people live in Uganda and that HIV only spreads in three ways in his nation: unprotected heterosexual sex, careless blood transfusions and tribal customs such as circumcision.

And there’s a limit to what this impoverished country can do on its own, in the face of such a colossal challenge. Large-scale efforts such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria are needed. Africa alone does not have the resources needed to combat the epidemic and to save the lives of those inflicted by AIDS. To date the Global Fund has received only US\$2.1-billion, well below the \$10-billion experts feel is needed to make a significant impact in the fight against the three killer diseases. The Fund is

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“When a lion comes into your village, you must raise the alarm loudly,” says Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni.

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currently bankrolling 150 programs in 92 countries.

That’s why U.S. President George W. Bush’s 2003 State of the Union pledge to increase AIDS spending by US\$15-billion over five years was welcome news. AIDS activists – including Bono, frontman of the popular rock band U2 – were happy that Bush put AIDS in Africa on his map. The musician also applauded the U.S. government’s emphasis on treatment as well as prevention, a shift from earlier policy.

There are concerns, however, over how the United States intends to channel the funds. Only \$1-billion of the \$10-billion will go to the Global Fund. Most of the money, which will start flowing in 2004, is to be managed by the U.S. government and American charities. “It’s troubling that the President gives such short shrift to the Global Fund, which is fast running out resources,” says Dr. Paul Zeitz, head of the Global AIDS

Alliance. "The Global Fund is the best hope yet for the fight against AIDS and other killer diseases." It gives both the donor and the recipient countries a say in how the money is spent.

And the one billion from America is contingent on other wealthy nations contributing more money to battle AIDS, so the actual amount could be reduced. But at the Group of Eight summit in Evian, France in June 2003, the European Union committed US\$1-billion a year to the Global Fund. Great Britain announced a one-time donation of US\$80-million while Canada has promised the multilateral initiative Cdn\$150-million through to 2005. These funds are in addition to the Canadian International Development Agency's ongoing commitment to the fight against AIDS. CIDA is quadrupling funding over five years from about \$20-million to \$80-million, earmarked for education programs, treatment clinics and vaccine research throughout the Developing World.

Back on the AIDS battleground, anti-retroviral drugs are enabling many people with the disease in affluent countries like Canada to continue living for years. Yet only 30,000 of the 30 million infected people in Africa have access to these life-saving drugs. Museveni has strongly denounced the reluctance of Developed Countries to make anti-AIDS drugs more widely available in Developing Countries. "It is very genocidal for one part of the world to have [treatment] for the AIDS disease while millions of people in another part are dying from the same."

Stephen Lewis, the United Nation's Special Envoy on HIV/AIDS in Africa, has gone so far as to accuse the world's rich countries of "mass murder by complacency" for failing to contribute enough money to defeat the disease. "Why can three trillion U.S. dollars be raised in a matter of weeks for the war on terrorism, but not \$65-billion over five years to prevent literally millions of deaths from AIDS?" says Lewis, a former Canadian ambassador to the UN. For his part, the emotionally-entangled Lewis has set up a foundation to get money into the hands of the small, local organizations that he sees as carrying out invaluable – and unheralded – work on the ground.

And with money and commitment, AIDS can indeed be confronted. The Ugandan Ministry of Health plans to provide free AIDS drugs to all expectant mothers to reduce the risks of infection at birth. Ugandan volunteers are now testing a potential AIDS vaccine specifically developed for the strain of the HIV virus common in east Africa.



“Uganda is leading the way in the search for an AIDS vaccine for Africa,” says Professor Francis Omaswa, director general of Uganda’s health services. Uganda is also offering hope for victims of AIDS, and a path for other African nations facing the deadly disease.

(June 2003)

*The battle against HIV/AIDS in Africa continues on many fronts. Stephen Lewis’s foundation ([www.stephenlewisfoundation.org](http://www.stephenlewisfoundation.org)) is attempting to ease the plight of women dying from AIDS, and help the orphans they leave behind. The Global AIDS Alliance ([www.globalaidsalliance.org](http://www.globalaidsalliance.org)) is a leading advocate on the worldwide pandemic. In May 2004, the Canadian government pledged another \$170-million to HIV/AIDS efforts in the Developing World.*

## NURSING WITHOUT BORDERS

By Sean Kelly

A CANADIAN NURSE TRAVELS TO ANGOLA TO HELP HEAL THE WOUNDS OF A DEADLY CIVIL WAR.

The African sun is shining new light on the subject of health care for Danielle Morin, a Canadian nurse volunteering in Angola. "When you are outside of Canada you see things differently," says Morin. "Things that people complain about at home may not be as worthy of a complaint overseas."

The list of medicare ailments in our country is well-known. Long wait times. Crowded emergency rooms. Lack of specialists. However legitimate, compare that with a day in the not-so-typical life of the 28-year-old Morin, who runs a small mobile health clinic in a country recovering from a long and deadly civil war.

Her team was travelling to a community that had no access to health care or medicine, apart from traditional remedies. As the truck peaked the hill leading down to the village, she was astonished at what awaited on the other side. "There were over 1,000 people coming out for a consultation. It was an amazing sight," says the former emergency-ward nurse who included tropical medicine in her mix of university classes.

"As we drove by people started shouting at the car 'Senhora Doutora, you've come, you've come!'" The community had banded together to build a health hut, complete with a large blue tarp for a roof. "And there was a grass bed inside so I could do private female examinations," adds Morin. "We did over 250 consultations that day. People had walked over 20 kilometres to come and see us. It was unforgettable."

Morin, who hails from Vancouver and lives in Richmond with her fiancé ("when I'm there," she says) is in Angola with Médecins Sans Frontières Canada, also known as Doctors Without Borders. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) works in many of the world's hot spots. Doctors, nurses, surgeons and health administrators are dispatched to war zones, refugee camps, disaster areas and poor countries urgently in need of medical assistance.

Morin, two German ex-pats and several Angolan nationals provide primary health care, dispense medicine and attend to the needs of pregnant women and underweight children. “The little things I was doing in Canada could go a long way in the Developing World, and I could make a bigger difference in people’s lives,” explains Morin when asked why she ventured to Southwestern Africa.

Morin manages a clinic that serves nine villages in an agriculturally fertile region that has other riches in the form of diamonds deeper in the soil. Because of this natural wealth, the two combatants in the complicated (and since April 2002 mercifully ended) civil war fought for control of the area, repeatedly driving thousands into fields and jungles. Entire villages were drained of their citizens. Those who survived this feral existence, including orphaned children, were left hungry and desperate for medical attention.

But even though the war is over, reaching people in need is still a battle. Years of conflict have yielded pitted roads that are barely passable. To get to one of her assigned villages, Morin has to cross a wide river by canoe. “There is a bridge over the Rio Kwanza but it was bombed three times during the last 30-odd years of war, and it doesn’t appear that it will be fixed any time soon.” Morin is happy to report that MSF has purchased a motor boat for her crew.

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“The little things I was doing in Canada could go a long way in the Developing World, and I could make a bigger difference in people’s lives.”

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Mussende, her home base in Angola, is a village about five hours drive from the city of Malange. The only road is lined with Portuguese colonial buildings, once stately but now riddled with bullet holes, their doors missing and windows blown out. Surrounding main street are capin-thatched huts, fields of swaying green grass and hills topped with banana and mango trees. On the side of the road women grind mandioca, a starchy root

crop, and then bake the staple in the hot sun.

Farming is the mainstay of Mussende, and during the dry season villagers burn the capin (a tall grass) to help fertilize the soil. “The whole countryside looks like it’s on fire,” says Morin, “and the smell is so sweet and distinctive – it’s what Mussende smells like to me.” A lively market sits

at the heart of the community, “although I always end up paying the higher ‘white price,’” she admits.

With the tenuous peace has come something of a building boom. The old bakery is being fixed up, and many damaged dwellings restored. Across from Morin’s house a new cantina plays Angolan music until 11 each night, the young carousers crowded around the speakers, dancing under an ancient African sky.

At her new home, rain is collected in a cistern, Morin showers with a bucket and the bathroom is a mud hut latrine. And to give credence to a cliché, it has been the experience of a lifetime. Morin arrived in March and will be back in Canada by Christmas, yet she knows her time in Angola will forever change the way she sees things, regardless of where the sun sets.

Halfway through her placement Morin travelled to a consulate in South Africa to renew her working visa. While staying at a hotel she had two hot baths (to soothe an aching back caused by another reminder of Africa – a bout of Malaria, now under control) and felt guilty about the water she was wasting. “I know this is something I will have to deal with when I return to Canada...I am Canadian and I have been granted a life of luxury.”

But now Angola, says Morin, has granted her a life of other riches, equally rewarding.

(October 2003)

*Danielle Morin is back in Canada and working at a hospital in Vancouver. She has started a Masters of Arts in Human Security and Peacebuilding.*

## SMALL TOWN, BIG HEART

By Lisa Roberts

THE HOME TOWN OF ONE OF THE ARCHITECTS OF THE GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM PROVES THAT BIG IDEAS CAN START IN SMALL PLACES.

When Colombian human rights activists Astrid Manrique and Yolima Quintero embarked on a consciousness-raising tour of the United States and Canada, in addition to big cities like Toronto and Vancouver one stop was non-negotiable – Hampton, New Brunswick, population 3,000.

Hampton is about as far from the troubled South American country of Colombia as one can imagine. Nestled in the valley of the Kennebecasis River, about 30 minutes from Saint John, downtown is two blocks long and doesn't exhibit any of the multiculturalism that characterizes big Canadian cities. But while Hampton may be a small town, it has developed a strong global conscience.

John Murphy is one important reason why, though he's quick to deflect credit and attention. A retired art teacher and Amnesty International activist, Murphy puts the finishing touches on an art installation he conceived with his successor, Jim Boyd.

Just steps inside the front entrance of Hampton High School, photos, a doll, a ball cap and cut-out question marks are assembled to evoke Colombia's disappeared. "The idea was, how can we visualize the disappeared?" Murphy says. "The whole idea of 'the disappeared' being a noun...people who have been taken with no trace."

Jim Boyd says the marriage of art and activism is a natural one, apart from being effective for drawing in young people. "Some people say it's not art unless you're trying to move people, to shift their way of thinking. It's been happening in art for hundreds of years, and I think it's an appropriate way to address things."

Hundreds of kids will pass by the display in the couple of days around the visit of Manrique and Quintero, members of the Association of the Family Members of the Detained and Disappeared (ASFADDES). When the Colombian human rights workers see the installation, they are quiet and emotional. During two successive talks in the school library, they tell

students how it resembles the “galleries of memory” which members of ASFADDES set up during May’s International Week of the Detained and Disappeared.

“We do [the galleries] in universities, schools, union offices or other public places. The wives, sisters, aunts and mothers of the disappeared set up tables with the belongings of our loved ones,” says Manrique. “Sometimes, all we have are old clothes that wouldn’t have any value to most people. But to us, they are precious. And with these things, we claim our loved ones.” Thousands of Colombians have been snatched from their homes without a trace.

Manrique’s husband was disappeared in 1988, leaving her to raise their children alone. Quintero’s brother and sister were taken in 1985. To this day, they do not know their whereabouts or fate.

As if they haven’t suffered enough, both have been threatened in recent years – and have needed support from Amnesty International (AI). Two of Quintero’s colleagues in the Medellin office disappeared in 2000. This is part of a disturbing phenomenon: in Colombia, defenders of human rights are very likely to be victims of human rights violations. In the slippery post-September 2001 world, human rights activists have even been labeled “white-collar terrorists.”

Manrique tells the stories of young people who have been targeted and disappeared for being involved in their communities in Colombia. In one case, she tells the student assembly, a young man’s mother saw him being seized from the street near their home, and begged for him to be spared.

“That just about brought me to tears,” says student Clare Lamont. She’s already active with Amnesty, and says local activists will be energized by the visit of the ASFADDES activists. “Coming first-hand from them, that what we’re doing can make a difference, it helps a lot to motivate.”

Though Murphy retired in 2002, Hampton High School is still full of art projects he initiated to help students imagine the struggles of others. For example, a sculpture done in bas-relief illustrates the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Murals decorate the auditorium, testaments to annual “Fast Blasts,” weekend-long sessions of fasting, art-making and fundraising to benefit a different cause each year: an AIDS hospice in South Africa, the reopening of schools in Afghanistan, street kids in Jakarta, Indonesia, a school

building project in Guatemala. In 30 hours, the effort raises more than \$3,000.

And it's not just students. A Hampton art project of a different sort is now in Colombia. The Hampton community AI group contributed a quilt to a project that saw 14 quilts made to symbolically protect human rights defenders. Ida MacPherson stitched Hampton's quilt blocks together. She still works as a nurse, but activism – through AI and her church – has become a life's project for her and her husband, David, a retired electrician.

"We're a very small group," she recalls with a smile. "A lot of them are men and they didn't think this was the greatest project. But once they got into it, making blocks in all sorts of way – painting, cross-stitch, patchwork – they found it was quite nice and a good way of expressing their feelings."

The Hampton AI group has even been asked to take on a special "action file." While the students in the high school group still write letters about human rights issues all over the world, the community group is focused exclusively on trying to help protect members of ASFADDES. Along with 13 other groups around the world, Hamptonians write letters to political figures in Colombia and Canada asking for greater respect for the human rights of these activists.

So what makes this rural town a hotbed of human rights activism? What is that "something special in Hampton" as noted by Alex Neve, head of Amnesty International-Canada? "They're dedicated, they're creative and they persevere," says Neve, who attributes some of Hampton's remarkable "energy and activism" to "a special sense of responsibility and legacy" as the hometown of John Peters Humphrey, 1905-1995.

As the first director of the United Nations Division of Human Rights, Humphrey was asked by Eleanor Roosevelt, the Chair of the Human Rights Commission, to draft a bill of rights for all the world's people. That draft formed the basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, enacted by the UN on December 12, 1948.

"[Humphrey] and his staff were directly involved," says Mark Perry, the head of social studies at Hampton High School. "They looked at the Declaration of the Rights of Man that came out of the French Revolution, they looked at the Magna Carta, they looked at constitutions from around the world."

Perry is a member of the John Peters Humphrey Foundation, a group that formed after Humphrey's widow wrote the town to ask that it do more

to recognize his contributions to the world community. In the four years since, Perry has become something of a Humphrey scholar.

“The UN Secretary General at the time, Dag Hammarskjöld, and Humphrey did not see eye to eye,” he says. “Hammarskjöld wanted to close down the human rights division, while Humphrey pushed for a High Commissioner of Human Rights.” That office was finally created in 1993, two years before Humphrey’s death, and almost thirty years after he left the UN.

“Big ideas do start in small places,” says art teacher Jim Boyd. That’s the message Hamptonians can take from the life and legacy of John Peters Humphrey, he adds. A simple stone in the Hampton graveyard marks his final resting place. “You can’t see it six or seven months of the year, because it’s covered by leaves or snow,” says Mark Perry. “By all accounts, he was a humble person.” Humphrey is now recognized as one of the architects of the global human rights system.

While the renaissance of interest in Humphrey has helped to keep energies up in Hampton, retired teacher John Murphy didn’t actually know much about him when he undertook his first big international project with students. That followed a personal awakening to concerns for social justice and the global community.

Rotary International funded Murphy to go to South Africa in 1999. (Again, for a small town, the Rotary International chapter is very active. The high school almost always has an exchange student, and many Hampton students have had the chance to live abroad with the group’s support.) He returned from Pretoria inspired to act, along with a request for soccer balls, bikes, toys and children’s books. Classrooms of captive students in Hampton were more than willing to get involved.

“We did quite a big project called A Gift for Africa, and it involved eight different schools filling this huge 40-foot container...it was a huge logistical problem in lots of ways, but it was a real community effort,” recalls Murphy. “I was greatly relieved to see the container finally drive away from the school on its way to South Africa. And as I stood there watching it go, a couple of kids came up to me and said,

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“It doesn’t matter how big you are if you’ve got desire and that passion for doing something. And that’s here in Hampton.”

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‘Well, what’s next? What are we going to do next?’”

That was a second moment of awakening for Murphy. “I’d been consumed with the need 9,000 miles away in the streets of Pretoria. But there is a real need here. Somehow, we’ve stumbled on the fact that our kids need these opportunities to act.”

Murphy credits the students for keeping the ball rolling – when he was in danger of soccer ball-induced exhaustion – and, later, asking for his help to start an Amnesty International group at the school.

Years later, the pace of international activity in Hampton shows no sign of slowing down. People like John Murphy and Ida and David MacPherson are now making links to people working with other organizations in Saint John and Fredericton. The local churches have sponsored a number of refugee families. Another community fundraiser is underway to benefit women in Afghanistan.

“It doesn’t really matter how big you are,” says Ida MacPherson, “if you’ve got that desire and you’ve got that fire of passion for doing something. And that’s here in Hampton.”

(April 2004)

*Astrid Manrique and Yolima Quintero are back in Colombia, and Hampton’s human rights groups remain active with Amnesty International Canada ([www.amnesty.ca](http://www.amnesty.ca)).*

## DEMOCRACY OR DEVELOPMENT: WHICH COMES FIRST?

By Paul Weinberg

CANADIANS ARE HELPING BUILD 'GOOD GOVERNANCE' IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD. BUT IS DEMOCRACY NECESSARY FOR DEVELOPMENT, OR IS IT THE OTHER WAY ROUND?

**Y**ou know you've hit a sore spot when a government minister attacks your research. In the case of Canadian David MacDonald, the political nerve in question ran not through Canada's Liberal Party but rather South Africa's African National Congress.

The verbal fireworks started in the summer of 2003 after MacDonald, a geography professor at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario, released a study showing 10 million South Africans have had their water cut off by local municipalities due to nonpayment of bills. "People [in South Africa] are making choices between food, school and clothes, and whether or not to pay their water and electricity," says MacDonald.

The findings of the Municipal Services Project, an initiative MacDonald co-directs through the Southern African Research Centre at Queens, highlighted the schism between the governing ANC's original social justice goals and its apparent embrace of free market policies – a discrepancy many blame on pressure from the World Bank.

But Ronnie Kasrils, South Africa's Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, denied that the water cut-off was widespread. In a letter to the South African newspaper *The Sunday Independent*, Kasrils said that North American researchers were encouraging citizens to "break taps and meters" to access water illegally.

MacDonald, who regularly travels back and forth between Canada and South Africa, counters that the research was based on data collected for local governments. He denies that the trend, as has been suggested, stems from a culture of nonpayment in the townships dating back to pre-apartheid boycotts. The investigation was defended by a host of local groups including the South African Municipal Workers' Union.

MacDonald's project, backed by the International Development

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Most foreign aid agencies say that democracy, human rights and the absence of corruption are essential for successful development.

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Research Centre of Ottawa, is helping build the research capacity of 'civil society' groups dealing with ANC economic policies on the urban poor. The project focuses on the downloading and commercialization – through mixed public-private delivery – of services such as water, electricity, sewage and health care.

Although being called an "international radical careerist" by a prominent member of the ANC must have been a shock to MacDonald, used to less vituperative debates

back home, it shows that South Africa's new democracy is robust and lively.

No doubt to the chagrin of the government there, South Africa is a nation where such shortfalls in public services can be challenged in the courts. It is fitting that research spearheaded by a Canadian could be used in a case against South African water policy, as that country's bill of rights is modeled on the Canadian Charter of Rights.

In the post-apartheid era, Canadians have been at the forefront of strengthening 'governance' structures in South Africa, both at the top through legal and judicial reform (training judges and magistrates in the new bill of rights, for instance), and at the grassroots level by providing tools for citizen participation.

Robin Sully, director of international development programs at the Canadian Bar Association, says that Canada's constitutional democracy has a lot to offer the rest of the world. Her organization is providing support for the Southern African Legal Assistance Network, a loose collection of public interest law centres and human rights organizations.

South Africa's bill of rights in fact goes further than the Canadian Charter in its inclusion of social and economic protections. "The potential to create a progressive society [is there because] everyone has the legal right to health, safety, clean water, sanitation and housing," says David McDonald. So far, few legal challenges have been launched to clarify the level of a government's responsibility towards its citizens. However, one provincial constitutional case in the western Cape did rule that squatters had to be given adequate shelter, notes MacDonald.

But is it an axiom that democracy, human rights and the absence of corruption are essential ingredients for development and poverty

reduction? Most foreign aid providers would answer yes. Studies by the World Bank, says Robin Sully, demonstrate a strong connection between governance and the rule of law on the one hand and poverty reduction on the other. She is adamant on this point. “Not a maybe. It is absolutely critical. In fact, it is the most critical.”

Yet South Africa, which has one of the best constitutions in the world, an established rule of law, and a politically astute and active populace, still has poverty and high unemployment. However, South Africa is in better economic shape than other sub-Saharan countries on the continent.

So what comes first, democracy or development? Louis Lefebvre, a professor emeritus in economics at York University and former advisor to the Papandreou government in Greece, says there no simple answer to this ‘chicken and egg’ conundrum.

Lefebvre points to Cuba where significant advances in basic nutrition, education and health have occurred in a country that lacks ‘Western’ ideals of democracy, namely freedom of speech and broad political choice. “In contrast, there is, for example, India where all of these freedoms exist but a large part of the population continues to live at or below minimum subsistence.”

For the Washington-based World Bank, which first used the term ‘good governance’ within a development context in the early 1990s, there is a greater stress on accountability, transparency and a recognized legal framework at the government and bureaucratic level. This leading international donor agency has come into sharp criticism for policies that include privatization, deregulation and fiscal discipline at the expense of living conditions of the people in the countries receiving the loans.

The Institute of Governance in Ottawa prefers the United Nations’ insistence on “democratic governance.” This definition is what the institute’s director Claire Marshall calls “a huge grab bag” of components: government, civil society, media, private sector, history and culture. Fixing government alone is not the entire story.

“When we talk about governance, we are looking at the way in which public policy issues are decided. We are looking at the institutions and traditions around decision-making. We are looking at who has voice. We are looking at the sharing of power.”

Fahim Quadir, who heads York University’s international development studies program, says the World Bank is not necessarily concerned about

promoting democracy and human rights. Yet many international donor agencies have drawn on the World Bank's definition of governance for their own aid programs.

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA – the government's foreign aid wing), "is a bit more focused," says Quadir, "in the sense that it talks about the importance of democratization, human rights, civil societies. The World Bank does not have the mandate to address these political issues."

CIDA has promoted non-governmental organizations as essential tools for building citizen participation in developing countries, adds Gerry Barr, president of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation, which represents Canadian development groups. "You can do extraordinary and innovative things through the support of civil society organizations." He cites CIDA's financial support of Oxfam Canada's Horn of Africa Capacity Building Program. However, he is concerned that CIDA's funding support for NGO and university-led projects is down by 12 per cent since 1989.

Governance and democracy may be inextricably linked, but economic development can occur in undemocratic states, says Claire Marshall of the Institute of Governance, listing Singapore, Brunei and Saudi Arabia as examples.

Robin Sully of the Canadian Bar Association has learned from overseas work that no easy and simple blueprint exists for good governance. "All you can do is go in and help them identify [their needs] and facilitate their process." She brings up the example of foreign experts arriving and urging the adoption of their home country's model of, for instance, environmental protection – holus bolus. "That will hardly work. Most countries have got many good laws, lots of them in fact. Bangladesh is a good example. It has volumes of laws. None of them are being implemented. They are not appropriate."

Many of the problems of good vs. bad governance stem from the existence of corrupt elites in Developing Countries, says Iris Almeida, director of policy and planning at Rights and Democracy in Montreal, which funds democracy projects around the world. "One of the key obstacles to democratic governance in many Developing Countries is that the local elite often believe that holding political office is the surest and fastest way to amass wealth."

There is no big dent yet in the armour of worldwide corruption, despite

the best efforts of international bodies to fight it, admits Dr. Daniel Kaufmann, director of the World Bank. In a speech delivered last December in Merida, Mexico, at the signing of the UN Convention against Corruption, he stated that this scourge must be tackled within “a broader governance context” of rule of law, property rights, a free press and transparent campaign financing.

Kaufmann bemoaned the role that influential business conglomerates play “in affecting policies and institutions in a country – sometimes for the better, at times for the worse.” Yet he denied that globalization encourages corruption. “There is no evidence that privatization results in increasing corruption, and where transparent and competitive methods of privatization prevail, in fact, the contrary is the case.”

But the World Bank misses an important point, warns Professor Louis Lefebvre. In one form or another, “corruption is an integral part [of global business]. The problem is as much with the developed as the less developed economies. For example, the bribing and lobbying costs incurred by multinationals [are often] tax deductible in industrial countries.”

So good governance does not begin and end with a country’s governmental and judicial institutions. Ultimately, nations need an informed, empowered population – of women and men – and civil society organizations to hector and pressure governments to make serious efforts to combat poverty and spread the wealth around.

It may not be straightforward or even polite, as David MacDonald learned in South Africa, but it is democracy.

(January 2004)

*The Southern African Research Centre ([www.queensu.ca/sarc](http://www.queensu.ca/sarc)) is a focal point within Canada for research focused on that corner of the world. The International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development ([www.ichrdd.ca](http://www.ichrdd.ca)) and the Institute on Governance ([www.iog.ca](http://www.iog.ca)) are well-respected sources of information on governance issues.*

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All nations need an informed, empowered population to hector and pressure governments to make serious efforts to combat poverty.

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## A SANCTUARY FOR HOPE

By Sean Kelly

A CANADIAN VOLUNTEER OFFERS HELP – AND HOPE – TO STREET KIDS IN TANZANIA

Maryamm Himid arrives at work each morning hoping to leave with her heart intact. She knows that on any given day up to 200 sad stories will walk through the door of the children's centre located in Buguruni, an impoverished quarter of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where she is halfway through a two-year volunteer posting.

Youth and children as young as three will arrive hungry, lonely and sick. Youth like Sadi Hajoge, a fifteen-year-old boy who came in dirty, malnourished and speaking the street language that defines his life. He sells gum, toilet disinfectant, toothpicks – anything to survive – and visits the centre for perhaps his only meal of the day. Hajoge is on the streets because his mom died and his dad is too poor to take care of him.

Himid is volunteering at a centre run by the Kiota Women's Health and Development Organization, known by its acronym 'KIWOHEDE.' This sanctuary from the street offers counseling, HIV testing and education, basic schooling, a warm meal and a place where children can act like kids.

The centre in Buguruni is a home away from home – or the only home – for children and youth in trouble. 'Trouble' comes in many guises: child prostitutes, orphans who have lost both parents to AIDS, sexual abuse survivors and the HIV stricken.

Himid counsels children and educates them about catching and spreading AIDS. Her background is in Early Childhood Education, so she also spends time with the very youngest. "Sometimes," Himid says, "the most important thing [you can do] is to offer some rare affection."

The 42-year-old Montreal woman is in the Southeastern African country with CUSO, a non-profit Canadian agency. Tanzania lies in the shadow of Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa. Around 37 million people call Tanzania home, with two-and-a-half million of them in the city of Dar es Salaam. Life expectancy at birth is 51.

Buguruni is a low-income district of hot and humid Dar es Salaam, made up of squatter shacks capped by rusty sheet metal. There is limited electricity and water. People dodge *daladalas* (private mini-buses) in narrow alleys alive with survival. Small canteens sell beer and *nyama choma* (roasted meat) with French fries. In the evening, women set up shop selling *chapati*, a fried bread topped with egg mixed with potatoes, tomatoes and green peppers. Chickens and goats mingle with children playing soccer.

Some hang on by begging or stealing. Or selling their bodies. “I have never seen poverty like this anywhere,” says Himid. She was warned this would be a tough posting. Among the required qualifications, the job description listed the ability to “cope with grief and the sad situations of young people.”

And it has been a challenge. “I was surprised to see children without parents wandering the streets looking for food,” admits Himid. “I was surprised to meet young girls and boys who cared for their AIDS parents. I was surprised to see children wandering around the streets picking stuff from the garbage, not understanding what a toy is.”

For Himid, this posting is both a humanitarian offering and a return to her roots. Her parents were from Mozambique, but moved to Tanzania where Maryamm was born. Her mother and father are still in Africa, but she and her brothers and sisters travelled widely for schooling and work. Maryamm journeyed to London, England, where the young woman graduated from school and then university. She moved to Montreal, which she considers home, although she still feels a connection to all the countries she has lived in. “I’m some kind of a blend,” says Himid, who is fluent in English, French and Swahili.

She is also a single mother of two boys, 12-year-old Ashraff and 7-year-old Tarek, who are with her in Tanzania. While concerned for the well-being of her children – they don’t live in Buguruni but in a safer neighbourhood 30 minutes away – she believes the experience has deepened their sense of humanity. “My boys will go back to Canada passionately enriched with so many experiences, good and bad. They will appreciate more the things too many of us

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“Sometimes the most important thing you can do for a child from the street is to offer some rare affection.”

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take for granted, like education, food and shelter.”

Being a parent adds an emotional entanglement to working with children at risk. Himid looks into faces of the children she works with and knows that there but for the grace of god go her kids – or anybody’s kids. “I was born in the Developing World,” she says, “so I have always known that I wanted to reduce suffering somehow. I consider myself fortunate to get to know people from different backgrounds. I feel touched by their lives, their stories.”

“And I try to not have my heart broken by applying what I preach here everyday. And that is hope.” Himid tells of some youth going back to school because of counselling and support from KIWOHEDE staff. And of women who had never spoken to their husbands before about condoms now telling their partners to use protection.

Himid even sees hope in the bloodshot eyes of Sadi Hajoge, the fifteen-year-old street kid. Ostracized by the community at large, he is an angry and abusive teen who makes it hard to be loved, she says. “So I took him in my office and started to listen to his story. After a long counselling session, he left me feeling emotionally drained and unsuccessful because he was arguing about everything.”

She didn’t give up, and kept trying to break through, taking the time to hear the fear and hope and longing under the anger. Slowly he began participating in group discussions and other centre activities.

“Then the other day he was not feeling well, so I checked his temperature and he was burning up. I bought him food and medicine, and he started to cry – for me, this was something very unusual because he always acts tough and pretends that he does not need anybody. I think he is at [our centre] because he never had a place where he can call home, where people listen to him as a child and where he can open up and tell of his troubles, his joys and his interests.”

And so ended another day of work for Maryamm Himid, who picked up Ashraff and Tarek from school with a heart heavy but unbroken.

(February 2004)

*Maryamm Himid, Ashraff and Tarek are scheduled to return to Canada from Tanzania in May 2005.*

## A PASSAGE TO AFRICA

By Sean Kelly

WAYN HAMILTON IS HELPING BLACK NOVA SCOTIANS CONNECT WITH THEIR ANCESTRAL HOME, AND THE SOURCE OF HIS PEOPLE'S STORY.

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When Wayn Hamilton arrived in the small rural town of Michika, Nigeria in 1984, the security guard at the housing compound where he was to live wouldn't let him in. Hamilton, beginning a posting in the West African nation of 120 million, told the guard he was the Canadian volunteer who would be teaching English at the nearby boarding school. "You can't be the Canadian volunteer," the guard argued, "you're not white."

"He had never seen a Black Canadian," recalls Hamilton, "he didn't think we existed!" The standoff lasted an hour, with Hamilton waiting, suitcases in hand, in the humid, kerosene-scented night air. The school principal was summoned, and once convinced that the Black Canadian did exist, the guard unlocked the lone wooden door cut into the cement wall that surrounded what would be home for the next two years.

Hamilton is from Beechville, an historic black community about half-an-hour's drive from Halifax. He was in Nigeria with CUSO, a Canadian non-profit development agency that has recruited, trained and placed thousands of volunteers in the Third World.

But most of the volunteers sent to Africa have been white, "so the colour of my skin allowed me to be an observer," says Hamilton. "I was more invisible, for lack of a better term, than the volunteers the Nigerians were used to seeing. Eventually, I was welcomed as an African who had come back home. I got to participate in things that were not the norm for Canadian volunteers."

Hamilton has walked through many doors in Africa during his ten years there, spread over two decades. He worked in Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone with CUSO and UNICEF, as a teacher and in community development and healthcare. In 1995 he had to leave Sierra Leone when the violence of a long-simmering civil war bubbled over into widespread brutality.

Hamilton, who is now the executive director of the provincial government's Office of African Nova Scotians, first travelled to Africa to learn more about his origins. "My mother used to tell me that my roots were very broad." For example, his great, great, great grandfather escaped the poverty of the Southern States in the early 1800s for one of the first land grants in Beechville. "My mom also encouraged me to read about Africa," which he did, on his own, because black history wasn't then taught in school.

He learned that Nova Scotia is home to some of Canada's oldest black communities – thousands fled to its shores after supporting Britain in the U.S. War of Independence. But many of these Black Loyalists felt betrayed when both the promises of land and the land itself proved barren. So in 1792, over 1,000 Nova Scotia blacks sailed for Africa. They helped found the modern country of Sierra Leone, today a nation of over four million. They named their capital Freetown.

Hamilton journeyed to the source of his story, and while now settled back in Canada, he knows his overseas posting "will never really be over." His wife, Rugi, is from Sierra Leone, and they live in Waverley, Nova Scotia with their five-year-old son Khalifa. And he keeps in touch with many friends back in Africa.

"Sometimes the best you can do is change the life of one individual," says Hamilton, "the student that says 'because of you I didn't drop out of school.' When they say that, I always give a thank you back, because if they hadn't let me into their lives I wouldn't be who I am today." Hamilton's sense of himself was forged in part through his African experiences. "I have more than just one identity, I'm connected to a larger world."

Connecting Black Nova Scotians to the broader African diaspora has become a mission for Hamilton, a man who looks younger than his years, often found onstage drumming for African musicians. He teamed up with Karen Hudson, a Vice-Principal at a Dartmouth High School and mother of two, and Barbara Hamilton-Hinch, Black Student Advisor at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Wayn's cousin and also a mother of two.

"We had been talking about how our various experiences as volunteers in Africa had changed us," says Hamilton, "and we thought, wouldn't it be great to give other African Nova Scotians the same opportunity. What if they could see what we saw, to understand the bigger picture, to witness first-hand the positive side of Africa, not just the negative we get from TV."

With the support of private donors, CUSO and the Nova Scotia government, the 'Connecting to Africa' roots project was planted in the black community. A group of nine African Nova Scotians – teachers, lawyers, entrepreneurs, youth and community workers – spent one month in the summer of 2003 in Ghana. Hamilton was the lead facilitator. "My job was to open a door; it's up to the individuals to keep it propped open."

While there, they met with rural organizations, business agencies, women's groups and AIDS workers. The goal, he says, was to foster human linkages, to hook people emotionally on Africa. "Person-to-person relationships are very important to most Africans," says Hamilton. The Ghanaians were "deeply touched that we had travelled all that way just to shake their hands."

The Canadians have been similarly affected. "I have thought of little else since getting back from Ghana," says Kari Jones, who works for the Cape Breton Black Employment Partnership in Sydney, Nova Scotia. "This trip has let me see into my past and my future."

In Kumasi, a traditional ruler told the visiting Nova Scotians they were the embodiment of *sankofa*, a word meaning a return to your cultural roots. "This ruler also told us of a place we had to visit, to better understand our past," says Hamilton. "He said we had to go back before we could go forward."

That place was a slave encampment in northern Ghana. From there the captives were crowded into 'slave castles' along the coast of West Africa, and finally forced below decks of leaking, stagnant ships bound for the harsh truth of the new world. The site is preserved by local custodians who pass on the oral histories of their nation's ghosts.

The Nova Scotians squeezed into the squalid quarters the slaves lived in, if live is the word that can be used. They sought shade under trees that prisoners were chained to, the roots still cemented into the hard-baked soil. They touched the punishment seat, a stone where troublemakers were shackled and forced to face the biting African sun. The rock was deeply pitted from use.

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"When people there  
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their lives I wouldn't  
be who I am today."

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“It was a moving experience,” says Hamilton, “and difficult. We usually stood in dead silence. It was the start of the journey for my ancestors, and here we were returning.”

Back in Nova Scotia, the Canadian participants have pledged to fundraise for African development projects, and to educate the public about Africa and the links to Black Nova Scotia. “I want to see how far we can go,” says Kari Jones, “to see how many connections we can make and how many Nova Scotians and Ghanaians can benefit from the project.” The organizers are aiming for another tour in two years, and want to include Sierra Leone in the travel plans.

For Wayn Hamilton, the personal journey from the past to the present to the future also continues. Now that stability has settled on Sierra Leone thanks to a peace accord and international peacekeepers, he and Rugi hope to take their five-year-old to Sierra Leone to visit his other home.

Hamilton wants to take Khalifa, which translates as successor, through a few doors of his own.

(August 2003)

*Wayn Hamilton is executive director of the Nova Scotia government's Office of African Nova Scotians. The Connecting to Africa group is fundraising to bring several Ghanaians to Canada to visit African-Nova Scotian communities, and another tour of Back Nova Scotians to West Africa is planned for 2005. Donations can be made through the CUSO Nova Scotia office: (902) 423-6709; [uso.atlantic@uso.ca](mailto:uso.atlantic@uso.ca)*

## EL CIRCO DEL MUNDO: CHILE'S STREET KIDS CIRCUS

By Nicola Ross

INTERNATIONAL BIGTOP PHENOMENON CIRQUE DU SOLEIL OF MONTREAL  
TEACHES THE ART OF THE CIRCUS – AND OF LIFE – TO STREET KIDS IN CHILE.

At one time or another, most children think about running away from home. One classic destination for these wayward dreams is the circus. The more adventurous may even fantasize about finding fame under the bigtop. Camilo Echevarria Reinoso did leave home and join the circus, but he discovered a different reward amongst the clowns and trapeze artists.

Today, Echevarria, a community worker with CUSO, is technical director of El Circo del Mundo's School of Social Circus in Santiago, Chile. An initiative of Canada's internationally acclaimed Cirque du Soleil, Circo del Mundo (Circus of the World) is an example of the Quebec-based outfit's creative touch. Circo del Mundo allows Soleil's performers to "share the challenge and magic of circus arts with young people in difficult circumstances, especially those who live in the street."

A social circus, says Manon Bernier, a project leader with Cirque du Soleil in Montreal, is a marriage of arts and social action. In a social circus, "the final objective is not to develop circus performers," but rather to give youth confidence and raise their image in the eyes of elders.

Bernier admits that not all artists work well with at-risk youth. That's why Echevarria's school offers a four-year program of social circus instruction. No longer a member of a traditional circus, Echevarria spends long hours passing along his expertise to a group of ten Chileans who are developing Latin America's first social circus school.

A circus of some kind has been Echevarria's home for a long time. Growing up in post-revolutionary Cuba, he began at age seven to practice gymnastics at a sports school in Havana. With Olympic dreams spurring him on, Echevarria practiced hard throughout his primary and secondary schooling. When it came time for a post-secondary education, Echevarria chose the circus. He attended his country's national school of circus arts and was soon showing off his acrobatic skills to the world.

Echevarria toured Italy, France, Hungary, Poland and Russia. He also travelled to Chile, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador and, in 1994, to Colombia where he decided he would stay and not return to his homeland. "If for you, this is escaping, then yes, I escaped," says Echevarria. After 16 years

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In a social circus, the final objective is not to develop circus performers but to give youth confidence and raise their image in the eyes of elders.

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of acrobatics, he knew he could find work in South America, especially in Chile. For three years he toured the long narrow nation that snakes its way to the southern tip of South America, working with Chile's largest circuses.

Then Echevarria attended a performance put on by Circo del Mundo. What he saw captured his imagination. After the show he talked to the kids and their director. He volunteered for two years before the opportunity with CUSO opened up and he was

selected to set up the school where circus performers learn to become social circus instructors.

El Circo del Mundo teams Cirque du Soleil circus arts instructors with social workers. Together they interact with troubled youth, many of whom are difficult to reach through conventional means. Circo del Mundo's program is based on the belief that "circus arts give youth-at-risk a chance to blossom and to express themselves."

Manon Bernier explains that when the youth perform for their community it might be the first time grown-ups have seen them in a positive light. Achieving any level of success as a circus artist, she explains, "changes the image of these youth in the community." And in themselves.

For instance, while one youth talked of how Circo del Mundo taught him to juggle, he was more interested in crediting his circus experience with the decision to avoid using drugs.

Circo del Mundo's earliest programs began in Chile in 1995. After 17 years of rule under dictator General Augusto Pinochet, ending in 1990, this nation of 15 million has emerged as Latin America's economic powerhouse. Chile boasts soaring glass skyscrapers and the other trappings that many equate with success: upscale restaurants, television sets and big cars.

The literacy rate for those aged 15 and older is 96 percent, and in 2002 unemployment was less than 10 percent. The gross domestic product grew

by over 4 percent annually during most of the 1990s, making Chile the fourth fastest growing economy in the world during that time.

Despite these successes, some 20 percent of the population live below the poverty line. Family violence is a concern and, like their counterparts throughout the world, disadvantaged youths struggle with drugs and alcohol, and the tendency to drop out of school.

Heading up Circo del Mundo in Chile is Bartolomé Silva Llanos, Echevarria's boss. An actor by training, Silva is an enthusiastic leader who gets excited when he sees how Circo del Mundo helps troubled youth realize their dreams.

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One youth talked about  
how Circo del Mundo  
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using drugs.

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Under his guidance, Circo del Mundo assists some 500 young people each year. Most of them come from Santiago, the nation's sprawling capital that is home to a third of all Chileans. Circo del Mundo, says Silva, uses circus arts as a tool to help frustrated teenagers improve their self-esteem and develop social skills.

Community workshops are at the heart of the program in Chile. Teaming up with a variety of municipal and state social agencies including Chile's drug prevention agency, pairs of instructors work with youth once or twice a week for eight to ten months. The teaching duo consists of a circus arts performer and a social worker. During the three hour-long sessions, youth ranging in age from early teens to early twenties are taught to juggle and do acrobatics. Some also learn the art of being a clown.

Instructors get the chance to strut their stuff too. A troupe of circus artists, especially clowns, performs for hospitalized children and families that live in neighbourhoods with social problems. The troupe's primary objective is to make audiences laugh.

Many international agencies, including CUSO and Oxfam, support the circus with money or people. Though Echevarria is not the first of what CUSO calls 'cooperants' to work with Circo del Mundo Chile, he is different in that he is not a Canadian. Forty-four-years-old and without family in Chile, Echevarria has visited Cuba just a few times since he left home ten years ago. Maybe it's because Fidel Castro's government has banned him from returning home permanently that Echevarria has thrown so much of his heart and soul into getting the circus school up and running.



Twenty-three-year-old Rodrigo Oyaczún Rivera is a member of Echevarria's team. Oyaczún spends every weekday learning the ropes, so to speak. From 10am until 7:30pm he takes classes in the trapeze and acrobatics as well as receiving lessons in social issues. Oyaczún would like to become a professional circus artist. Another student, 20-year-old Daniela Oyanedel Alarcón, cherishes the opportunity to pass along her knowledge of "the magical world of circus," while 15-year-old Marcelo Ibacache Guebba says his goal is to "travel so he can learn more than he already knows."

The opportunity to visit other lands is a benefit that Executive Director Silva believes is especially valuable. Last year, five of the youth involved in his program spent two months in Australia. Upon their return, Silva noticed, "they were very different, stronger and more professional."

Possibly they were more like the Cirque du Soleil's founders. In the early 1980s, a few young street performers in Montreal believed in themselves as well. Today, Cirque du Soleil and its unique form of circus spectacle employs 2,500 people, over 500 of whom are artists. The company has nine shows on the go with permanent theatres in Florida and Las Vegas. Since 1984, Cirque du Soleil has staged more than 240 performances in 90 cities before 40 million spectators.

And the magicians behind the Montreal phenomenon could easily expand its Circo del Mundo initiative too. "There is so much demand that if we wanted we could develop Cirque du Monde programs all over the world," enthuses Manon Bernier. As it is, staff involved with Cirque du Soleil's social programs have difficulty keeping up with their workload. But Bernier promises that Circo del Mundo will coach other motivated groups interested in setting up their own version of the program.

And then more kids will be able to join the circus after running away from home and onto the streets.

(February 2004)

*Chile's El Circo del Mundo ([www.elcircodelmundo.com](http://www.elcircodelmundo.com)) continues to help hundreds of youth each year through circus and life skills workshops, while presenting critically-acclaimed public performances.*

## PRESERVING A PEOPLE'S SOUL

By Sean Kelly

A CANADIAN VOLUNTEER HELPS PROMOTE PACIFIC CULTURE IN A GLOBAL WORLD.

Marshall Hoke now knows in his heart what he already knew in his mind: language is important to one's identity. And one's self-esteem. "In English, I am talkative and outgoing. But in Bislama, I am not the same person. I can't be witty, charming or quick, and I miss a lot of cultural subtleties. It can be tough to take."

Hoke, who hails from Edson, Alberta, is picking up the Melanesian dialect while in Vanuatu, an archipelago lying off the northeast coast of Australia. The 60-year-old is in the lush, mountainous country with CUSO, a non-profit development agency.

Hoke is halfway through a two-year volunteer posting at the 'Malakula Kaljoral Senta,' and has a personal connection with the centre's goal of promoting traditional language and culture. "Language and culture gives a positive sense of identity to a people," says Hoke, in English. "When culture is lost, something of the soul of a people dies."

Vanuatu is a collection of 70-odd islands and islets of volcanic origin, the steep, verdant peaks breaking the water's surface along an 800-kilometre stretch of South Pacific ocean. The smallest ones are uninhabited, and over 200,000 people live on the larger islands, generally in villages of 50 to 500. Many Melanesian idioms roll off the native tongue, but Bislama, English and French are the official languages.

Hoke's Centre (that is, the 'Senta' in Pidgin English) is on Malekula, the second biggest island of Vanuatu, population 20,000. The Senta is a large traditional house with painted bamboo-slatted walls and a thatch roof that houses a small museum of "decaying artifacts and mildewed cultural information." There is also a branch of the national library with a collection of musty discard books donated from rural Australian libraries, mostly novels but also, Hoke says, "How to... books such as 'How to Play Golf' and 'How to Buy or Sell a House.'"

While he (or anyone else, for that matter) is not playing golf or selling homes, Hoke has become a Jack-of-many-other-trades. He writes funding proposals, helps facilitate workshops – such as a traditional tamtam or slit-gong drum session featuring old masters of the aural art – and fixes the aforementioned but leaking thatch roof. “And every now and then some tourists wander in, and I give them a tour of the museum,” adds Hoke.

Hoke is assisting the curator, Numa Fred Longga, a 40-year-old father of six who lives on the nearby small island of Uripiv, five kilometres offshore. Longga has a grade six education, but years of experience in cultural promotion and language preservation. “Numa is a great guy to work with, knowledgeable, friendly and inclusive.”

Hoke has a Masters’ Degree in Social Work, and worked for 25 years as an addictions counsellor for the Alberta government. He also taught university anthropology and in his spare time “raised a few sheep.” He is on Malekula with his partner, 56-year-old Barbara Prescott, who is volunteering with the Vanuatu National Council of Women on life skills training.

They start their day early – 7:30 am, after a seven-kilometre bike ride – and take the traditional break of two hours starting at 11:30. “Barb and I go down to the foodstalls by the road for lunch. We chat with the ladies about local affairs. We come back up to the cultural centre, take a mat outside and snooze under a shade tree until 1:30.” They leave at 4:30, “Numa to catch the boat back to Uripiv, and Barb and I to bike back home for a glass of iced coffee – the luxury of the day.”

Like most Canadian volunteers, Hoke says he and Prescott are gaining as much, if not more, than they can give. “The problems the Centre faces, primarily from inadequate funding, are far outside my area of influence.” It can be difficult as well to get the building supplies he needs – “I thought I’d be able to do more handyman stuff.” But, he says, local residents “like to have us here – they feel supported and encouraged by our very presence.”

And Hoke believes the work is meaningful. “In places where an indigenous people have lost their sense of positive cultural identity, the

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“Language and culture gives a positive sense of identity to a people, but when culture is lost, something of the soul of a people dies.”

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people tend to be demoralized. The people here remain sure of who they are and where they come from.”

Perhaps the most colourful thread in the cultural mosaic is how the niVanuatu (as citizens there are called) deal with the land they live on. At independence in 1980, the new country reverted to traditional land ownership, based on the extended family rather than the individual. Most land owned in the country by foreigners was returned to its hereditary holders. Land cannot be purchased, but rather leased for no more than 75 years.

There are no landless people in Vanuatu, and it is one of the few places on earth where indigenous peoples have not been alienated from their ancestral home. “The niVanuatu who have travelled abroad are shocked to see homeless people in wealthy countries.”

However, this cultural norm hinders ‘modern’ development, as land laws discourage outside investment – the World Bank is lobbying to have the laws replaced by a Western title system – and values of egalitarianism inhibit individual entrepreneurship. By many standards Vanuatu is a poor country, dependent on foreign aid.

Yet these same traits are a buffer against some harsh realities of poverty. The government has promoted the benefits of village life, where there may be little money but there is land, food, family and friends. Urban flight and city squalor have been reduced, and 85 percent of the population lives in rural communities.

Finding their own path to development in a global economy won’t be easy, but Hoke hopes the people of Vanuatu can avoid some of the pitfalls that other impoverished countries have fallen into.

Hoke believes culture is key. “It is a powerful source of power – for the individual, and for the broader society.”

(December 2003)

*Marshall Hoke and Barbara Prescott are scheduled to return to Canada from Vanuatu in November 2004.*

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