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the Courier

the magazine
of ACP-EU development cooperation

COUNTRY REPORT
Sierra Leone

DOSSIER
Migration



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Armenian guard on the Turkish border

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Sierra Leone:
Blama camp for internally displaced persons
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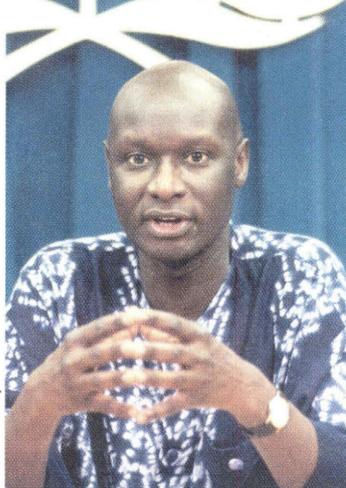
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Olarra Otunnu

Culture and Society

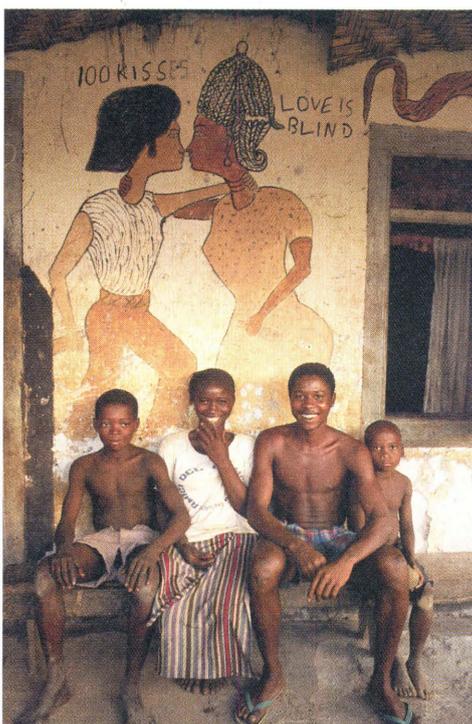
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The ACP-EU Courier

is the main publication of the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and the European Union. The EU provides ACP countries with preferential access to EC markets and substantial development assistance (some two to three billion Euros a year).

The ACP and EU cooperate at a political level and engage in a continuous political dialogue: in trade, to promote the integration of the ACP countries into the world economy and in development assistance, with the clear objective of promoting sustainable development and reducing poverty.

Volunteers to the fore

AN INTERVIEW WITH JERRY RAWLINGS

2001: International Year of Volunteers.

Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings, former president of Ghana, is devoting himself wholeheartedly to the cause, described by this indefatigable worker more as a crusade than a mission. In his capacity as an “International Year of Volunteers” (IYV) 2001 key figure in recognition of his efforts to improve economic and social conditions in his own country, Jerry Rawlings’ new career led him in May to attend the third UN conference on LDCs.

The objective? To promote volunteer service in developing countries.

This year the United Nations Volunteer Programme is celebrating its thirtieth anniversary. Jerry Rawlings is delighted that the organisation has sent volunteers to 157 countries, and that he can promote a programme he sees as unique, given that it is based on a South/South dimension. This is totally in step with LDC III – which focuses not only on what the international community can do, but also what the developing countries themselves can contribute as a solution.

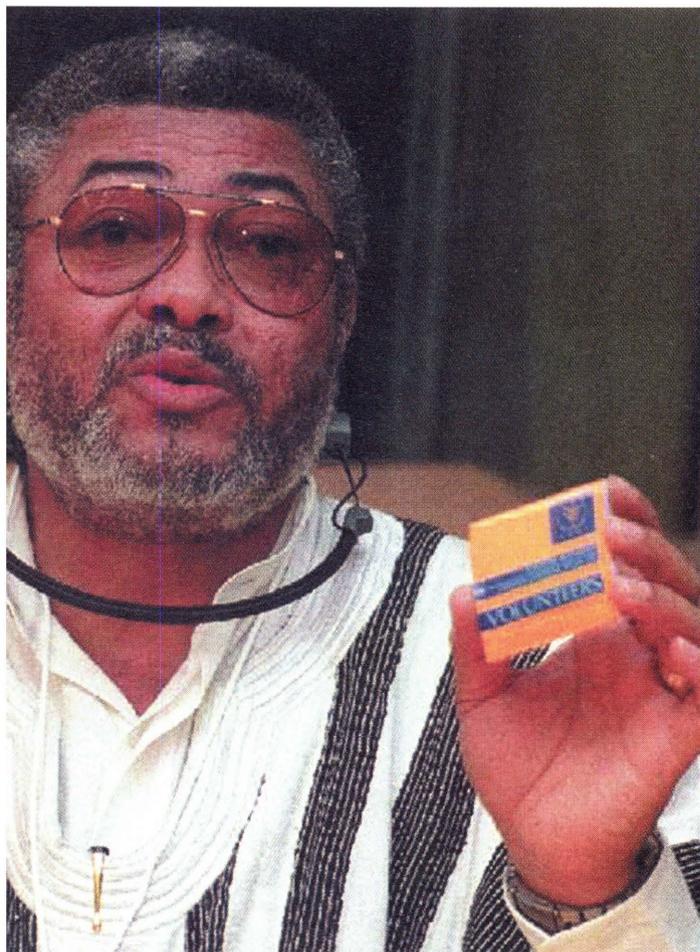
He was just back from a trip to Botswana where he spoke, just as in Brussels, about the impact of the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) and its partners’ campaign to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic. He immediately reels off figures which give a more precise idea of volunteer activities: a programme which every year sends 5,000 people to assist in projects which include technical cooperation, community development, humanitarian aid, promotion of human rights, the conducting of elections and the consolidation of peace. “What I would particularly like to discuss with you is the incredible impact of our work, which involves emphasising recognition, facilitation, networking and the promotion of volunteer service. Above all, we want everyone to know that this is a unique programme with a major South/South dimension. Under this programme, we are distancing ourselves from the donor/recipient paradigm. All countries are contributing to the development effort.”



Photo: AP/Thierry Charlier

Devaluing human beings

After almost 20 years as leader of his country, what made Jerry Rawlings embrace this new cause? The answer is simple: he is a man who makes a commitment. “I didn’t feel that I could simply retire, leave the stage and do nothing. I am driven by a great passion for justice, and when we speak about AIDS we have to face facts: the pandemic is diminishing in severity in the western world but increasing exponentially in Africa. Why is this? Is it because we “lack discipline”? Obviously, there are all kinds of paradigms to take into account, but I am convinced that, in one sense, we do lack discipline. That is why I speak of justice and respect. We have to respect our partners. If women allowed themselves to indulge in just one-tenth of the behaviour they have to put up with from men on our continent, they would all die of a heart



attack! The root of this problem is the issue of behaviour. I am not advocating abstinence, I simply want to send out a message to African men, to tell them that if they intend to be unfaithful they have a moral duty to protect themselves so as not to infect their wives, their partners and the children these women bear. It is absolutely essential to keep on talking about family planning: take your precautions. If not, you are devaluing human beings. You only have to look at the price we are paying: wholesale loss of life, the death of a continent. However, what we can do is to foment a revolution in African men's behaviour, by encouraging them to take the necessary precautions."

Using proven methods

Volunteer service is always built on fertile soil: "You know, people don't wait to be told what is required of

them. Local voluntary movements do indeed exist, each characterised according to local custom. Villagers who help each other out at harvest time are doing no more than volunteer work! Our contribution under the UNV is to try to make this natural solidarity movement a global phenomenon, based on initiatives which already exist. Too often in thinking on development issues, resources and traditional methods are regarded paternalistically in the context of a developing country. In the North, when a group of citizens decides to do something, to build a school, for example, the initiative will get an amazing response. In certain countries, it was decided to measure the value of self help, and it emerges that from 8-14% of the GDP depends on this. In the South, this contribution has not yet been measured, and this is undoubtedly the reason why policies do not recognise the existence of or encourage volunteer service. It is considered as a given in most societies. The importance of such statistics must be acknowledged."

In his approach, Jerry Rawlings seems to have chosen deliberately to address men. "I am speaking to both men and women, but I accept that my words refer more particularly to the former as they are the ones who have the freedom to do as they please. When addressing a meeting, I am fairly sure that everyone is secretly convinced that what I am saying is correct: both men and women. But as a representative of the male sex, it is only right that I should express clear ideas on the issue. And I hope that that is just what I am doing."

A painful anniversary

As if to validate these ideas, current news reports mention the victory in South Africa on the part of those who campaigned for access to cheaper medicines. Twenty years after the disease was first identified, the pharmaceutical industries have, after much resistance, agreed to lower their prices. "Here, too, it is volunteers who have succeeded in motivating people. Ordinary people who have forced pharmaceutical companies to reassess their approach to fixing the prices of medicines. Many of them can, in fact, be produced in India, for example, and much more cheaply, too. A word of caution, though: they may have won the battle, but the war is not over, as the medicines are still in the North and the sick are predominantly in Africa. How many people can actually afford these cocktails of medicines? South Africa has had the courage to challenge the big pharmaceutical groups and to tell them 'Sorry, chaps, but who do you want to sell your treatments to? We will all be dead!' If you are

going to talk about life, you have to have a measure of compassion, not just a desire for profit”.

Money is the key factor in the battle, particularly in HIV/AIDS research and prevention. During his trip, Jerry Rawlings intends to call upon the international community to raise funds to support the fight against the pandemic. “I am doing so and will continue to do so systematically, everywhere. It is a prerequisite for the campaign to function: one has to be aware of the fact that, in order to assist governments in setting up the infrastructures which will enable people to be tested, etc., there is a need for money – money is still a decisive parameter in this battle.”

The link between health and economic growth

For Jerry Rawlings, a meeting such as the LDC conference recently hosted by the European Union should lead participants to see the link between public-health problems and the impoverishment of countries in the South. “Those who do not yet understand the way in which economics and health are interconnected need to

Most people are still sceptical; they see death, but its various forms do not always turn their thoughts to HIV/AIDS

open their eyes. A sick nation is a nation unable to produce, unable to guarantee economic growth.”

The former president of Ghana does not really see himself as a trail-blazer, but he would like his example to be followed by other African heads of state. “I like to think that this is what they are already doing, but everyone has to follow their own nature. Some will be more diplomatic in their style, others, like me, will use unambiguous language. I have been told that my language has, on occasion, caused offence. That may be true, and I can become quite brutal when speaking of such issues, because I think that it’s time to call a spade a spade. I am adamant that the message should get through, and I can see that this is already bearing fruit. Most people are still sceptical; they see death, but its various forms do not always turn their thoughts to HIV/AIDS. I have to preach, preach and preach again: it would be a terrible thing to know that people will react only when it’s too late. I am setting out on my crusade to put an end to death in Africa.”

Aya Kasasa

The United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) is the volunteer arm of the UN system. It extends hands-on assistance for peace and development in some 140 countries. It recruits and fields qualified UN Volunteers and promotes global volunteerism. It encourages lawmakers to adopt policies improving volunteer opportunities and better, unimpeded conditions to help volunteers advance their work. UNV is the UN-designated focal point for the International Year of Volunteers 2001.

- In 2000, 4,780 UN Volunteers from more than 150 countries served globally.
- They help secure peace, organize elections, bring emergency relief, promote human rights, promote self-help groups for persons living with HIV/AIDS, etc.
- About two-thirds come from the developing world.
- In 2000, 30% of UN Volunteers served in Africa.
- The UN Volunteers work with governments, NGOs and the private sector to deliver efficient and effective professional assistance in a culturally sensitive manner.

More information: <http://www.unv.org>

Targeting global poverty

- a new ten-year plan is agreed in Brussels

The UN conference on Least Developed Countries, hosted by the EU in Brussels from 14 to 20 May, brought together the 49 poorest countries in the world and the international community, to decide together on a new plan to tackle poverty.

Dorothy Morrissey

“We are here to consider what kind of support would be most useful to the people of the Least Developed Countries, and to make sure they get it,” UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan told the opening ceremony of the conference.

The LDC group consists of 49 countries where poverty is endemic. Almost half of the population of 630 million lives on less than \$1 a day. Life expectancy is as much as 25 years below the average of industrialised countries. Criteria for inclusion in the category include low per capita income, low level of industrialisation, dependence on subsistence agriculture, weak infrastructure, vulnerability (to climatic conditions such as drought or flooding), as well as geographic limitations (landlocked or small island states). These countries are also characterised by high debt burdens, many are affected by civil strife, and now devastating levels of

Photo: UN



HIV/AIDS. Population size is also a factor – under 75 million. Small countries are more likely to be politically and economically ‘disenfranchised’ on the global stage. For this reason the LDC category is a useful designation, giving a voice to the group, and raising public awareness. On the other hand, countries which fulfil all other criteria –

Poul Nielson, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, is optimistic that there will be fewer LDCs in the group next time round. “There is now a clearer focus on poverty, and a better distribution and use of development assistance. We will also be seeing the effects of the debt relief effort 10 years ahead. We now have a consensus on development cooperation. The poverty-reduction strategy papers agreed by each LDC and developing country, the World Bank and the EC means that there is a better framework, more ownership and clearer priorities on social sectors. These factors will all make a difference 10 years down the line.”

such as Nigeria or India – could not be included in the category, despite high levels of poverty.

Sub-Saharan Africa dominates the group, with 34 countries falling into the category, while the Caribbean has one member (Haiti), the Pacific has five, one in the Middle East (Yemen), and the remaining eight countries are in Asia.

What has gone wrong?

In 1971 when the UN created the LDC category, 25 countries were classified as least developed. Now the group has grown to 49, and is set to expand even further. The income gap between rich and poor has widened steadily in the past 20 years. Between 1980 and 1988 the LDCs share of global exports dropped from 0.6% to 0.4%, yet these countries are home to more than 10% of the world’s population. According to World Bank figures, tariffs and quotas applied by the industrialised world cost LDCs around \$2.5 billion annually. One important step in opening its markets was taken by the EU prior to the conference, allowing immediate or phased in duty-free access for all exports from LDCs, except arms (the ‘Everything but arms’ initiative), and hopefully other developed nations will follow suit. Despite the wealth gap between rich and poor, levels of overseas development assistance have dropped by as much as 45% since 1990. Among OECD countries, only five have reached the UN target of 0.7% of GNP given to development assistance (Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden, and recently Luxembourg). A series of factors account for this drop, such as geopolitical and ideological changes following the end of the Cold War, attempts to reduce public expenses and inflation and establish macro-economic stability.

But there are signs that this drop has bottomed out and is rising again. Last year Luxembourg reached the target,

25 to 49

In 1971 the United Nations established a list of 25 countries denominated Least Developed.

Three criteria are used to determine the list:

- per capita income of less than \$900 (average per capita GDP in the LDCs in 1998 was \$278);
 - weakness in human resources: based on indicators for health, education, nutrition, and literacy;
 - economic vulnerability: factors such as instability in agricultural production, and of exports of goods and services, the share of the industrial sector in GDP.
- In the 2000 review of the list, a country qualified to be added to the list if it met the above criteria and had a population of less than 75 million. Application of this rule resulted in the admission of Senegal.

Source: UNCTAD

► LDC CONFERENCE

Denmark reached its highest ODA/GNP ratio ever recorded, and Ireland has committed itself to reaching the figure by 2005.

Allied to this is strong pressure from civil society, and what French President Jacques Chirac called the "malaise" felt by the industrialised world at the wealth gap. More prosaically, there is the realisation that, in an increasingly interconnected world, poverty-related social instability can no longer be contained within national borders.

There is now a clearer understanding of the importance of civil society, and, for the first time in such an international gathering, non-state actors had an official place. They may not have achieved all they wanted, but their presence is a major step forward. This conference was not marked by the increasingly frequent mass demonstrations that put a stop to the Seattle WTO meeting, and more recently, marred the EU summit in Sweden. As one participant quipped, "there are no demonstrators outside because they are all inside".

Participation in this conference was deliberately wide-ranging. As well as representatives from more than 120 governments, heads of key institutions such as the WTO, the World Bank, and the UN and its agencies, the private sector was also represented, and as many as 600 non-state actors were present, including 250 from LDCs. A sign of this new inclusiveness was that the head of Oxfam international spoke at the opening ceremony on the same platform as heads of state and of the international institutions. He said, in his address, that the conference would be "a litmus test of whether globalisation can be managed to close the increasingly obscene gap

In 2000, Luxembourg reached for the first time the UN 0.7% target for ODA as a proportion of GNP, joining Denmark (which reached its highest ODA/GNP ratio ever recorded), the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden who continue to surpass this target. No other countries exceeded the average country effort of 0.39% of GNP (OECD)

between rich and poor countries". Present also were parliamentarians, mayors from north and south, representatives from some of the major transnational companies, young entrepreneurs, and women entrepreneurs.

"Change the way we do business"

These were the words of UNCTAD Secretary-General Rubens Ricupero to describe the new vision of partnership envisaged in this conference. The accent would be on practical outcomes. "We are looking for realistic outcomes, even if

they are modest, which will improve the lives of the people."

There was acknowledgement that the previous LDC conferences, held in Paris in 1987 and 1990 had not improved conditions in the poorest countries. The goal of this conference was to look at the reasons why this had happened, and find consensus on a realistic and achievable action plan. The programme of action decided here would become a blueprint for national and international plans.

Talk-fest?

The large-scale nature of UN conferences and their value was a question raised by some journalists. Could this money be better spent on educating children, was one such question. It is not an either/or situation, replied Ricupero. In fact, the conference may have the effect of ultimately increasing resources available, as global attention is focused on the situation, and the agenda adopted will eventually filter into the

World Trade University launched

The World Trade University was launched at a "Summit of Young Entrepreneurs" held as part of the LDC conference. The university will provide training in institutional capacity-building in trade and investment finance. "Trade policy and other trade-related issues such as standards and quality control, have traditionally been the responsibility of governments. Private sector must be more closely involved on formulating these trade-related issues," said Zéphirin Diabré, Associate Administrator of the UNDP. The World Trade University will help business people from developing countries address this challenge. "The LDCs have the least infrastructure for this type of training, unlike the rich countries." The university will be based in Toronto, with campuses in Asia and Africa. It is not only for LDCs but primary emphasis will be given to them. "The 49 LDCs have a population of 630 million people, but their total global trade is less than half of 1%, said Sujit Chowdhury, secretary-general of the Summit. "The World Trade University is not only for those with a degree," he explained. "Our primary focus is on professionals with extensive work background, because it is they who manage trade in developing countries." He believes that very little has been done to promote trade literacy. "In a survey of all OECD countries, we found that less than 11% of universities offer just one or two courses. Developing country professionals need FDI management, export market development, access to foreign markets..." The World Trade University will begin in 2003, and the goal is to spread to 15 countries within five years. Various Foundations and multinational companies have shown interest in providing scholarships to participants.

body politic. Poul Nielson put it another way, saying that such conferences were a kind of global governance, outlining and enshrining values, and even acting as a kind of counterweight to globalization. Noerine Kaleeba, a UNAIDS adviser, is convinced of the importance of such meetings: Speaking to *The Courier*, she said “as a person from grassroots level, a conference like this breaks the isolation of people working at national and community level. It keeps the issues on the agenda, otherwise the danger is that the global community – as there are so many issues going on – will forget that the problems exist.”

A key role for the EU

The conference was unusual also in that it was hosted by the EU, and not by a single country. France hosted the two previous LDC conferences. As is usual for UN conferences, it is the host that bears the bulk of the cost. The EU provided €6 million to cover the organisation, finance the NGO Forum and parallel events such as meetings of mayors, parliamentarians, and inviting LDC experts and representatives. €2 million of this sum was for the NGO Forum, to cover costs of participants, especially from LDCs.

“The EU took the lead not just in logistics but also in the real substance,” says Francisco Granell, EU chief adviser and co-ordinator of the conference. He points to the political commitment, where the EU took the lead in making concrete commitments. “From the beginning it was clear that the basic structure of this conference was different, with thematic sessions in which single donors made promises and commitments to the LDCs. The EU has been the more active partner in offering deliverables, at the bilateral level and at the global community level.”

The participation of the NGOs was one major innovation of the conference. They took part in all the activities of the conference, such as thematic sessions, side meetings etc. They could not take part in the plenary and bureau meetings, only open to governments and their representatives. The NGOs were critical of this, believing that they were excluded from the real decision-making part of the conference, where the final programme of action would be decided. But, says Granell, “it was an intergovernmental conference, which is in the hands of the governments and their representatives. The NGO participation was important for creating public awareness, and lobbying governments. It is difficult to assess who was more influential in the Programme of Action. The NGO demands, some of which might have been considered unrealistic a few years ago, are becoming more and more realistic. It is a process.”

Grim situation for agriculture

Addressed in one session of the conference was agricultural development in LDCs. Two-thirds of the poor live in rural areas, so the link between development and agriculture and food security is vital. Yet agriculture has been badly hit by the fall in development assistance – available funds have

fallen by as much as 40% in the last 10 years. “There is a wide recognition that all development starts with agriculture and food security,” says Eddy Boutman, Belgian State Secretary for Development Cooperation. Millions can go hungry in countries with a surplus of food production. This is related to inequalities within society, making access to food a vital element. Sartaj Aziz, former foreign and finance minister of Pakistan, spoke of the “tragic combination” in LDCs, of low local production, low capacity, and lack of food security. “The per capita intake of calories is 20% less than in other developing countries, the number of malnourished people has doubled from 1.16 million to 2.25.” Despite this grim situation, LDCs have enormous untapped potential for agricultural development. “Almost 50% of them are not using half their land, only seven countries use almost all of their land, the rest have between 40-60% additional capacity to grow.” Why is this potential not being used? One reason, he says, is lack of investment, because most of these lands are rain-fed, and require heavy investment in land preparation. “When you look at these facts, slow agricultural growth on the one hand, and the potential for growth on the other, it is really sad and ironic that the flow of ODA to LDCs, instead of going up, has gone down from \$17 billion in 1991 to \$13-\$14 billion now. This is a 20% decline in nominal terms, but when you take account of inflation, it is almost 40%. This in my view is a very disturbing commentary on the international commitment to development cooperation.”

Yet, in Europe, development really started with agriculture, said Lennart Bage, president of the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

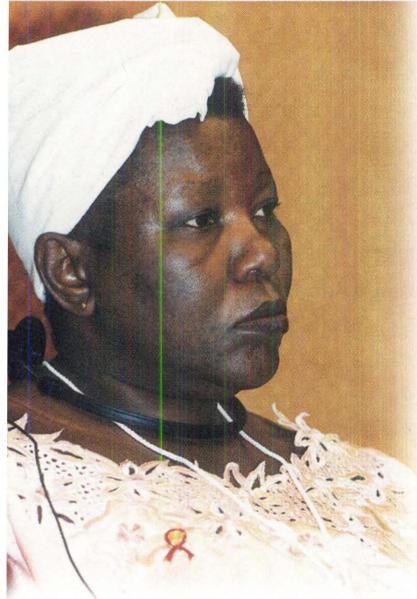
During the conference the FAO announced the creation of a special fund to help LDCs improve standard setting and build capacity to be able to adhere to standards. The fund will consist of \$98 million, from voluntary donor contributions. The FAO propose that previous levels of ODA for agriculture and rural development be restored.

Minister of Bhutan Khandu Wangchuk pointed out that the difficulty of complying with standards applied, not domestically, but to exports, making it difficult to export. “These standards have to be science-based so they are not hidden barriers to trade,” he said.

Research is vital if productivity levels are to be increased. “No country in recent history has managed to increase its sustainable agricultural production without investing in agricultural research,” said Stein Bei, Director-General of the International Service for National Agricultural Research. “But there has been a sharp decline in investment in agricultural research over the last 10, and even in some cases 20 years. Those of us working in international agricultural research have watched with growing despair as countries closed down their public intellectual capacity to innovate technologically,” he said.

Health - a prerequisite for development

Photo: UN



Noerine Kaleeba

The HIV/AIDS epidemic was turning progress backwards by decades and making development targets difficult to achieve. This was the sober message in the session on health. The epidemic affects every sector, from agriculture to industry to education, said UNAIDS adviser Noerine Kaleeba. "Children are losing people from whom they should learn. There is a huge impact on health systems, for instance in Rwanda the average cost of treating a HIV patient is \$63, compared to the \$3 average. It affects education and school enrolment, which among orphans is 39%, compared to the national average of 60%." She pointed out the importance of political leadership, and cited Uganda's case where President Museveni made a difference by being willing to speak openly. HIV/AIDS is not just an African issue, but a world issue, said Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, new executive director of UNAIDS.

Health-care systems in the LDCs are still largely undeveloped and cannot cope. Lieve Fransen, responsible for health and social development in DG Development, told the session that the EU – which commits €800 million yearly for health – has been asked by EU member states to increase this to €1 billion. The EU has just launched a programme of action against HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB.

The \$10 million global fund just launched to combat AIDS and other diseases was welcomed, but caution was sounded that money was not the only solution. Reform is also needed. "Good money" is needed, said Dr Asamoabaah, Executive Director of the WHO. "Not throwing money at our problems, but a fundamental re-think of the very design, philosophy and orientation of our health systems. What is needed is a new form of partnership, of mutual respect."

The seven-day conference ended with the adoption of a programme of action which aims to bring these countries out of poverty in the next ten years. The programme of action covers a wide range of policy guidelines, measures and actions in various fields. It focuses on seven broad commitments, covering political as well as economic issues, where both LDCs and their development partners pledge to take action. Emphasis is on partnership, and shared responsibility. A chapter of this 60-page document is dedicated to outlining mechanisms for follow-up and review of progress.

Programme of Action and other information on the conference available on <http://unctad.org/conference>

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) focuses on governance

"Only one country has graduated from the LDC group, so we have to ask what's going wrong, said Mark Malloch Brown, UNDP Administrator. The fall in development assistance over the last thirty years had disproportionately hit the LDCs, he said. Stressing the link between economic growth and a democratic culture, he said that it is not enough "to fix financial and trade marginalisation aspects". But, he says, "fixing the quality of the institutions is essential because clearly sustainable development needs strong participatory institutions."

During the conference, the UNDP launched a Trust Fund to strengthen democratic governance.

It will focus on four areas:

- Public sector reform and decentralisation
- Electoral and parliamentary systems
- Human rights and access to justice
- Conflict prevention and peace-building.

While governance was regarded as a no-go area a few years ago, it is now recognised as "the means by which society shares assets, where competition over resources is channelled through a friendly, politically open and transparent process, rather than a violent one." He warned, however, that the international community must not "lay out governance as a solution to the crisis of the LDCs". Good governance is an indispensable element of the LDC solution, but not the only one. Problems cannot be resolved at the national level without redressing weaknesses at the global level. "For us in UNDP, there is no such thing as a solution to governance at the national level, without redressing the weaknesses of governance at the global level. The main reason for the weak performance of LDCs lies as much in the features of the global economy, and the weak hand LDCs have in addressing those structural imbalances, as it does at the national level." He pointed out that many LDCs had liberalised their economies and opened up to world trade, but most had not been rewarded with growth. "We have to recognise the role of declining development assistance, poor access to global markets, and of other imbalances, which, if we do not address, will never allow the LDCs within the confines of their own national borders to achieve success."

Foreign direct investment in the LDCs – how it could help and what's preventing it

Poor countries do not attract enough foreign investment to enable them to achieve the growth that is essential to their development. Not surprisingly, those attending the third UN conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC III) called for more private capital to flow towards them. The problem of direct foreign investment in the LDCs is so important that it needs to be put into its proper context.

Kenneth Karl

When the UN set up the category of "Least Developed Countries" in 1971, they numbered only 25. Unfortunately there are now 49. The doubling of the number of LDCs is a sign of the deterioration in living conditions that has occurred in a number of countries in the South. It is a fairly stark indicator of the persistent economic and social problems they have experienced over the years. The LDCs – with a total population of approximately 630 million - have an average GDP per capita of \$278.

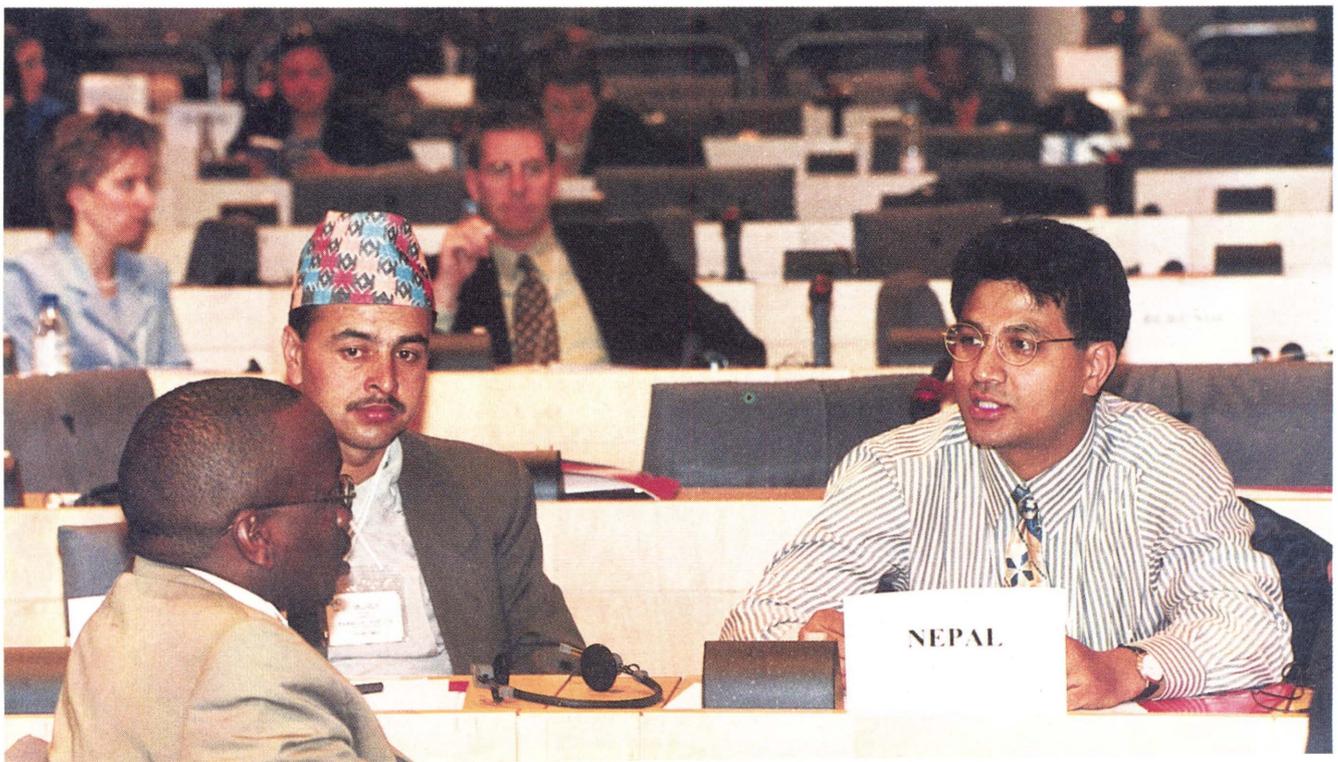
This compares with \$25,535 in the industrialised nations (1998 estimate).

Their economic growth rate remains insufficient to meet the essential requirements of their populations. Moreover, their very poorly diversified economies are subject to numerous instances of imbalance. There has also been a lack of tangible progress in areas like health, education and employment. This, together with their structural and economic constraints, makes it is easy to see the delicate situation in which these countries now find themselves.

“Least developed” or “least attractive”?

One of the striking features of LDC economies is their inability to attract foreign direct investment (FDI), despite - very often - their genuine potential. The volume of foreign assets invested in the LDCs remains globally insignificant. And this has to be seen in the context of globalisation, where economic interdependence has a tremendous influence on economic growth - and even on the economic take-off of countries trying to develop. The dearth of private capital, therefore, further accentuates the way they lag behind

Summit of young entrepreneurs at the third LDC Conference.



other countries. This in turn compromises opportunities for genuine integration into the world economy.

According to a new UNCTAD study on FDI flows to the LDCs, the latter attracted barely one half of one per cent (approximately \$5.2 billion) of global investment in 1999. Their share in the total investment received by the developing countries increased from an average of 2.2% in 1990 to a maximum of 2.4% in 1999 (see graph). This is disappointing in view of the fact that private investment in the developing countries overall has constantly increased in recent years.

In absolute terms there been a substantial increase in flows of private capital into the LDCs in the last decade, as the value of private investment in the LDCs was a mere \$600 million in the early 1990s. In 27 LDCs the growth of FDI has been 20% during this period. But this evolution should not be allowed to mask the disappointing global performance levels achieved by the LDCs in this area - though the situation varies greatly from one country to another.

The geographical breakdown of flows to these countries reveals that five of them alone received more than half of FDI between 1996 and 1999. With \$880 million per annum, Angola is in first place, ahead of Kampuchea, Myanmar, Mozambique and Uganda. Thirteen LDCs have captured more than \$100 million. So the last sixteen unfortunately have to content themselves with less than \$10 million.

Benefits of FDI

The harshness of the battle between the developing countries to attract FDI is nowadays unquestionable, because of the numerous benefits that it can bring. For this reason development-aid bodies are increasingly trying to promote FDI in the LDCs.

While it is not a panacea, foreign direct investment does offer the advantage of providing considerable financial flows to the recipient countries and of creating wealth in them. In view of the increased scarcity of public aid and the problem of financing development, raising the level of private foreign investment could make a considerable contribution. But the current contribution of FDI to the formation of capital, taking the LDCs as a whole, is below the 10% bar.

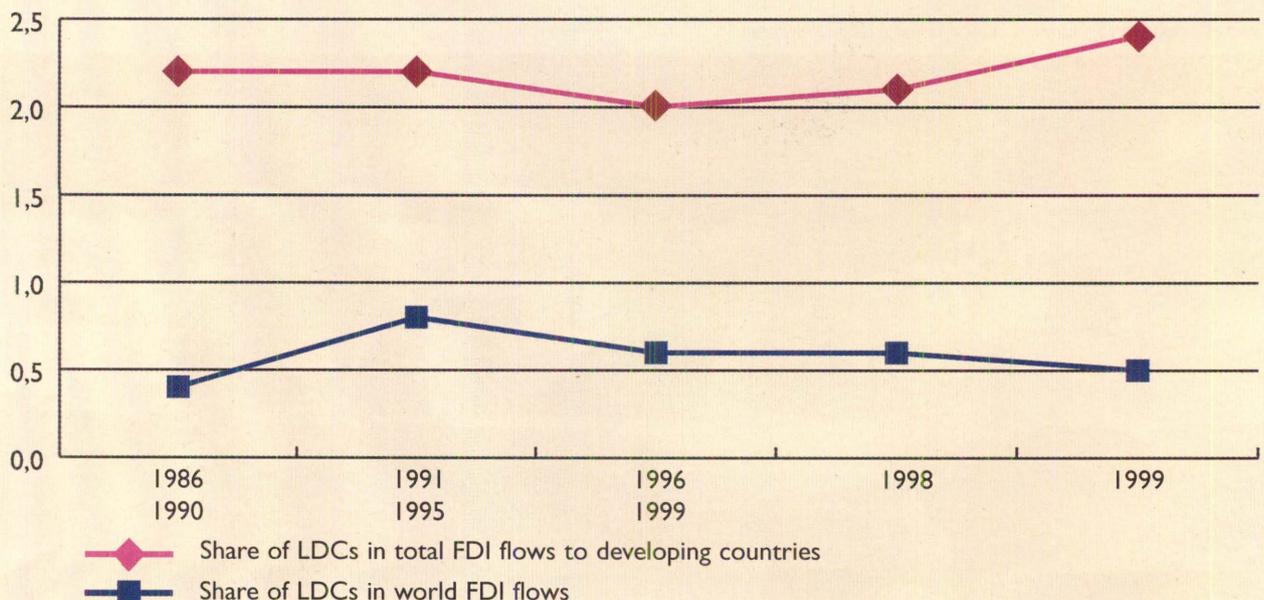
FDI can also offer poor countries interesting opportunities in terms of technology and the transfer of know-how, enabling them to convert their comparative advantages into competitive advantages.

The lack of industrialisation in the LDCs, and their difficulties in profiting from the recent technological boom in the tertiary sector, further legitimises the role of FDI as a catalyst. FDI brings employment. It also provides motivation through the effects of formal and informal training which arise from subcontracting and domestic investment.

On a macroeconomic scale, foreign investment promotes an increase in production and income in LDCs and contributes to the essential diversification

Source: UNCTAD

Figure 1. Share of FDI flows to LDCs in total FDI flows to developing countries and in the world, 1986-1999 (Percentage)



of their economies. However, an analysis of the advantages attributed to FDI requires a degree of circumspection. FDI is useless, if not harmful, in poor countries if it does not trigger genuine development dynamism. Consequently its importance can be measured only in terms of genuine spin-offs and of recipients' capacity to manage investment in a balanced way. This did happen in several Asian countries (tiger economies) during the 1980s and is happening in certain countries in Latin America.

The challenge for the LDCs and their various donors is to reduce the many obstacles that render the business environment so unattractive and to do so within a consistent global context.

What's preventing investment?

According to neoclassical theory, flows of private capital should move towards countries where the stock of capital is relatively low and where their marginal performance is highest. On this basis the LDCs should have been the focus of attention for foreign investors. But there you have it! Economic reality does not always obey theory and investment in the LDCs has remained low. Although there is real potential in certain LDCs to attract FDI, the risks and obstacles to increasing flows of private capital are equally great. There are also differences between countries to take into account.

Decisions to invest follow from analyses of factors like risk and opportunity, profitability and security. Without either stability or predictability, the political and institutional, as well as the legal and regulatory, frameworks within which investment evolves may prove to be a disincentive. This is still the case in several LDCs. The economic environment is also characterised by constraints such as the limited size of markets and their low growth rate, inadequate infrastructures or the lack of assistance to the private sector.

The high level of administrative costs and poor governance are also dissuasive factors. Add to these the absence of efficient financial intermediation, resulting from the weakness of domestic financial systems. Then add a whole series of other negative external parameters, such as problems of access to world markets, basic-product price instability, debt, the dysfunctional nature of international capital markets and so on. You then begin to understand the nervousness shown by

FDI can offer poor countries interesting opportunities in terms of technology and the transfer of know-how, enabling them to convert their comparative advantages into competitive advantages

foreign investors. They regard the LDCs as very risky - particularly certain African ones, dogged by a poor image. Some factors, crucial to FDI, are beyond the control of governments. But there are others that they could influence.

What can be done?

There are currently a number of initiatives in progress aimed at helping LDCs to set up a more attractive business environment. These initiatives aim to support structural reforms and to accelerate the process of liberalisation. It is to be hoped that this will be properly managed. Certain LDCs have made tangible progress but they have not sparked off the anticipated, decisive flood of investment. This confirms the need for a global approach.

UNCTAD and the International Chamber of Commerce are providing technical support to improve the field of action for FDI and to highlight existing potential (through manuals, information brochures, an investment code and so on). Surveys are being carried out among trans-national companies to better identify the constraints. A number of actions were announced at the Brussels conference. Thus a technical assistance programme - mobilising UNCTAD, UNIDO and two World Bank institutions - should soon be starting in pilot countries. Its aims are to increase, through joint action, the level of FDI in the LDCs and to help them maximise its benefits.

Twenty-nine bilateral investment agreements have been signed between the LDCs and the developed or developing countries. Some countries, such as Sweden, have decided to support a new UNCTAD programme to increase countries' ability to attract foreign investment. The EU also envisages the launch of an initiative to promote investment in the LDCs, as part of a wider programme promoting the integration of LDCs into world trade. This wider programme includes, within the new Cotonou Agreement, a "Pro-Invest" programme for the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group, covering 40 LDCs. Many hope that such actions will make a positive contribution and will enable the LDCs to become, to use President Jacques Chirac's term, the "next emerging countries".

Parliamentary support for the Least Developed Countries

“Parliamentarians have a necessary role, because political will is required to find a solution to the most serious problems”

Elected representatives from around the world met during a working session of the high-level Parliamentary Round Table. This meeting was part of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Hosting this conference was a first for the European Union, and attendance at it was a first also for most of the parliamentarians. The organisers' intention was to mobilize the representatives of the people into contributing to the dialogue on the problems encountered by the world's poorest countries.

By Aya Kasasa

Recognising the problems

Overall, everyone agreed that urgent action should be taken to improve the situation of the LDCs. All those who spoke lamented the shortfalls, false promises and lack of commitment. So what was to be done? In the opinion of some who took part, nothing had so far been done to relieve extreme poverty in these countries. Was this a reflection on the people of the countries themselves? MarieThérèse Oyie was adamant: “That's precisely what I would refute. It must be stated and restated that many people in our countries are not just standing there, helpless, waiting for the situation to improve by itself! They react and set up small schools and businesses, but none of it forms part of the macro-economy... it all remains confined to a micro-economic level, and within that micro-economy, women are part of the micro-micro-economy. Quite simply, they're completely invisible.”

Providing the tools

Good intentions aside, what action should be taken to improve the situation? First, according to the representative from Cameroon, is to enable political discourse to filter down to grassroots' level. “And that is precisely where we parliamentarians have a role to play. We appear to have



The three flags (UN, EU and Belgium) in front of the European Parliament buildings

According to the organisers, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the European Parliament and UNCTAD, this initiative was intended to mobilise parliamentarians from the world over and to encourage them to contribute to the dialogue on issues addressed during the Conference. The purpose was also to involve them in implementing action in the fields covered during LDC III, and in following up the results.

The approach was intentionally selective: to address questions of very particular interest for the LDCs – basic products and particularly agricultural products, skill enhancement and new technologies, development finance, debt alleviation and capital movements.

This meeting was open not only to the world's parliamentary representatives: representatives of civil society had also been invited. But members of associations and NGOs had not rushed to take their places. This was a pity, because it was an opportunity for active members of society to say something constructive to those who represent them. In the opinion of the elected representative from Cameroon, MarieThérèse Oyie Ndzie, there had undoubtedly been a problem of coordination: “The message obviously did not get passed around. Before I got here, I myself didn't even know that there was an NGO Forum!”

given the impression up to now that we are not terribly effective – and that's probably true. However, there are reasons for this state of affairs. Don't forget that, before democratisation, parliamentarians were not involved in discussions with the international community. They were merely a resonance chamber for the parties in power."

How can these new-wave parliamentarians play their full part in supporting development in their countries?

The answer is quite clear: skills. "We have to be given the means whereby we can understand. We need tools to understand just what is at stake. This is the first time that we have been involved to this extent in the search for a solution. We will never slacken, and, as my colleague from Thailand commented, we have to set up active networks with civil society, work in concert and not be content with trying to influence the executive arm of our government."

Photo: European Parliament



JOAQUIM MIRANDA
Chairman of the European Parliament's
Committee on Development and Cooperation

The position of the European Parliament on the LDCs is contained in the Resolution of 5 April 2001. Adopted in plenary session, this resolution covers all the essential points as far as the Commission and the Parliament are concerned: democracy and human rights, the role of women, the rural economy, free access to EU markets, democratisation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), debt cancellation and investment, technology, education and health, and conflict prevention. In the words of the Chair of the Committee on Development and Cooperation of the European Parliament, Joaquim Miranda, it is a reference document.

Can this round table be regarded as a launch pad for parliamentary action regarding the LDCs?

That's one way of looking at it, but parliamentarians have always been interested in the major issues concerning the developing countries: debt, the amount allocated by donors to official development assistance, access to markets, conflicts, the price of raw materials, etc. These topics have been discussed for several years now, but what role do parliamentarians have in the search for solutions? I have always thought that we have a decisive role to play.

Everyone seems to agree on the principles which will help the LDCs in their fight for relief from poverty. Are the parliamentarians expecting to propose anything concrete at LDC III?

That is indeed our aim: to obtain responses on the principal issues and interests relating to the LDCs. We also have to set up contacts between the national delegations, which must be followed up. I should say that our primary concrete objective is to emphasise follow-up after the conference. We will have to make it possible for parliamentarians to be involved in this. Parliamentarians have a necessary role, because political will is required to find a solution to the most serious problems. It is the political process that is decisive, and it is up to parliaments to act as catalysts, and ensure that the solutions arrived at are applied.

What role will the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly have in this process?

As you know, the majority, but not all the LDCs are members of the ACP group. It is therefore quite natural that the Joint Parliamentary Assembly should monitor things very closely. Its role will be to promote reflection, with joint discussions at a global and regional level. Discussions on the most concrete issues will lead to tangible results.

Can elected representatives provide added value?

Absolutely. Some of us, particularly those who actually come from the LDCs, have emphasized the importance of enhancing skills: giving parliamentarians the opportunity to train, and providing them with access to essential information, to technology. Nor must we neglect cross-disciplinary questions such as gender, the environment, etc. Finally, the precondition for obtaining results is to involve civil society more closely with the search for solutions and to help it monitor application of the follow-up process. We must all be sailing in the same vessel.

Hope turns to disappointment at the NGO Forum

The involvement of organised civil society was a recurrent theme at the Third UN Conference on Least Developed Countries. Yet the NGO Forum ended in disappointment for those who took part.

Valérie Michaux/InfoSud

Just four minutes' walk from the European Parliament in Brussels - venue for the Third UN Conference on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) - a thousand or so NGOs were holding their own Forum at the prestigious Solvay Library. More than 200 of these came from the LDCs. According to the Forum's organisers, this was the biggest ever gathering of NGOs and citizens organisations representing the LDCs. Their objective was to participate fully in the work of the official Conference and influence the new 10-year programme of action.

The NGOs were determined to make their demands heard and get their message across in the media. They interrupted their talks to stage a mass assembly on the Esplanade du Cinquantaire. The location could hardly have been more symbolic. This triumphal arch was built in 1905 and, according to the Belgian NGOs, represents "the glory of Belgian colonialism in Africa". Various actors from the Southern hemisphere had the chance to speak and echo the rallying cry of the Porto Alegre Social Forum: "Another world is possible".

An opportunity not to be missed

The involvement of civil society in this Conference was billed as one of the big new ideas introduced by UNCTAD (The UN Conference on Trade and Development). Indeed, at

the opening session of the NGO Forum, Rubens Ricupero, Secretary-General of UNCTAD, proclaimed that "the rapid expansion of organised civil society is the best development we have seen in recent years." He went so far as to state that "the forces of progress can only come from civil society." In the view of Jean-Pierre Ouedraogo, actively involved in this Forum as a member of the Burkina Faso League of Consumers, "this is a real challenge for the NGOs. The first two action programmes were disappointing, to say the least. So the UN thought that involving civil society might throw up something fresh and new. When they told us that one of the new features at this Conference would be the participation of civil society, we jumped at the opportunity."

And so, basking in their new aura of legitimacy, the NGOs began the week by presenting their policy statement, featuring three of the NGOs' primary concerns - complete cancellation of debt, access to an open market and honouring of international agreements on public development aid. Each day, the Forum worked on the subjects scheduled for the following day in the official programme, hoping to be able to report back on their deliberations at the official sessions, as affirmed by Conference spokesman, Habib Ouane. Given this background, it was not surprising that the 250 NGOs from the LDCs expected great things. Indeed, some were already describing it as 'no ordinary Conference' because, for the first time, it was bringing together Heads of State, international organisations and members of civil society, all united under a common umbrella.

Sidelining the NGOs?

But, as the week wore on, the enthusiasm of the first few days began to wane. Some blamed organisational problems. Others cited the absence of consensus among the NGOs. But the loudest complaint heard at the Forum concerned the lack

of any real exchange between the official Conference and the NGOs. "Right from the start, relations between the main Conference and the NGO Forum bore no resemblance to the promises we'd been given by the UN." So reads the open letter sent from the NGOs to UNCTAD Secretary-General, Rubens

Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, addresses the NGO Forum



Ricupero. "There was no liaison between the two events," complains another Forum participant, Georges Tshionza Mata from SERACOB (an organisation supporting communities at grass-roots level in DRC). "The initial idea of organising an NGO Forum was a good one. But the international community is afraid to listen to the voice of civil society. The lesson of this Forum is that it was financed and organised by the international Community with the sole aim of keeping the NGOs quiet, so that they wouldn't cause ructions and create the sort of havoc we saw recently in Seattle. They wanted to disperse us to venues relatively distant from one another to demobilise us, while all the time there were several empty rooms at the European Parliament where the NGOs could have held their meetings," he adds. "It was just another way of sidelining us," echoed Camille Chalmer, member of a Haitian association of lawyers.

The NGOs reserved their strongest criticism of the Conference's organisers for not having allowed them to attend the clusters, official meetings at which the political decision-makers determined the broad outlines of their 10-year programme of action. With heavy irony, Jean-Pierre Ouedraogo explains: "To get into these meetings, you needed a red badge. The NGOs only had a brown badge, which barely allowed them access to the cafeteria, so the most they could do was to corner a few delegates there and attempt a bit of lobbying." Answering this criticism, Rubens Ricupero emphasised that his organisation did not have the power to influence the decision by governments not to allow NGOs access to these meetings. Senegalese economist Demaba Moussa Dembele, a member of CONGAD (NGO Council for Development), was not surprised to discover that the NGOs were excluded from the official platform. "All this rhetoric about openness and dialogue with civil society is simply part of the prevailing culture of hypocrisy." Others, such as Emmie Chanika of the Malawi Committee of Civil Liberties, condemn the "tendency to use the NGOs to legitimise the proceedings and then to get rid of them afterwards."

Meagre progress

It was with a sense of disenchantment that the NGO Forum drew to a close on 20 May. NGOs from both North and South had to face the fact that their main preoccupations did not feature in the programme of action approved by the governments. They deplored the lack of progress regarding public development aid and access for LDC products to the markets of the developed world. The greatest disappointment of all, however, concerned the fact that there

"The NGOs have come a long way. We're not always allowed to have our say at an intergovernmental Forum, but it's no longer a case of NGOs being thrown out of international meetings. Although we still have only a limited role, we must make sure that we play it fully. This is the only way to expand it."

was no new initiative to alleviate the problem of debt. Forum participants believe that cancellation of debt is an essential prerequisite if the vicious circle of poverty in the LDCs is to be broken. Their only consolation was the OECD decision related to untying aid: which frees the LDCs from any obligation to use the aid to purchase goods from the donor country. More generally, the body of NGOs took issue with the fact that the action programme approved at this Conference failed to challenge the model of development to which the international financial institutions ascribe, even though, according to the NGOs, this model tends to marginalise the poorest countries.

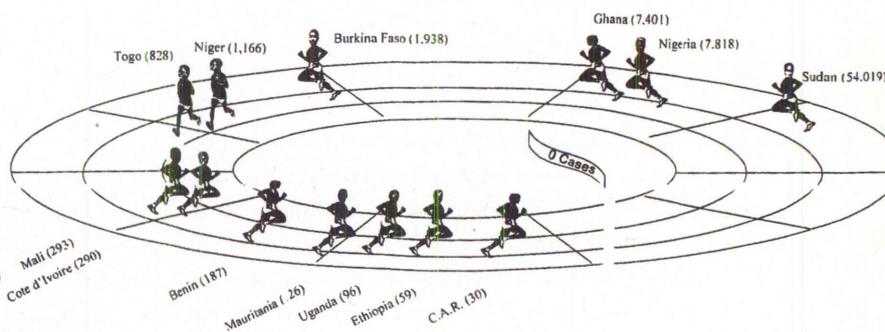
Camille Chalmer believed that the NGO Forum impact on the official Conference was unavoidably marginal.

"The NGOs – and particularly those from the LDCs – came to this Summit under all sorts of illusions," explains Gérard Karlshausen, Political Secretary of the National Development Cooperation Centre (Brussels) and a member of the NGO Forum's steering committee. "There were many NGOs here from very poor countries, and they imagined they'd carry far more weight in the negotiations than was actually the case. Secondly, and this is true of the NGOs from the North, too, we had listened very carefully to the words of the United Nations, which had promised us a different kind of Conference. We had all expected a scoop – North and South alike – but we didn't get it!"

Positive outcome

Despite such widespread disillusion, there was a positive aspect to this Conference. It gave the people of the LDCs the chance to meet each other, even join forces. The NGOs stressed the importance of building up a vast network, to enable civil society from both North and South to come together and put forward alternative solutions. As Camille Chalmer reiterated, "this Forum has helped to ask the right questions and clarify certain fundamental issues on which the NGOs of various LDCs are desperately short of the information needed to understand what is at stake". Ultimately, the fact that this NGO Forum was held at all remains the principal achievement of this third Conference. As Jean-Pierre Ouedraogo points out, "the NGOs have come a long way. We're not always allowed to have our say at an intergovernmental Forum, but it's no longer a case of NGOs being thrown out of international meetings. Although we still have only a limited role, we must make sure that we play it fully. This is the only way to expand it."

When the worm turns



Ten years ago Uganda was one of the most endemic countries for Guinea worm disease or *Dracunculiasis*. Today it has almost totally been eradicated. How has this been achieved?

Ruth Evans reports on a remarkable success story.

For someone who could soon be out of a job, Dr John Rwakimari is a remarkably happy man. On the wall of his small office in the Ministry of Health in Kampala is a large poster showing athletes running round a track under the title "Guinea Worm Race 2000". It shows Uganda's runner lying in third place, behind Ethiopia and the Central African Republic, with fewer than 100 cases. Now, however, Uganda is reporting a remarkable public health breakthrough in the battle against Guinea worm, and may even be winning the race for eradication within Africa.

Dr Rwakimari is in charge of Uganda's Guinea Worm Eradication Programme. When his work started in 1992, Uganda was the second most endemic country in the world (after Nigeria), with 130,000 cases of Guinea worm. From November 2000 to April 2001, for the first time ever, there were no new reported cases at all. Although a handful of cases was reported in two isolated villages in May – traditionally the peak month – Dr Rwakimari is optimistic that the transmission cycle has finally been broken and that Guinea worm will be eradicated within a matter of months.

Guinea worm disease, or *Dracunculiasis* to give it the proper medical name, has affected human beings for centuries, and evidence of it has even been found in 3,000 year-old Egyptian mummies. It is also known as the "fiery serpent" for the excruciating, burning and disabling pain that it causes. It's a water-borne disease, and a person can only become infected by drinking water containing Cyclops or water fleas. The larvae then incubate within the body for a year or more, and eventually develop into a long

thin worm that migrates towards the lower limbs where it emerges slowly and very painfully. Sometimes there may be multiple worms. The pain can have a devastating effect on people's lives, leading to disability and inability to earn a living, and disrupting children's schooling. There is no cure for the disease... it's simply a matter of waiting for the worm or worms to emerge in their own sweet time and then wrapping them around a stick.

Water is the key

The key to eradication efforts worldwide has been the fact that you can ONLY get the disease from drinking water. The cycle of transmission can be broken by ensuring water sources are clean and remain uncontaminated. In poor, inaccessible areas with few options for obtaining water, this can be a difficult task, but it can be done, as Uganda's experience demonstrates.

Since 1992, with funding from UNICEF and other agencies, virtually every Guinea worm infected village in Uganda, and particularly in the most infected areas of the north east, has been provided with a bore-hole and clean water. Where fixed and monitored bore-holes are not possible, due to nomadic lifestyles or insecurity, pond water is filtered or treated with non-toxic chemicals to kill off the cyclops.

Intervention measures and health education are then repeatedly given through volunteers to ensure the water remains uncontaminated.

There are several reasons for Uganda's success, but Dr Rwakimari believes above all it's the involvement of the people themselves that has made a difference. The decentralised system of government that Uganda has adopted in recent years has facilitated mobilisation at local levels through community leaders, and also provided health professionals with an easy entry point for getting their health education messages across. Many communities have appointed volunteers or pond caretakers (often elderly people) whose job it is to detect and report cases and ensure that wounds are properly treated and that the infected person keeps away from water to



Dr Rwakimari on the left with the man who has been appointed pond caretaker to make sure the water doesn't get reinfected by guinea worm.

*Provisional, includes imported cases

avoid passing the disease on. In nomadic communities, such as the Karamajong, cow herders have been given pipe filters for drinking water from ponds – a simple, but very effective method of avoiding infection.

Rewarding vigilance

Since 1998, a reward system has also been in place, emulating the earlier success of the smallpox reward scheme, by paying money to the person who first reports the case as well as to the patient who follows the health guidelines. As the number of cases has decreased, the amount paid in reward has increased, so that the incentive to remain vigilant remains strong. Some other African countries, such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Niger and Togo are now embarking on similar reward schemes.

There are also lessons here for other diseases, and since 1998 Dr Rwakimari and his team have been urging the Ministry of Health to copy the example of Guinea worm village health committees to tackle other diseases such as malaria, polio, cholera and ebola. “Committees and volunteers can detect such diseases if properly trained, even if they have never gone to school,” says Dr Rwakimari. “The system is a good one that can be emulated elsewhere.”

These measures have certainly been effective, as the rapid decline in reported cases testifies.

Success story

It’s a remarkable public health story, especially given the most endemic areas of the country, in the north and north east, are also plagued by insecurity, with health workers and communities facing attacks from rebels and cattle rustlers in addition to the “fiery serpent”.

Edward Bwengye, UNICEF’s Programme Officer for the eastern Region, is full of admiration for the bravery of the Guinea Worm Eradication Programme workers in these insecure areas. “Uganda is one of the shining examples in the whole world, according to the WHO. Our programme manager has received an international award for his efforts and we are very proud of our achievements.” At the last two major global conferences on Dracunculiasis, Uganda’s programme was recognised as the most effective in Africa.

Dr Rwakimari, however, remains characteristically modest. “We have been able to penetrate these areas because the people themselves have recognized the importance of the Guinea worm eradication programme,” he says. “Water is vital to the Karamajong, and Guinea worm eradication workers were welcomed.”

But he does tell me about one incident in which he and his colleagues were ambushed by armed rebels and thought they were going to be shot dead. Suddenly, the men ran off back into the bush, leaving the doctor and his team to carry on with their work. Later they heard that the next car had been shot at and two people had died. Dr Rwakimari



Guinea worm education team tell villagers about the importance of keeping their water source free of infection.

believes the only explanation is that the rebels had recognized the Guinea worm eradication programme vehicles and spared them.

Another problem is that neighbouring Sudan remains one of the most infected countries in the world and the border is extremely porous, with people moving back and forth all the time. Uganda cannot afford to be complacent in the face of this success, so maybe Dr Rwakimari’s job will be safe for a little while yet. “We have tried to set up a strong surveillance system along the border,” he says. “We have to keep being vigilant. There is definitely no room for complacency. Our aim is to detect cases coming in from Sudan as quickly as possible before our water sources are newly contaminated.”

That said, there is much to be proud of. From being one of the most heavily infected countries, Uganda is poised to win the African race to eradicate Dracunculiasis. “I am proud that Uganda has achieved this,” says fiery serpent killer Dr Rwakimari, adding with a slight sting of the proverbial tail: “But it would have gone much earlier if there had been no insecurity in the country.”

“The fiery serpent”

Guinea worm disease – commonly known as “the fiery serpent” – is a preventable infection caused by the parasite *Dracunculus*.

Today, only 13 countries are still affected, all in Africa.

Infection is caused by drinking contaminated water. Inside the body, the Guinea worm can grow up to almost one metre in length, and, when mature, it emerges through a blister on the skin. It is a painful and debilitating disease, but preventable.

Prevention is by drinking only clean, uncontaminated water, which can be filtered. People who are infected should not enter water used for drinking.

Cocoa

the link to peace in Bougainville

Do you associate “cocoa” and “peace”? For many people eating or drinking chocolate evokes a feeling of serenity – as it must have done when the Spanish discovered cocoa over 500 years ago and named it the “food of the gods”! But in the small, rugged, volcanic island of Bougainville, a few kilometres north of the Solomon Islands in the Pacific Ocean, the link is more profound. Cocoa rehabilitation is a major incentive to building peace after a decade of conflict.

Text and photos by Georgina Fekete*

Mining and the independence struggle

Twenty-five years ago Papua New Guinea (PNG) gained full independence from Australia. The sizeable profits from the open-cut Panguna copper mine, which had been established in 1964 on the island of Bougainville, were to provide the financial backing for the “new” Papua New Guinean nation – around 45% of its export earnings. But the benefits of this huge investment were only felt by a privileged few.

The Bougainvilleans themselves had no share in the company and so received no benefits. At the same time their precious land was being devastated – a land that supported community cropping of cocoa and copra. The negative economic, environmental and social impact of the mine on local communities led in 1989 to a nine-year struggle for independence from Papua New Guinea.

Prosperity to ruin

Before 1989 Bougainville had been one of Papua New Guinea’s most developed islands. Its fertile agricultural land produced around 18,400 tonnes of cocoa per year, equivalent to an export value of €40 million or 2% of the world market. In 1998, when a peace agreement was signed following the civil crisis, its position was quite the reverse. An estimated 20,000 people were dead and practically all the 20 million cocoa trees had either been destroyed or were in a state of neglect.

The fighting stopped – which was a positive step – but what next? The island was in ruins and the future looked bleak. The issue of Bougainville’s constitutional future was still to be resolved. But perhaps even more important: how could Bougainvilleans be persuaded to put down their guns forever if there was no visible prospect of a sustainable livelihood?

Cocoa rehabilitation

The United Nations Development Programme addressed the issue, with a multitude of partners and stakeholders, by providing support for the economic revitalisation of the island. In the context of the emerging peace and reconciliation process, particular emphasis was placed on cocoa rehabilitation.

Today partners such as the European Union, the UNDP and Australia continue to reach out through the cocoa smallholders to almost all the population of Bougainville (somewhere between 150,000 and 180,000). The “Community Cocoa Cropping” project provides a strategic contribution to an already visible peace dividend in all parts of the island – providing an alternative to the gun.

The aim of the project is to contribute to the peace process by engaging people in income-generating activities to sustain their livelihoods, by increasing rural employment and by alleviating poverty through the restoration and expansion of cocoa crop activities.

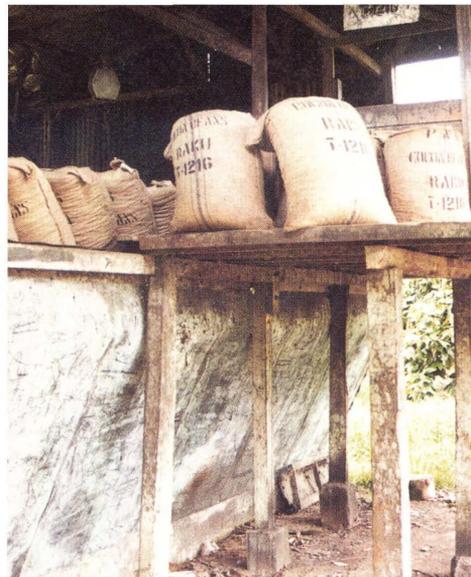
Nurseries to plots

Over the next two years 9,600,000 cocoa seedlings will be procured and managed in local village nurseries by Bougainvilleans themselves. These will be distributed in “starter packs” of 720 seedlings, once a grower’s plot of land has been inspected to ensure enough land has been cleared and holes dug. Papua New Guinea’s Cocoa and Coconut Extension Agency (CCEA) then provides advice on how to plant the seedlings. Each starter pack of seedlings is sufficient to plant one hectare of land, providing a kick-start to each farmer, who is then expected to buy further seedlings, but at a subsidised rate. So over two years 13,300 households should go back into production, replanting the same number of hectares.

The project provides for the extension and enlargement of eight central nurseries, where the plants are cultivated, and around 70 non-permanent “feeder” nurseries. These feeder nurseries are in locations that are relatively inaccessible, allowing easier transportation of seedlings (normally on foot) to remote plantations. These nurseries also work with local church and youth groups on other tasks, such as clearing bush, filling



Bags of soil



The finished product: bags of cocoa

bags, cutting palm leaves and planting seeds.

Once all the plants from the feeder nurseries have been distributed and supply has met demand, the temporary nurseries will be disbanded. The central nurseries will remain and develop to grow special hybrid seedlings for bud-grafting material.

Training for sustainable production...

In order to ensure that cocoa rehabilitation is a sustainable activity, nursery managers and extension workers need to improve their skills, so they will attend annual cocoa technology courses for three months at a time. They will be trained in plant management, nursery establishment, shade establishment, block lining, planting, pruning and bud-grafting.

Twelve trained staff will then train twenty local extension workers who will, in turn, train sixty village extension nursery workers. The snowball effect will be to train 1,450 people per year. Training will create a better understanding of the processes that produce fine quality cocoa. As the cost of alternative accommodation is too high, classrooms and dormitories will be built with EU funding to house the courses.

... and sustainable development

The hope is that all these activities will ensure the restoration of peace. The emerging Bougainvillean authorities will gain revenue from both the increased exports of cocoa and the trading taxes derived from increases in rural incomes. This will allow them to embark on self-funded development activities such as education and health, further enhancing the peace process. An increase in the level of disposable family income will also improve the welfare of each rural household.

With more nurseries in existence, the distribution of seedlings to smallholders will be quicker and more efficient. This will lead to reduced production time, as well as the delivery of greater quantities and higher quality cocoa to the market. The price should go up and at the same time more foreign buyers and investment should be attracted to the island. This is a frequently voiced ambition among the people of Bougainville, based on the history of pre-crisis trade with foreign chocolate companies, many of whom were European in origin. Estimates for the year 2000 indicate that already cocoa production was somewhere in the region of 8,000 tonnes, double that of 1997.

Underpinning peace

The Community Cocoa Cropping project focuses on specific activities, but it forms part of an integrated approach to underpinning peace on Bougainville. It covers all stages of the process from the production of seedlings in the nurseries to marketing and adding value to the final product. The growth in demand for more seedlings is creating new requirements that must be met to maximise the returns to the whole community. These include the need to improve the management of seedlings, to train new staff, to improve breeding techniques and grafting through budwood gardens, and to rehabilitate processing facilities, such as kilns and dryers, destroyed during the crisis.

Three years on from civil strife and neglect, the future for Bougainville looks brighter. The cessation of hostilities has held, but reduction and disposal of weapons remains one of two key issues. The other is autonomous government for the island. The government of PNG agreed last year that a referendum on independence could be held ten years after autonomy.

Meanwhile the cocoa project provides a very clear example of the importance of sustainable development projects in contributing to the peace process. It has shown effectively that building peace and improving economic life reinforce one another. There has been real progress in rebuilding infrastructure and restoring services, and this has been based on clear development objectives at the community level. With the support of the donors, the EU and the UNDP, cocoa rehabilitation is giving the people of Bougainville the chance to realise their aspirations for peace.

Next time you bite into a chocolate bar don't forget how the ingredients may have helped to foster peace in the island of Bougainville!

** UNDP Liaison Office, Brussels*

The contents of this article do not necessarily reflect the views of the UNDP

In memory of Richard Applebee, First Counsellor (Economic), EU Delegation in Papua New Guinea, who died in January and who was instrumental in realising the joint project between the European Commission and UNDP.



At work in the nursery

Between the Sahel and the Ténéré

Wedged between the Sahel and the Ténéré, Niger wages daily war against the desert, poverty and food insecurity. After 40 years of independence against a background of chaos alternating between attempts at democracy and military dictatorships, the country is slowly climbing out of the rut. Following three years under military leadership and two *coups d'état*, the 1999 election has opened the way for civil government. The new president, Mamadou Tanja, has inherited a bankrupt country. But as **François Lefebvre** writes, today the winds of democracy are blowing and society and political life are slowly reasserting themselves.

On 9 April 1999, a shot tore through the torpor bearing down on Niamey airport. It was one more breakdown for a country that had not yet dried its tears from last time. President Ibrahim Maïnassara Baré was gunned down and relinquished power as he had seized it three years earlier – violently. Colonel Baré (former Nigerien ambassador to France) had himself ousted President Ousmane by force. Since his election in 1996, Maïnassara Baré went through the motions to appear every bit the dedicated democrat. Power would be placed in the hands of civilians, he promised, and free elections organised. It never materialised.

After Ibrahim Maïnassara Baré was assassinated by members of his presidential guard, the national assembly was dissolved and all political activity adjourned as yet another military officer took the reins of power. Leading a group of officers, Daouda Wallam Wanké set up a National Reconciliation

Council, proclaimed himself president and announced democratic elections. Nobody believed him.

The international community, led by France, condemned the *coup d'état*. There was to be no more credit, international aid representing almost 70% of the budget was suspended and embassies closed. One of the poorest countries in the world, it had already lost two of its principal assets over the last ten years: income derived from uranium plummeted due to the collapse of world prices and tourism had barely recovered from four years of Touareg rebellions (1990 to 1994).

In September 1999, the general and presidential election campaigns took off and the country was swept up in a wave of euphoria. An independent electoral commission was given the task of monitoring the elections while two safeguards were imposed to ward against the ghosts of the past: no military figure could accede to the highest position and no member of the civil government could intervene in the elections. Observers, followed by the international community, recognised the transparent and democratic nature of the elections.

On 7 December 1999, Mamadou Tanja, a retired army colonel and leader of the former single ruling party MNSD (National Movement for the Development of Society) was elected president of Niger with almost 60% of the vote. No demonstrations in the streets, no revolts at the barracks. Daouda Wallam Wanké stepped aside. At the age of 61, Mamadou Tanja became the leader of a country teetering on the edge.

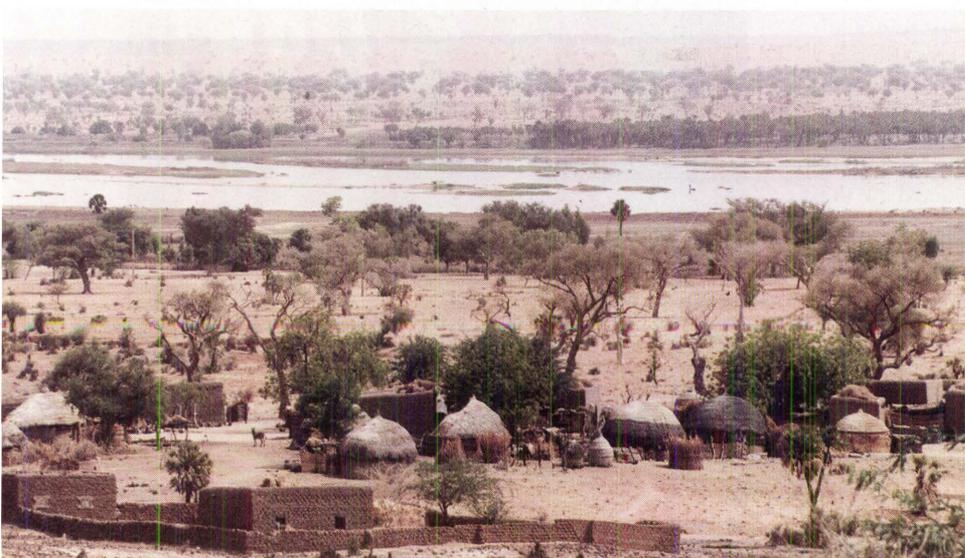
A corner has been turned. The instigators of the April 1999 putsch were granted amnesty, as were the supposed murderers of President Baré, and realpolitik is once more the order of the day. With the aid of the European Union and France, impoverished civil servants have received their wages, school and health infrastructures are being rebuilt, development projects and programmes have been relaunched. Growth is bordering on 1.7% and the country's indices are currently positive.

However, the hope that now courses through the country's veins must not conceal the risks and problems that lie beneath. The civil servants may well have been paid, but the authorities must still face the demands of students and dissension with the opposition is on the increase. Although the Touareg rebellion now seems to have been

▲ *Tourags, dressed for the New Year celebrations (above)*

◀ *Agadez, in the north of the country*

François Lefebvre



quashed for good, the road to economic recovery is painstakingly long and famine lurks at the door, Niger is second from the bottom in the ranks of the poorest countries and two thirds of the population live below the poverty line.

A hostile environment

Niger underwent the most artificial political construction process - the legacy of the colonial period. The country's territory is the result of the carving up of the stretch of Africa that formed part of France between the Mediterranean, the Sudan, French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa. Three quarters is desert. The Ténéré dunes form a formidable barrier of sand that consumes the oases of Aïr and Kaouar.

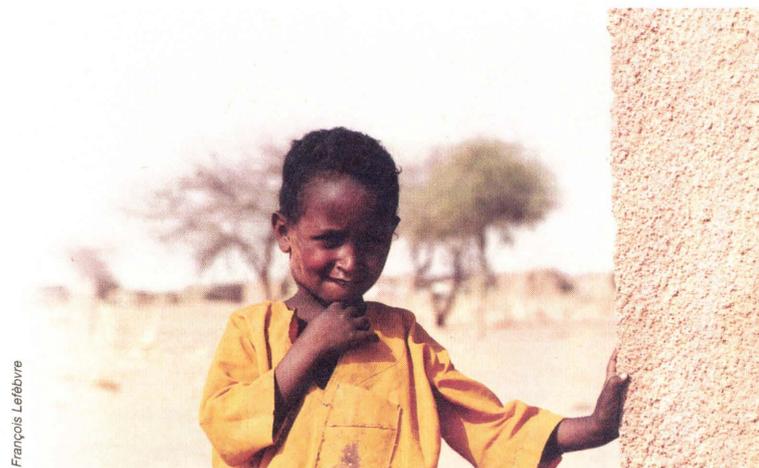
South of the 16th parallel, where annual rainfall amounts to no more than 400 mm, the Sahel begins. This wide belt, with a few shrivelled trees for relief, marks the limit of agriculture without irrigation. In the extreme south west of the country, the Niger River valley stands in contrast with the expanses of parched land. The colonial powers christened this densely populated strip of green "the useful Niger".

The Nigeriens are slowly recovering from droughts that have ravaged the Sahel in recent decades. In a time of emotion distinguished by a few humanitarian activities, the droughts of 1973 and of 1984 to 1985 made it onto our television screens. Today, the desert continues its endless advance and the risks of climate-related misfortune remain high where rainfall is chronically lacking. The dangers are exacerbated by the farmers who, urged on by several favourable years and intense demographic pressure, have relentlessly pushed the limits of cultivatable land northwards at the expense of pastures.

This hostile environment, extremely vulnerable to the whims of the weather, is scarce in natural resources. Hopes built on the exploitation of the Arlit uranium mines were dashed when uranium prices went through the floor. As Africa's second largest producer of uranium, the country benefited from the oil shortages and nuclear programmes between 1970 and 1981. Since then income from mining has taken a nosedive and the government has been trying, without much success, to make up the shortfall by increasing efforts in oil and gold exploration.



François Lefebvre



François Lefebvre

A country of collisions and conflict

The environment exerts pressure differently in the various regions and on the various populations who live there. Niger can be basically divided into three main sections, each occupied by a dominant ethnic group. In the west is the Djerma-Songhai, the Hausa prevail in the centre and to the east and in the north the Touaregs hold sway. The fragile national unity is subject to the centrifugal forces and the conflicting interests of the settled agriculturists and the nomadic pastoralists. In addition, internal and external geopolitics become confused, as the ethnic groups that lead the internal politics of the country extend beyond national borders.

The Djerma, settled in the Niger River valley, were the first to rub shoulders with the colonists and to go to their schools. They gradually asserted their position within the government and the military, supplying an army of senior officers. Although in the minority, the Djerma have enlarged their sphere of political influence to a considerable degree since independence.

They dominate the institutional life of the country along with the Hausa, who hold the economic power. The latter represent almost half of Niger's population and extend into the birthplace of the Hausa language in Nigeria. Their territory was split by the Franco-British Treaty of 1904 - 1906 that established the border. This permeable line has enabled vast crossborder business networks, further strengthening the power of the Hausa who, although the subject of political jealousy, are unlikely to want to break away from the rest of the country.

The Touaregs account for about 10% of the population, and are made up of former black slaves and nomads. Victims of their political and economic marginalisation, of the decline of pastoralism and of the fragmentation of their traditional territory, the Touaregs demanded autonomy and took up arms. Ten years of fighting, truces, peace agreements and violence finally ended on 25 September 2000, when hostilities ended with the ceremony of the flame of peace.

Crossing the river Niger

Water beneath the sand

With two-thirds of its surface area classed as desert, Niger is on a perpetual quest for water. Rainfall is low, unpredictable and unevenly distributed. Underground water sources exist but are difficult to access. Permanent surface water sources now boil down to the Niger River.

In the south, the Sahelian belt displays a deceptive regularity. This arid landscape, bristling with acacia trees and shrouded in a dry mist, slips away to reveal, out of nowhere, a herd accompanied by men. It is hard to believe they live here, in the middle of nothing.

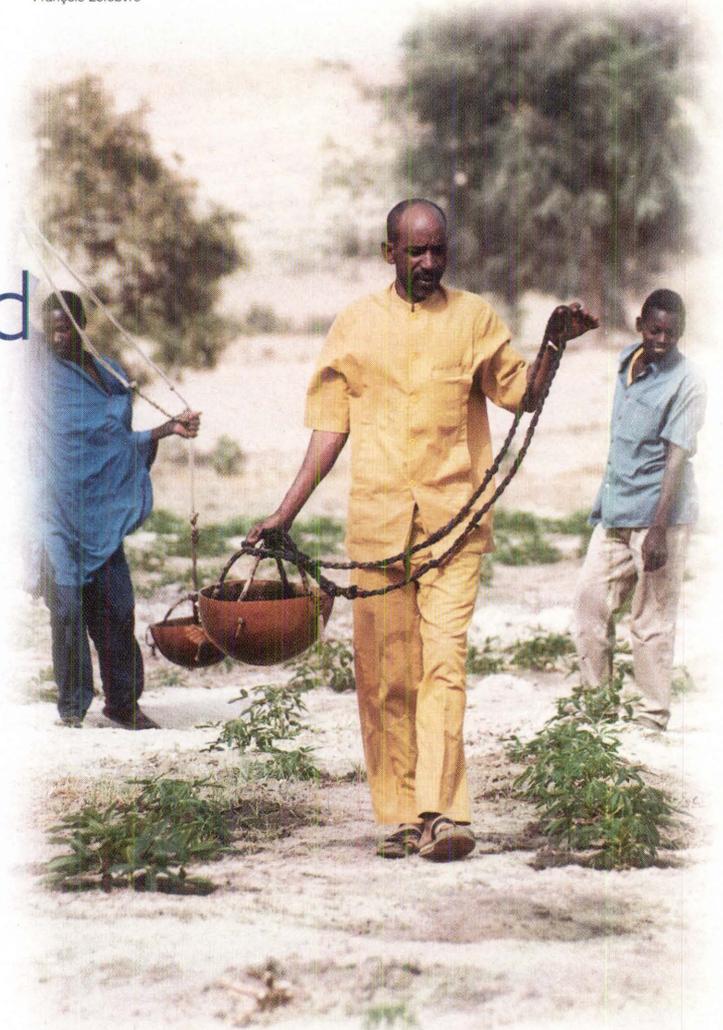
Around Madaoua, the Tarka valley contrasts sharply with the sandy, dry horizon. Lyre-horned zebras, raised by the Peul, Niger's second-largest nomadic ethnic group, roam the fields of millet, sorghum and onions. An exceptional area, the lower valley of the Tarka is a basin fossilised with fertile soils and subsoil gorged with water.

Not far underground, natural reserves are replenished annually by streams of rainwater. The lower Tarka valley, the sloping basins, the plains and the plateaux surrounding the Madaoua and Bouza districts cover almost 3,000 square kilometres and are home to 160,000 people.

Here, in this immense area marked by permanent confrontation between vegetation and sand, an ambitious rural development project has been set up with the aim of increasing food security and compensating for the vagaries of the climate. The PBVT (Lower Tarka Valley Project) began operating in 1988 thanks to the support of the European Development Fund, which to date has allocated almost €19 million.

Water beneath the sand

In the Tarka valley, the presence of water at shallow depth has helped propagate irrigation and contributed to crop development. Wells ten metres deep and some 15 centimetres in diameter sit alongside the cultivated plots. Water is drawn using a small, motorised pump that runs on petrol. Simple, flexible and inexpensive, the



Transporting water in gourds to irrigate the onion crops

system is suitable for individual developments and makes it possible to enlarge the area under cultivation considerably while contributing to agricultural diversification.

"Sometimes the water is so close to the surface that all that's needed is to sink shallow wells to two metres. Watering can be done by hand, using a gourd," explains Imolène, a technical adviser to the PBVT. "But sometimes, when the geology affords less favourable water opportunities and wells have to be deeper, irrigating small collective areas is preferred."

However, there are problems with this collective approach, he explains, such as those linked to shared use, maintenance of equipment and sticking to a strict irrigation schedule that is difficult to implement.

Pastoralists and farmers – conflicting interests

Intensification and diversification of production is also up against the diverging, indeed conflicting, interests of the pastoralists and the farmers. The struggle to acquire land and water sources has been going on through the ages and has worsened under the pressure of desertification.

Extensive stock raising, which is destructive to the environment, is impeded by the increase in the areas under cultivation. Stockbreeders are faced with deterio-

rating vegetation and diminishing sources of fodder in the valley. The development of irrigation during the dry season and the growing number of peasants diversifying their sources of income by becoming stockbreeders means there is much less in the way of crop waste. As a result, the nomadic stockbreeders are forced to resort to the trees to ensure the survival of their livestock.

"There are two opposing elements. One group is, and always has been, stockbreeders while the other is, and always has been, farmers," stresses Imolène. "We try to encourage fattening, milk production and fodder crops to strike a certain balance between farmers and pastoralists."

It is difficult, he explains, but it is important because the lower Tarka valley could become the granary of Niger. This is why, in addition to irrigation, the project is trying to make credit systems widely available, improving supplies of agricultural aids, honing farming methods and moderating the quantities of onions produced in the area.

The fertile soils of the Tarka valley are an abundant source of onions with 75% of the country's total onion production coming from this region. The Galmi Purple variety is the pride of Niger, the leading producer and exporter of onions in West Africa. However, onions are subject to speculation and their price fluctuates greatly with the season. The exorbitant price of seeds and fertilisers, the difficulty in obtaining credit and the poor organisation of the cooperatives play right into the hands of speculators.

Unable to intervene in marketing, the PBVT is trying to encourage onion producers to turn to other crops to reduce the amount of onions produced and thus increase their commercial value.

From support to self-management

Finance and external aid are not enough to ensure the success of a project. Self-management, the adoption of regulations that are sometimes remote from the social customs and the implementation of new procedures require an organisation and system of learning that are up to the job.

One of the main problems in setting up efficient organisations is the high level of illiteracy. To help structure communities and increase their autonomy, PBVT organises courses in reading, writing and in management, both upstream and downstream of production. It also enables the establishment of credit systems managed by the villages.

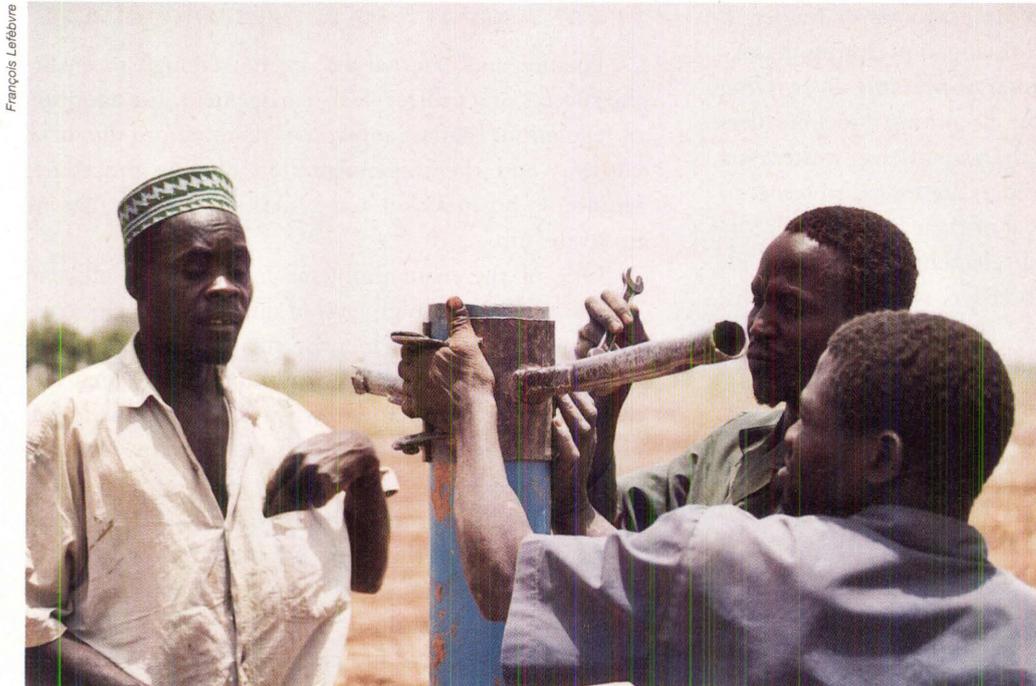
With credit, women can buy stockbreeding animals, fatten them, re-sell them and use the proceeds from the sale to repay the loan. If the animal happens to die, the women will fall back on small-scale crop farming, product processing or arts and crafts. They are never late in paying back the loan because their honour is at stake. The men, however, cannot always boast such a propensity to honour their contract.

"We have come together to form this credit group and when we have given loans to the men they have never repaid them," says Manim, a member of the village credit group's management committee in Sabon Guida. "Now we only give credit to women."

The importance of women in the socio-economic development of communities is beginning to receive recognition, although always in the face of disapproval or passive resistance by the male community.

Selling food to workers in the fields





François Lefebvre

Sinking a shallow well by hand

In supporting women's groups, PBVT is trying to increase their representation in decision-making bodies of rural banks, credit systems and networks for conveying drinking water.

"There is still a long way to go," whispers Zhai, a young woman living in Sabon Guida, in discreet reply to the grumbling of the village elders.

A perpetual struggle against desertification

The landscape of the Sambagou hills is dominated by a water vat measuring 650 cubic metres. Placed downstream of a rainwater catchment basin, this reservoir decants the water and supplies a spring and network of pipes. It provides the villagers with an alternative to the four kilometres they would otherwise have to travel daily to procure drinking water. This unique project still suffers from watertightness problems. However, it has won the support of villagers whose life, as in the rest of Niger, is dominated by the inevitable search for drinking water.

"Farming is something," says Issaka, from Sambagou. "But it needs men and women to be able to produce. And, just like the animals, the men, women and children need water to survive."

Improvements to living conditions in the Tarka valley are also influenced by the lack of infrastructure and equipment such as access roads, schools, community clinics and pipes for drinking water. Depending on the available means and the needs of the villagers, PBVT supports works such as the installation of solar panels to

supply energy to the water pumps, road maintenance and repair, building windpumps or the construction of schools.

Recent climate changes have brought with them wind and water erosion, reducing the potential for production. Demographic pressure further accelerates the deterioration of the environment and the suffering of the rural communities. Land development and management takes place at the risk of seeing hectares and entire vil-

lages disappear under a layer of sand.

There is a need for awareness and action. Little by little, the valley slopes are growing greener. The barriers of millet hold back the flow of solid elements, the plantations help to retain the soils and the small crescent-shaped walls promote the penetration of the water into the ground. Gully control hardens the banks of the kouri, protecting the vegetable gardens located along these part-time rivers that are fed by the rainy season. These are daily tasks in the perpetual struggle against desertification.

Food security – a leitmotif

It is time for the lower Tarka valley project to be replaced by the programme for support for food security by small-scale irrigation (ASAPI). This programme is picking up the threads of the PBVT, the south Zinder small-scale irrigation scheme and the project for promotion of women's organisations and activities in Zinder. As well as these three projects, the programme also covers the Maggia valley.

The people living in the area under the programme have something in common besides their poverty: they have to bear the more or less significant deficits of their rain-dependent food production. The problem of food security weighs daily on their shoulders. About 2,500 farmers involved in small-scale irrigation and agriculture and 5,000 women will benefit directly from the ASAPI programme. In general, the whole of the rural population of Madaoua and Zinder should benefit from its aim, which rings through Niger like a leitmotif: food security.

François Lefebvre

Training for a trade

Agadez at 10 a.m. *banco* houses are pierced by the sun's rays as the Harmattan raises the dust and produces a haze on the horizon.

Beneath an oppressive heat, in a jumble of hands, arms, spades and trowels, the floors shake and the scaffolding vibrates.

Ten Nigeriens from the four corners of Agadez are learning how to build a house.

Too old for school desks, they have joined the Nigeteq project for continuous professional training.

means wood, car mechanics and dressmaking," explains Issoufou Gado, Head of the Nigeteq office in Tahoua.

Nigeteq does not limit itself to training. Credit is made available to those who have undergone training so that they can start up a business or even set up a small company and procure basic equipment. According to Issoufou Gado, "The end aim of the project is as much to help trainees find a job or become self-employed as it is to increase the quality of local production so it can compete on equal terms with imported products. Only by increasing the added value of our products will we be able to compete with foreign firms."

A victim of its own success, the project now has ever-lengthening waiting lists and a selection system has had to be put in place.

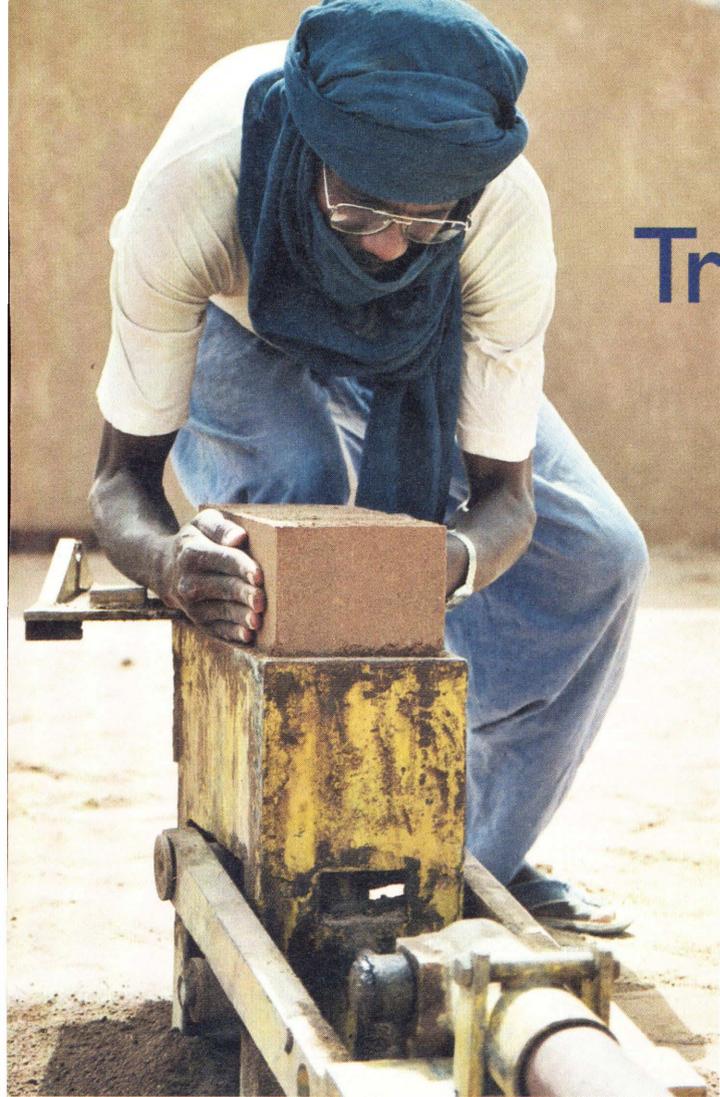
Says Abdoul Rachid Moussa: "Although the first few days do serve to convince the trainees of their shortfalls or lack of training, motivation quickly takes over and the results are surprising. More and more people want to enrol in the courses, even those who already have a job."

For the second phase, from 2000 to 2003, Nigeteq has a budget of €7 million, but unfortunately, "still too small to meet all of the country's training needs," he adds.

François Lefebvre

▲ *Making a clay block*

Workers sifting sand



François Lefebvre

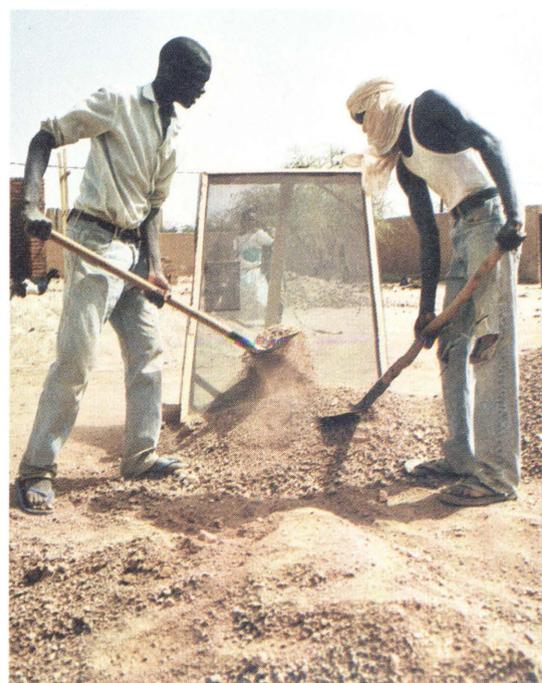
Nigeteq, started by the Nigerien employment ministry in 1995, entered its second phase in 2000. With €7 million from the European Development Fund (EDF), the project is aimed at employers, craftsmen, labourers and apprentices, as well as the unemployed. It aims to strike a balance between supply and demand as regards professional qualifications. Nigeteq covers the whole country offering training modules in bricklaying, mechanics, electronics, plumbing, carpentry and arts and crafts.

"Learning is a gradual process," explains Abdoul Rachid Moussa, who runs the Agadez branch. "There are initial training modules, courses for improvement and lessons in specialisation so that each stage of learning can be matched to the students' qualification levels. We have also organised specific training for trainers to help them manage their group and improve their skills."

Reinforcing traditional activities

Nigeteq has opted for a rotating training system so that each region of the country can benefit from all the modules on offer. The courses are also adapted to the particular requirements of the regions. One area might urgently need someone who can repair the motorised pumps while another needs construction workers for the development of school infrastructures.

"The subjects taught are chosen also as a function of the traditional activities of the local people. Here in Tahoua that



Eritrea

“Self-reliance remains the principle but sometimes we have no choice”

Since independence from Ethiopia in 1993, self-reliance has been the key for Eritrea. As it struggled to rebuild, it avoided foreign aid as far as it could. Eritrea wanted to be in control of its own development. But the border conflict with Ethiopia had a devastating effect on the country's economy. Last year the two belligerents reached a cease-fire agreement. Eritrea now faces a second period of reconstruction. Will it be able to maintain its self-reliance?

Jos van Beurden

Roses and strawberries

On the outskirts of the capital, Asmara, just before the mountains, lies “La Belle Flowers”, a farm cultivating flowers, primarily roses, and strawberries. A few times a week a lorry comes to take pallets loaded with boxes full of fresh roses to the airport. They are flown to an auction hall in Europe and sold to flower-shops all over the world. Roses are their outstanding product and so far their only export item. La Belle Flowers would also like to export its other flower varieties and its strawberries.

The company was formed two years ago and this will be its first year in profit. The investment capital came purely from Eritrean sources. The government's agricultural department supports La Belle Flowers, but has not put money into it. It has recently asked the farm management to study whether similar enterprises could be set up in other parts of the country.

The farm is of a kind you also find in Israel, South Africa and Kenya. There is nothing to remind the visitor that it was started in the midst of a devastating border conflict. La Belle Flowers is a typical example of Eritrea's self-confidence and its principle of self-reliance. “We Eritreans prefer to do things by ourselves,” says the farm's director Haki Siir Yohannes. “We are known to be self-starters. We began La Belle Flowers with our own resources, energy and ideas. When it comes to expansion we are interested in cooperation with foreign countries and companies, but on the basis of equality.” As well as fifty local workers her firm employs an experienced Kenyan as overseer and a expert in flower cultivation.

Self-reliance in the camps

A few hours drive from Asmara, not far from the border with Ethiopia, thousands of internally displaced people (IDPs) live in a camp. Camps like this one have been set up in a way that retains the structures of the border villages from which the people come. Neighbours have remained neighbours. Village committees and village judges have contin-

▲ Strawberry pickers at La Belle Flowers near Asmara

◀ A few hours drive from Asmara, not far from the border with Ethiopia, thousands of internally displaced people (IDPs) live in a camp



ued to function. Even savings groups have not been dissolved, as Hasebenebi Kafel explains. He is the director of the non-governmental organisation, ACORD, which runs a micro-credit scheme among 11,000 women. “These women could have used the war as an excellent excuse not to repay. But they keep up their payments. In our society it is a matter of shame to become a defaulter.”

After the women had settled in camps, ACORD went back to them and asked what they wanted. “They came with a clear message: if you give us fresh loans we will be able to survive,” says Hasebenebi. In his view self-reliance in Eritrea is more than just government policy. “It can be seen at all levels of society. It is part of our culture.” Women use these loans to buy drinks, on which they make a small profit, or for other entrepreneurial activities.

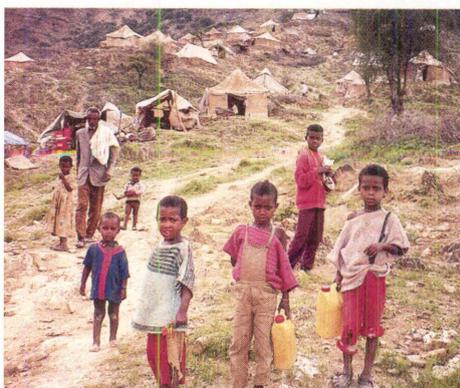
The impact of war

When asked whether the principle of self-reliance suffered during the war with Ethiopia, Haki Siir Yohannes' answer is firm: “La Belle Flowers was set up during the war and is now beginning to make a profit.” So did the war not have any negative impact? “Many airlines interrupted their flights to Eritrea. That raised the cost of air transport. Since the start of the conflict, most of our workers have been called up to join the army. They have been replaced by local village women.” He says this has not been such a bad thing for the farm. “Women are more careful. When they cut flowers and fruit, the damage to the plants is minimal.”

Avoiding aid-dependency

Eritreans have a saying illustrating their independence: “Never kneel down!” Thirty years of struggle for independence - Eritrea was annexed as a province of Ethiopia in 1962 - left them with no other option. Time and again they have shown it.

“During our war of liberation self-reliance meant mostly self-sufficiency,” explains Dr. Woldai Futur, the President's adviser on macro-economic affairs, in his office in Asmara. “At that time we were entirely dependent upon our own efforts. With a few exceptions, the world was not interested in our struggle.” Since 1991 Eritrea has become part of the global system. “Our isolation ended and we were offered aid from many sides. In quite a few cases we refused the offers as they did not fit in with our priorities or because donors did not want to transfer control of the funds to us.” Donors could not always understand that. After a few years Eritrea began to outline an economic policy. “Even then we would not involve foreign experts



directly whenever we could provide the expertise ourselves. Eritreans hate aid-dependency.”

In 1997 the Eritrean Government announced that the period of emergency and reconstruction was over. From then on only development efforts were to be undertaken. It defined a new space for international aid organisations. First of all, foreign aid projects should conform strictly to the government’s development priorities. They were allowed only in the educational and health sectors. Overhead costs had to keep below a ceiling. Foreign aid workers were to pay income tax. And, finally, aid organisations were to pool their cars and other equipment. The authorities would decide who would use what.

“Eritrea slowly but surely wanted the foreign organisations with their myriad of small projects to leave the country,” says Dr Futur. “We wanted to develop bilateral relations with a limited number of countries, based on direct aid, trade and investments.” The result was that a number of NGOs closed their offices and handed over their projects to the government. Only four or five stayed.

Losing control

That remained the situation until the summer of last year, when Ethiopian troops occupied a large zone along the border. One million Eritreans, about a quarter of the population, left their homes. They sought shelter with relatives or in one of the camps for IDPs. “We were panicking and did not know how to help these IDPs. There were too many. They had gathered too quickly,” says a Government official. Foreign organisations, many of them Italian NGOs, immediately entered the country and began work in the camps and among needy families.

“The Government then lost the control it used to have,” says Arjan Bons of Dutch Inter-Church Aid. His organisation has been running projects in Eritrea for 25 years and was allowed to stay after 1997. “In a few months I saw a change from a government setting the rules for outside agencies and running the country, to organisations coming in without prior approval and doing their own thing. Sometimes these NGOs pretended to know the needs of the camps better than government departments. It was very painful.” Arjan Bons also had the impression that the Government regretted the strictness of the rules it had issued in 1997 and that it “used the crisis of 2000 to relax them.” At present there are over 35 NGOs in Eritrea.

Dr Woldai Futur admits that last year’s crisis was extremely serious. “It was an emergency and we had a capacity problem. The many foreign NGOs that came did a tremendous job. Now the Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC) co-operates with the UN agencies. They co-ordinate all aid efforts. As soon as we go back to the development phase, NGOs that do not fit in will have to leave again. This remains part of our philosophy of self-reliance.”

Debt and bureaucracy

Does the country not depend on foreign aid more than in the past? Eritrea’s foreign debt was US\$108 million in 1997. Now it has more than doubled to US\$260 million. In Dr Futur’s view even that does not make the country dependent upon foreign donors. “It is a big amount, but most of it is concessionary debt with 40 years for repayment. So the rate of

repayment is low. Moreover, not a single dollar of this debt was borrowed for consumption or military purposes. It has all been used for productive projects, for example in the field of infrastructure.”

The usually calm and reserved macro-economic advisor becomes more emotional on the subject of a US\$12 million donation by the Italian government for emergency projects during the 2000 crisis. Because Eritrea was one of the warring states Rome did not transfer the money directly to the government in Asmara, but to the UNDP in New York. The UNDP transferred the money to its office in Asmara. The UNDP representative then distributed the money, mostly among Italian NGOs. Did this not infringe Eritrea’s principle of self-reliance? “Sometimes we have no choice,” he says. The UNDP office in New York subtracted the regular overhead fee from the donation. The representative in Asmara and the foreign NGOs then did the same. “If the money had come straight to us, such a loss would not have occurred.”

He also cites the case of European money that went straight to the World Food Programme. A fixed proportion of WFP food is earmarked for victims of hunger and another part for IDPs in the camps. “In Asmara people are starving in the streets,” Dr Futur explains. “But the portion for the hunger victims has been exhausted. In the storerooms food meant for IDPs is left over. But it is almost impossible to move earmarked food from one target group to the other. We loathe these situations.”

Disappointments like these do not change the presidential adviser’s conviction that self-reliance remains his country’s guiding principle. “We should bring about our own development. Our people are our most crucial asset. We are proud and we cannot develop through handouts.”

A chance to start again

The Ethiopian army has now withdrawn from Eritrea and UN troops have taken up positions in the border area. As soon as they declare areas safe and mine-free IDPs can begin to return home and take up productive work. Eritrea can then start its second major reconstruction period. The price of the border conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia has been high. An estimated 100,000 soldiers were killed. Hundreds of thousands of people were evacuated. The material damage is huge. The seeds of distrust have been sown deeply between the two peoples.

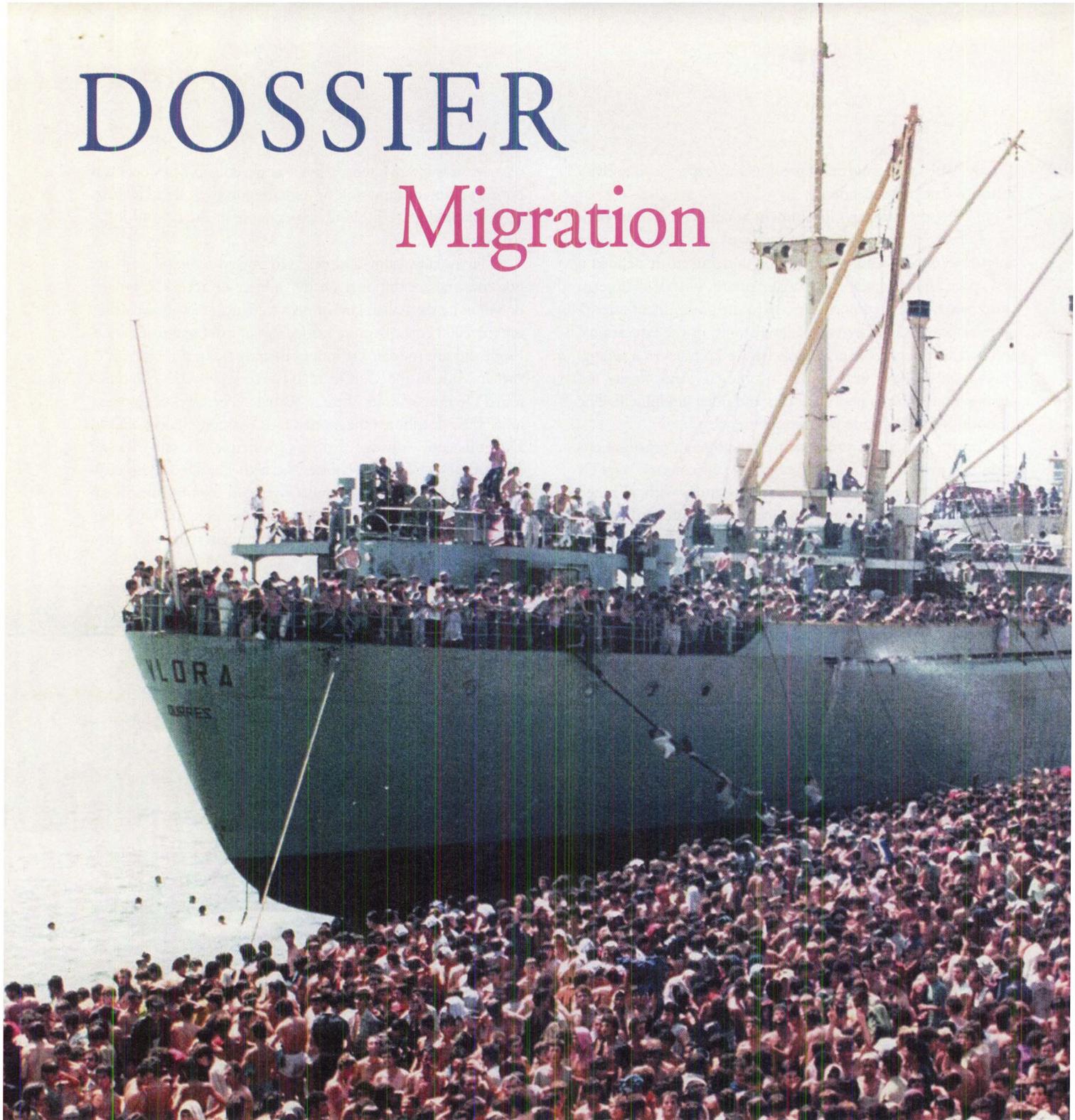
But in the long term the war’s greatest damage could be to Eritrea’s self-reliance. It has driven a wedge between the principle and the practice. No Eritrean could bear to admit the possibility that this wedge might stay permanently in place.



Dr. Woldai Futur, the President’s adviser on macro-economic affairs, speaks about Eritrea’s philosophy of self-reliance

DOSSIER

Migration



Who are they? Refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants, students, or nomads? Should they be classified in this way or should all the reasons which drove them to leave their countries of origin be taken into account?

The departure of migrants and their arrival in refuge countries generates a wide range of problems relating to economic, demographic, social and health issues.

Although migration is not a recent phenomenon, management of it in today's age of globalisation is taking on a dimension that could be cause for concern.

The port of Bari in southern Italy. A group of Albanian refugees rests, awaiting a decision from the authorities.



Where to?

Migrant flows are always from the poorest countries with a low probability of employment towards less poor and more dynamic countries where there is an opportunity to find some sort of job. Over the last few years international migration has intensified, with the media referring to the “regionalisation and globalisation” of migration. As if to illustrate the phenomenon, the media recently reported the plight of Nigeriens prepared to take on the desert to seek a better life in Khadafi’s Libya.

The major centres of attraction are the same: the United States and the European Union, with countries in southern Europe gradually becoming immigrant-receiving countries. The third major region that attracts migrants is the oil-rich Middle East. The fourth major region set to be the target for increasing numbers is Asia/Pacific, including Australia and New Zealand.

The demographic threat

In recent months, Europeans have become aware of the demographic downturn and the ageing of the population that will set in over the next few decades. The dearth of manpower in certain sectors is becoming a serious problem in numerous countries, requiring a rethinking of the zero-immigration policies that have prevailed in recent years.

Yet, how best to resolve this conundrum? Europe can no longer simply close its eyes as it “consumes” illegal workers whose entry into the EU is prohibited, thereby supplying circuits trafficking in human beings. The ambivalent reaction to this dynamic is reflected in procedures for legalising foreigners without papers in certain countries. It should be followed up by a proactive immigration policy.

What are the effects of migration on the countries of origin? Funds sent by migrants to families back home often play a considerable part in the development of the local economy. However, when highly qualified people leave their home country, the investment made by the developing countries in their higher education is lost. To remedy this, programmes have been set up to encourage immigrants to return, so that they can contribute to the economic development of their home country. This problem is increasingly affecting India and countries in Africa. It will persist as long as there is a labour shortfall in wealthy countries, in sectors hungry for highly qualified personnel and offering attractive salaries.

Challenges are urgent and manifold

The challenges of managing international migration are manifold and urgent. They include harmonising and improving refugee reception policies that regulate the legal entry of migrants, while discouraging illegal immigration, and taking a more active part in the development policies of the migrants’ country of origin.

The European Union is now dealing with these challenges*, although the delicate subject of mobility is an everyday concern. It is difficult to investigate an issue that touches upon the most intimate aspects of people’s lives. In this dossier, *The Courier* reviews the situation of “people on the move” and analyses issues with a view to better addressing the future.

Aya Kasasa

*Conclusions of the October 1999 special session of the European Council in Tampere: http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/unit/immigration_en.htm

Generally, they leave with hopes for a better life; departure often marking their first step towards the future. Despite what one might think, it appears that in the absence of compelling reasons such as war, the search for a better life or reuniting family, migrating to another country affects a small percentage of people: just 2,5% of the world’s population are international migrants. However, such migrations have a long-term impact both on their countries of origin and on the countries of refuge.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) divides international migrants into two major groups: those who migrate of their own free will, leaving to study, work or join their family abroad, and those who flee to escape persecution, conflict, repression or natural disasters. The two categories fairly rapidly become interdependent.

Asylum and immigration - Europe's search for a common policy

Those following the efforts of member states and the various EU institutions to create an area of "freedom, security and justice" are looking to the forthcoming EU Summit in Laeken, Belgium. This is a task that can no longer be put off.

Aya Kasasa

Years of migratory pressure have left Europe in something of a sorry state. Zero immigration policies implemented more or less strictly across member states have done little to ease the pressure. Refugees continue to flood in and migrants persist in coming to Europe to seek a living.

In a number of countries, such as Belgium, the situation is frequently overwhelming. Immigration is still taking place, often illegally, given that visas are an all too precious commodity. The result is the launch of vast campaigns to grant the new arrivals legal status in an attempt to reduce the numbers of illegal residents.

"Amsterdam called for us to give greater consideration to minorities and Tampere suggested ways for us to do so. Now it remains for the member states to do their bit to piece together a plausible solution to the problem of asylum and immigration and decide who should take on what role," says Leonello Gabrici, European Commission Spokesman for Justice and Home Affairs. "At the end of the year, Laeken should provide a perfect opportunity to discuss the progress made."

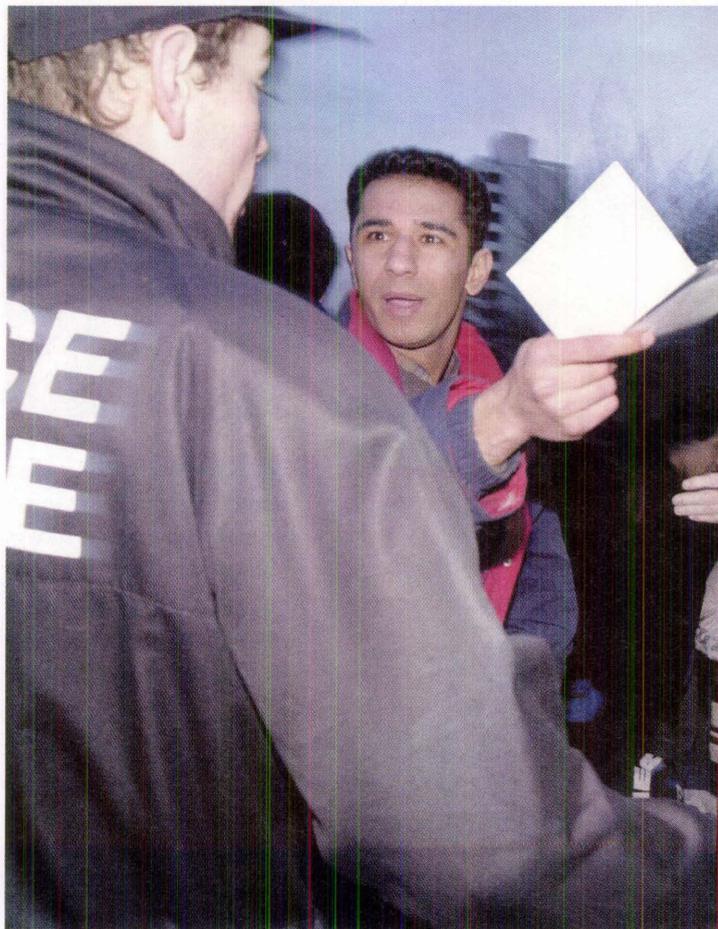
Fitting the pieces of the puzzle together

Asylum and immigration issues have been on Europe's agenda for some time now. The member states included them in the Treaty of Amsterdam, which came into effect on 1 May 1999. Amsterdam resulted in a number of very important decisions, including setting up a Directorate General for Justice and Home Affairs and to raise the profile of the Tampere Summit, which coincided with the Finnish EU presidency.

The Treaty of Amsterdam also called for a common asylum and immigration policy to be drawn up and devel-

oped over a five-year period. It did not, however, suggest ways to achieve this. How was such a task to be approached? At the Tampere Summit in October 1999, the European Council accepted the Commission's suggestions to start by establishing an efficient and consistent working method before going on to discuss possible specific actions.

To this end, the Council asked the Commission to draw up a suitable Action Plan to allow constant monitoring of the progress made in terms of measures implemented and to ensure the deadlines set by the Treaty of Amsterdam were met. It was also to monitor the Vienna Action Plan (on activities to combat trafficking in human beings) and the Tampere decision to create an area of freedom, security and justice. This Action Plan was presented in March 2000 in a Communication to the Council and the European Parliament. It will be reviewed



twice a year and updated to take account of possible modifications and initiatives put forward by member states.

Now it is up to the member states; the ball is in their court. The Commission has provided them with an Action Plan containing all the pieces of the puzzle. They are left with a lot of jagged edges which must be smoothed out before they can fit all the pieces together to form a coherent whole.

The institutions also have their work cut out. The Commission has introduced, amongst other resolutions, legislative proposals and communications governing a whole range of immigration issues, including:

- A standard visa.
- Minimum requirements regarding conditions of entry for asylum seekers.
- The status of third-country nationals who are now long-term residents.
- The mutual recognition of decisions governing parental responsibility.
- A rethink of community instruments governing the right to stay and to take up permanent residency.
- A stepping up of security in this age of information.
- Common definitions, procedures and penalties with respect to drug trafficking.

Several member states have also come forward with initiatives that are under review by the Council. The

European Parliament has received a number of proposals for proceedings on which it has openly expressed an opinion. It has clearly had no qualms in rejecting any proposals that it feels do not correspond to or only partially tie in with the desired political agenda. In addition, a number of instruments have been adopted, namely a master agreement governing the status of victims, the setting up of the EuroJust provisional unit (responsible for cooperation in the fight against organised crime), temporary protection, a judicial network on civil matters and a crime prevention network.

A tracking system for Europe

In the face of such migratory pressure, the 15 member states have opted to follow the "European added value" strategy, to use the phrase coined by Leonello Gabrici. If you were to ask him for an example, his immediate reply would be the Eurodac instrument.

For example, an immigrant arrives in Italy armed with an application for asylum. But his real intention is to cross over into Germany to work there illegally. Under the old system, while the Italian authorities were busy wasting their time and energy investigating his case, he would have been able to shoot off to Germany and request asylum there as well. The German authorities, in turn, would have opened a file and the departments concerned would have ended up completely snowed under.

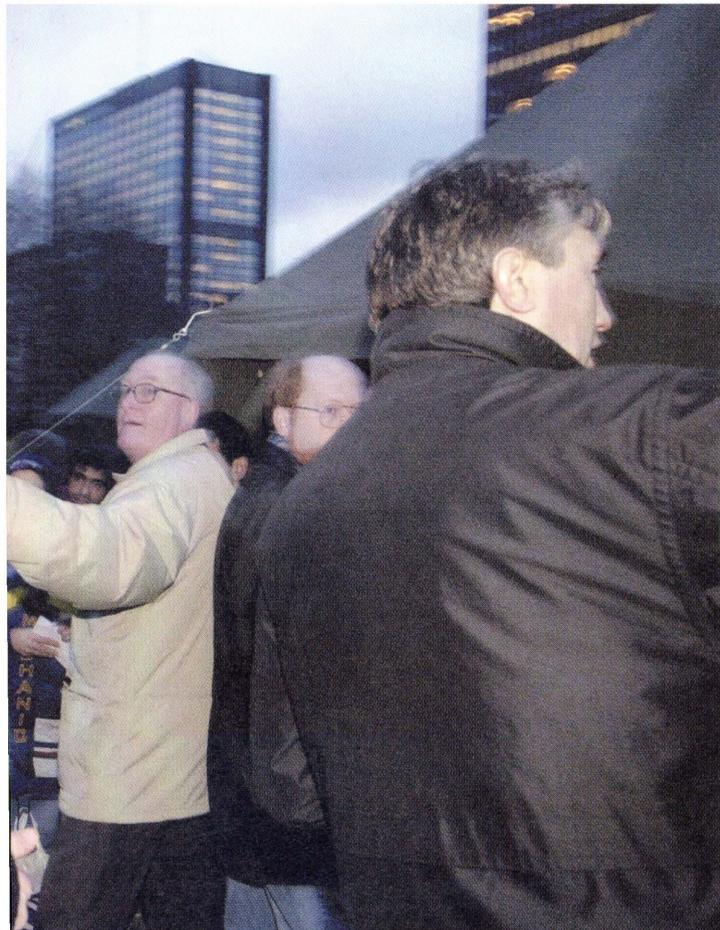
The new system leaves no room for cheating. It will now be possible to flush out any bogus asylum seekers. A further measure adopted by the EU is the introduction of clauses granting readmission to third countries. Instead of sending the bogus asylum seeker back to his previous destination, in this case Italy, the German authorities will now be able to send him back to his country of origin, which will relieve administrative pressures enormously.

There is no fortress

For Leonello Gabrici, the concept of "fortress Europe" belongs within the realms of science fiction. There is no such thing as an impregnable fortress in this day and age, just as there is no such thing as quotas. What does exist and what must be investigated is the confusion caused by the enormous disparities in procedures and methods adopted by the various member states in their general management of migratory flows.

These disparities are apparent in all aspects of immigration policy, from the humanitarian aspect of asylum and the control of legal immigration, through to the fight against networks and the perpetrators of organised crime. The latter have learned to manipulate any given situation and to take advantage of the lack of common policies.

An asylum seeker waves his authorization papers at a police officer.



AP Photo/Virginia Mayo

"We want each member state to build its immigration policy into its set of social policies," he says. "Such a course of action can only take us on to the next step, which is the creation of a true European immigration policy."

Leonello Gabrici also disagrees with the "alarmist tone" of the most recent United Nations reports on population. Figures quoted there have led to claims that very shortly Europe will need a large influx of immigrants to counter the fall in the birth rate and an ageing population. These are simply not accurate, believes Gabrici.

"These figures do not take into account the integration of women and young people into the world of work, a situation that is improving all the time. Neither do they take into account the development of new technologies, which will inevitably lead to smaller workforces. These are just two examples," he says. "The figures are based purely on statistics and on predictions as to the rate at which the population is set to decrease."

Successful integration

All the documents published by the European Commission refer to the fact that successful immigration depends on successful integration. Leonello Gabrici explains that what the Commission has in mind is true integration, which means integrating migrants at local level in EU countries.

This is in concert with the concept of European added value, which allows those who have entered Europe legally, who live and work here and pay their taxes, to enjoy, on a permanent basis, the same rights as European nationals. At a most basic level, this would grant them the right to

live with their families, a move that would obviously require decisions regarding family reunification.

A great deal of careful consideration is required by each member state in this area. An example is the Netherlands' recognition of homosexual marriage. It would be up to the Dutch authorities to decide whether to extend such a right to a migrant, thereby enabling same sex partners to benefit from family reunification policies.

"This is part of the political message contained in the communications we have proposed," says Leonello Gabrici. "You cannot discuss immigration policies at community level unless you have clear ideas as to your own national policies on the subject. You need to take a good look at yourself and your own policies first."

Laeken's objectives - towards a common policy

The European Council Summit in the Belgian city of Laeken will assess progress made. Therefore, it will be necessary to take a good hard look at priorities and at the most efficient way of achieving aims within prescribed time limits to provide the impetus needed to speed up work in the areas falling behind schedule.

It is difficult to predict what will come out of the meeting but it is already apparent that a number of key aims must be achieved. Irrespective of whether all or part of the asylum/immigration package is accepted, Laeken will certainly produce a clearer indication as to what each member state can offer at this stage.

Even if no conclusion is reached on issues surrounding European added value, it would be no great cause for concern. The main issue is that phase two of the process can be launched - the official drawing up of a European common policy.

"We hope that Laeken will signal acceptance in political terms on the part of the member states," Leonello Gabrici concludes. "All we want from them is a sign that they are prepared to build the asylum/immigration policy into their economic and social development policies. Such a step would constitute significant progress."

A refugee family waits to board a bus which will take them to the central asylum office in Brussels



IMMIGRATION

what effect on the progress of enlargement ?

by Thomas Glaser *

To judge from the public mood in the EU, as it is analysed twice a year by the Eurobarometer polls, immigration and unemployment figure at the top of the list of public priorities, along with crime and the environment. It is also established - at least to the satisfaction of the pollsters - that enlargement is not seen as a priority (negative or positive) and that in November 2000, 44% of the EU's public pronounced itself favourable, 35% unfavourable and 21% had no clear views.

However, this relatively benign state of affairs is not considered by the Commission as sufficient. The progress of the negotiations is undeniable; some of the candidates have made startling progress when one considers their situation a decade ago; but all of them require - even if only for their own domestic public opinion - a probable date of entry; and a fixed date of entry can only be given if the expectations for ratification are high enough to discount failure. This is not yet the case. Within the overall "benign" EU picture, there are several anomalies: an anti-enlargement vote of 50% in France and Austria; slightly fewer in Germany, and a wide level of ignorance (36%) in the UK, which could crystallise into a negative vote once a timetable had been published.

This state of affairs has led to two major Commission initiatives: the first is the proposal to make flexible transitional arrangements for free movement of labour which is perceived as a major negative, factor in the EU; the second is a major information campaign to stimulate debate and to put the questions relating to enlargement firmly into perspective so that the true and not the hypothetical facts of immigration among other things are presented.

Historically, similar fears were expressed by EU Member States in the early 1980s when the entry of Spain and Portugal was being negotiated. Transitional periods of up to seven years were introduced but not needed. The flow of labour which had been powerful well before enlargement, actually reversed: numbers of Spanish migrant workers in France declined from \pm 180.000 in 1980 to \pm 117.000 in 1986 as the Spanish economy geared up for membership and increased in dynamism.

At present, around 2% of the EU population live and work in countries other than their own. People do not seek to migrate unless there are compelling reasons. Frequently, in both Member States and candidate countries, jobs in one part of a country fail to attract people from other parts; how much less is the attraction then in a wholly different linguistic and social environment? And finally, the great bulk of the unskilled, seasonal or manual migrants have already set up in the EU, coming on tourist visas, staying for some months and then returning to their place of origin to renew the visa. There is, in the debate about immigration, a certain sense of locking the stable door after the horse has bolted. But this is evident largely to those who make it their business. The broader public still has visions of hordes of poor central Europeans waiting to flood in.

There are, nevertheless, some specific factors to be taken into account on the question of membership negotiations and immigration. Political parties, mostly of the extreme right and extreme left,

neither side particular partisans of the European idea, continually talk of enlargement as a means to 'swamp' Europe with immigrants. This is simply not the case. The most authoritative study, by a German research body, has come up with the figure of 220,000 immigrants to Germany (335,000 if family members are included) once enlargement has taken place. This hardly makes a ripple, let alone a wave.

There is a serious situation concerning immigration to the EU; we see almost every night on our TV screens the spectacle of immigrant ships beached on the North Mediterranean coast, of lorries being flushed of immigrants in Dover, of migrants hiding under the carriages of Eurostar. But the point to be made is that these are not immigrants from candidate countries (except, perhaps, in the case of Kurds) but from Iraq, Bangladesh, China, Somalia, etc.

A second point to be made concerning immigration from the candidate countries is that the wave of unskilled workers is beginning to recede: wage levels at home, whilst not at EU levels, are rising fast (from 10% of EU rates in 1990, to 30% in 2000) and sufficiently to entice home many from candidate countries. Their replacements are increasingly coming from non-candidate countries: in Portugal, there are some 12,000 migrant workers in the construction industry but most come from Ukraine and Moldova (non-candidates) where the wage rates are much lower than in, say, Poland.

There is one area in which free movement of labour will pose a threat for the foreseeable future: cross-border migrant workers. All along the German, Austrian and Italian borders there is the prospective problem that in border areas people will migrate the short distance to work in a high-wage economy and spend their wages in a low-cost economy. The European Parliament has authorised the Commission to launch a €10m programme to mitigate the effects of this, and coupled with the proposed transitional arrangements; this should go some way to easing the problem.

There is an interesting background to all this: birthrates in the EU are falling, and if the EU is to maintain economic dynamism it requires immigrants, both qualified and unqualified. The most natural place to seek them is from the prospective Member States, whose educational, social and cultural norms are already so similar to the EU's own.

In sum, then, the problem of immigration and enlargement is principally a problem of perception, and of anti-enlargement (and by extension, anti-EU) polemic. By embarking on specific programmes for areas where a genuine problem may exist, by proposing transitional arrangements to allay popular fears, and by embarking on a communications strategy to explain all this to the public the Commission is seeking to ensure that perceptions are corrected, polemic is countered, and that enlargement - even in the area of immigration - is seen as the win-win situation which it in reality is.

** Directorate-General
Enlargement, Information and Interinstitutional Relations*

Castles in Spain

the dreams of would-be illegal immigrants

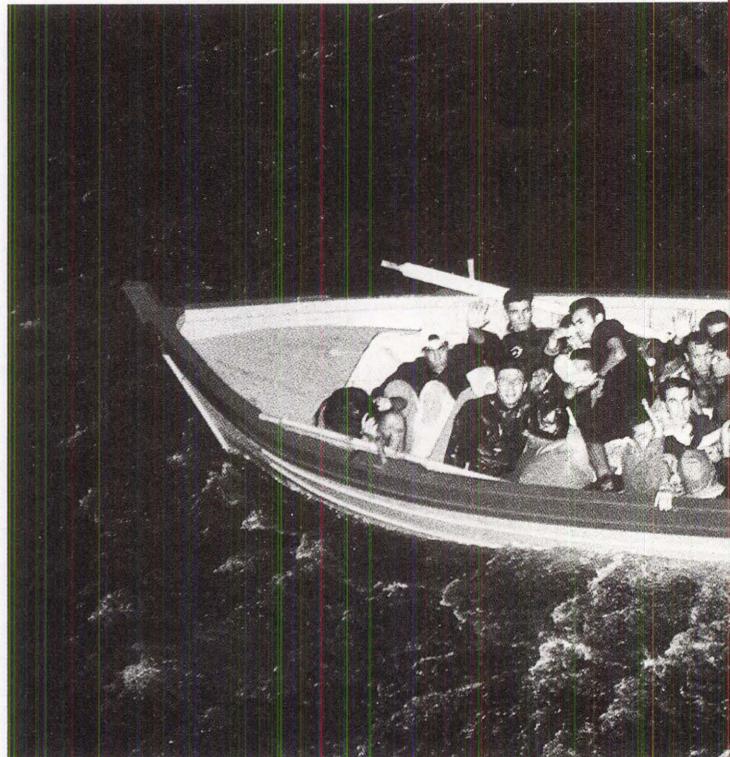
Every year thousands of Africans dream of building castles in Spain and of finding happiness in Europe. Wandering along the roads or packed into sordid hotel rooms in Morocco, they are pursued by the nightmare of an interminable wait or a life that may end at the bottom of the Straits of Gibraltar. Those who try to cross the narrow channel hope that on the other side they will find reasons to go on living. This is a chronicle of desperate adventures.

Eyoum Nanguè - special correspondent in Morocco

Monday, 7 May 2001, 12.30 am: the last aficionados from the feria in Seville are melting away into the night. On a waiting-room bench in a bus station in the Andalusian city's Plaza de Armas, two young black men wait in silence, in the shadows, for the departure of the 1.00 am bus which will take them to Madrid. The younger of the two, Bony, a Nigerian from the Delta region, is twenty-five years of age. His companion, Salif, a Guinean from the town of Kankan, is already in his thirties. One English speaker and one French speaker in Spain - what do they talk about? What language do they use? Bony is more enterprising and seems more resourceful. Ever since the commercial port of Casablanca in Morocco, where they stowed away on a merchant vessel to Cadiz, it has been the Nigerian who has taken the initiative.

From Cadiz they boarded a boat up the Guadalquivir River to Seville. And now they will make the long journey by road to Madrid. After a stopover in the Spanish capital they will move on to Barcelona, where Bony has friends who will take them in. Salif's original plan was to go to Italy, but since he met up with the young Nigerian he has been trusting in his lucky star. So far their luck has held. Their friendship, forged in adventure, has become brotherhood.

Bony speaks for Salif: "He had a business in Guéckédou, a border town in Guinea, and was the target of attacks by armed groups from Sierra Leone and Liberia. His workshop was looted twice. Instead of waiting there to die, he thought it better to leave". About himself, he says: "All Nigeria's petroleum is extracted in the region I come from, but only the military profit from it. Sometimes I'm



Illegal immigrants crossing the Straits of Gibraltar, caught in the searchlights

ashamed to say that I am from Nigeria. If I'd remained in my country, I would have no hope for the future".

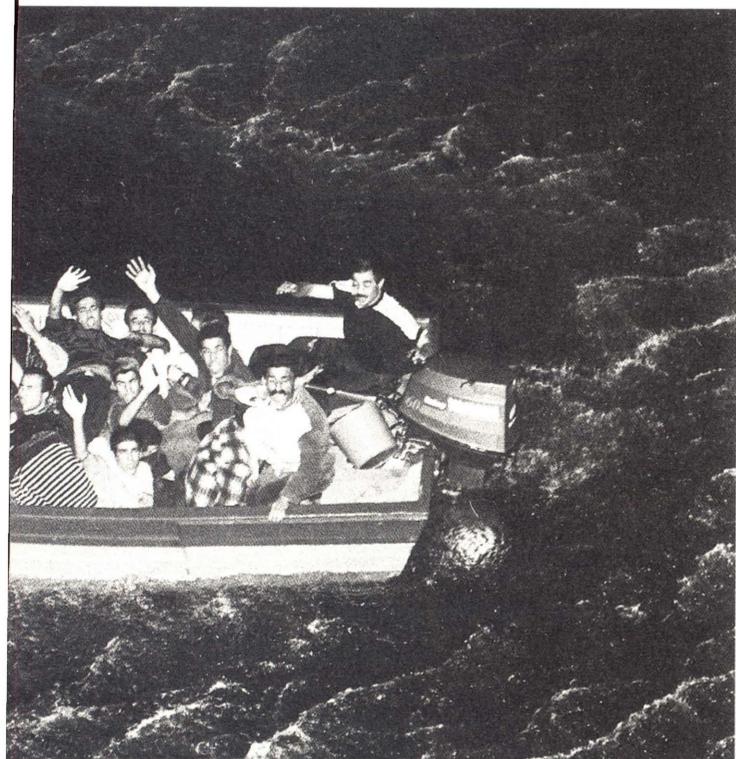
Bony and Salif make up a winning ticket - they have made it successfully to Europe. What they have achieved is the dream of hundreds of thousands of sub-Saharan Africans. Thousands of young people undertake this perilous journey in an attempt to get round the insurmountable hurdle of obtaining a visa. The consulates of European countries now issue these only in small numbers, after making applicants complete what the latter see as a veritable obstacle course. Instead Africans, in groups of two or three, can be seen taking trains and buses, heading for Morocco's northern coast. There they will look for an opportunity to get across the Straits of Gibraltar which stand in their way.

A place for trafficking

The town of Nador in north-east Morocco, not far from Oujda and the border with Algeria, is located deep in a Mediterranean cove. On the main road there is a sign announcing "Melilla: 11 kilometres". The Spanish enclave in Moroccan territory represents the first fantasy of Europe - and it can be reached by taxi. On the Moroccan side is the

small town known as Beni Sadr - grey buildings on either side of the road, with bars or restaurants on their ground floor, and a customs post.

In front of the border guards' office, a colourfully dressed, bustling crowd of people makes the place look like a market square. People emerge from a small door, laden like mules with sacks full of Spanish goods.



© SEBASTIÃO SALGADO/AMAZONAS Images/CONTACT PRESS IMAGES

of a Spanish surveillance helicopter.

Just like the town of Nador, this place makes a living from goods smuggled back from Melilla on the other side of the sentry box.

The surrounding waste ground is the scene of various activities: scuffles for a bottle of Don Simón; and currency being exchanged for merchandise in the shadow of a wall, three metres high, that forms the border. Sinister-looking individuals hang about here. The place has a reputation for playing host to every imaginable kind of trafficking - under the almost indifferent gaze of the Moroccan police force.

“Luxury yacht or luxury limo?”

So it is here that some Africans attempt to force their way across the border, after nightfall when the smugglers have packed up and gone. Invisible during the day, they emerge from nowhere like shadows to hang around the customs post or by the wall, in the foolish hope of making it to the other side - to “Europe”. Shut away in hotel rooms in Nador, they sometimes make furtive sorties into the street by day in order to make a phone call. Some of them need the services of smugglers in order to get through. It was estimated that, in 1999, between 500 and 1000 attempts to cross the border at Melilla were made every

week. But for some months now the structure has been reinforced and so has the surveillance.

Would-be immigrants to Europe have no choice but to use highly risky methods. Hence the ritual question: “Luxury yacht or luxury limo?” The former refers to crossing from Nador to Almería in Spain on board an eight-metre craft carrying twenty illegals for the sum of US\$1,000 per person. The latter means trying to enter Melilla by crossing the wall or by using false papers to get past the control post. The false-paper solution is only an option for Algerians and Mauritians, who closely resemble Nador’s inhabitants. These have the right to enter and leave the Spanish enclave as they like. Everyone else is closely inspected by the guardia civil.

“Pays-z’amis”

West of Nador lies the town of Tetuán, a stone’s throw from Ceuta, the other Spanish enclave in Morocco. Driss, a member of the Moroccan security forces, explains how it is possible to cross over to “the other side” if you are deemed to “pass”. By this he means being coherent in speech and not trembling when confronted with a man in uniform asking about your destination. According to Driss it is enough to slip US\$500 into the right person’s hand and all is sorted - a satisfactory solution for those with an individual strategy.

Every year, within the context of South/South co-operation, Morocco trains soldiers from a number of countries in black Africa - hence the name *pays-z’amis* that men in Moroccan uniform give to citizens from sub-Saharan states. But this friendship between Africans has its limits because, although they know perfectly well that would-be immigrants to Europe have saved up in order to undertake their journey, they have no hesitation in demanding their “share” as they pass through. This racket is now so widespread that there is enormous pressure on people travelling across Morocco. They are harassed from all sides by bogus security service agents, genuine soldiers, impostor customs officers and money-grabbing civilians acting as double agents - not to mention genuine and bogus middlemen and casual smugglers, keen to profit from the ignorance of strangers seeking information.

A bad press

The future illegals, therefore, find Morocco a hostile place. They arrive in the country by various means. They come by air from Guinea or Senegal, whose citizens have no need of a visa to enter Morocco. From Casablanca airport they make their way to Tangiers, Tetuán or Nador and wait for their passage. Or they come overland via Mauritania or Algeria, handing over hundreds of dollars as they pass through every border. On arriving in northern Morocco, they may have nothing left with which to pay for their passage to Europe.

Moroccans do have some reason to believe that the travellers may be rolling in money, as a few black sheep have greatly tarnished the reputation of sub-Saharan Africans. On several occasions the King of Morocco's police forces have arrested smugglers from pays-z'amis. Among the illegals en route to Europe there are people who have escaped from prison and those who might be described as highwaymen, seeking the road to fortune.

Yet the majority are just ordinary people: the unemployed, those wanting to try their luck, unemployed graduates dreaming of regaining their dignity on a continent where they have heard there is work enough for all.

Despite the fact that they have had a bad press, those looking to cross over are, nevertheless, accepted in the towns and cities where they set about preparing for their great adventure.

Waiting for their chance

This explains how, two and a half years ago, the city of Tangiers was home to hundreds of people attempting to cross over to Europe. In Medina's guesthouses and hotels, citizens of Cameroon, Niger, Senegal, the Gambia and Nigeria took rooms in which they simply waited. In one such guesthouse, overlooking the Petit Socco (the market) in central Medina, thirty-four Nigerians were occupying four rooms. It was a noisy gathering, as might be expected: ten or so young women, whose average age did not exceed twenty, and young men under thirty, including an adolescent. There was also a baby of less than six months. According to Hussein, who has worked in this establishment for seventeen years, some "guests" wait more than six months. Sometimes the girls leave more quickly, given that they can find "work" in Europe to repay the cost of the trip, advanced by some generous benefactor.

No risk too great

There are Africans who end up in Moroccan prisons because the vessel from which they were picked up was carrying drugs. The master denied all knowledge of the cargo and placed the blame on his passengers. Modibo, who arrived in Morocco from Guinea-Conakry in 1994, speaks of the many accidents that occur in the Straits for various reasons. Overloaded *pateras*, small boats built to carry about forty people, are packed with up to seventy. There is the lure of reward, according to Abdelkrim, who claims not to carry more than forty-seven "clients". And people with no hope of outside help are willing to take any risk simply to get across. Some of them are used by drug traffickers, for whom they offer to carry "goods". Others opt for almost suicidal solutions. They hide themselves over the wheels of lorries travelling from Tangiers to Algeciras by ferry, or in containers for export.

Keeping watch: "an almost impossible task"

Under pressure from the EU authorities and, above all, from Spain (especially in the wake of their fishing dispute), the Moroccan security forces are attempting to redouble their vigilance in order to contain the phenomenon. Ali Lmrabet, editor of the magazine *Demain* and author of a report on the clandestine immigration of Moroccans, says that it is difficult for one country to monitor 3,446 kilometres of coastline (512 km along the Mediterranean and 2,934 km on the Atlantic). So this is not a priority.

It is an almost impossible task to keep watch on the hundreds of natural harbours and small coves dotted along the Moroccan and Spanish coastlines. He estimates that between 4,000 and 5,000 Moroccans disappeared into the channel over the past decade. But these statistics do not take into account the Africans who die in the Straits of Gibraltar. Every day the Spanish and Moroccan media publish macabre news about the dramas taking place between Africa and Europe - capsized launches and bodies ripped to pieces by sharks. Yet this does not seem to discourage the balseros, who continue to launch their rafts into the Mare Nostrum. One Moroccan journalist called them "the kamikazes of the sea".

Motivated by despair

Omar F, an economics teacher in Rabat, believes that "all the barriers erected against illegals will not stop them, because as long as there is no balance between levels of wealth in the Northern and in the Southern Hemispheres people are going to try their luck, motivated by despair. They will always try to reach the world they see as an Eldorado".

The illusion of a "Promised Land"

No one in Morocco has forgotten the story of little Clarisse. In August 1999, her father, originally from the Congo, wrapped her up in fabric and padding and flung her over the wall into Ceuta. He explained why he did it: "Even if I can't get into Europe, I want my daughter to at least have that chance". Happily Clarisse was found uninjured by the Spanish guardia civil. This sorry tale merely shows that people will stop at nothing to reach their Promised Land.



Bus station in Nador.

Mobilising **the** resources of migration

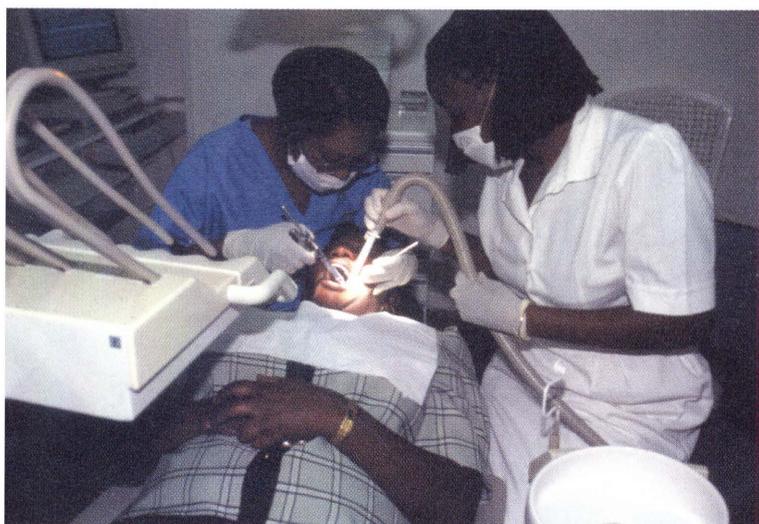
Emigrants from many of the least developed countries (LDCs) send more money home than these nations receive in development aid. If home countries were to harness the financial and human resources of their Diasporas they could offer a home grown solution to the development dilemma facing the poorest 49 nations. This new concept is particularly important as aid budgets from the developed world dwindle and the LDC share of trade declines.

Farah Khan, Brussels (IPS)



Wendy Stone/IOM

Agricultural Specialist returned to Kenya with IOM's Return of Qualified African Nationals (RQAN) Programme



Wendy Stone/IOM

Dentist returnee to Kenya with IOM's RQAN Programme.

This was a key message to emerge at the UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reports that remittances from emigrants to their families amount to a substantial percentage of exports: 33.5% for Bangladesh, 117% for Cape Verde, 83% for Eritrea and 67% for Yemen. In addition, the remittances comprise over 20% of the gross national product (GNP) of Cape Verde, Mali, Eritrea and Yemen.

"Migration is the most underestimated factor in the world economy today," says UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Secretary-General Rubens Ricupero. At the same time, however, he is con-

cerned about restrictions on the free movement of people.

"Often the word globalisation is used as a synonym for liberalisation of the movement of goods and services, but this is not to say that it has led to a great liberalisation of the movement of people," he says.

The view of migrants as key players in development is a recent one. Conventional wisdom is that a "brain drain" of skills from developing to developed countries is a negative trend. Now the IOM is planning ways to help developing countries and receiver nations manage their migrant populations.

First, the IOM believes the Diaspora should become an important development partner. Second, macro-economic management must be sound to ensure that remittances find their way into the formal economy. A third component is to encourage professionals to return to their countries.

"We've decided to create tools to mobilise Diasporas and to find an innovative approach to the transfer of human resources," says IOM Deputy Director-General Ndioro Ndiaye. Underlying the IOM's work is an acceptance that migration is here to stay – it is an age-old human instinct to move in search of better opportunities or human security. An estimated that 1.7 million people have fled the Democratic Republic of Congo in the past five years to escape from war. The rest of Africa is losing its

brainpower as well. The World Bank estimates that the continent lost one third of its executives between 1960 and 1987.

Valuable partners in local development

Every year, some 23,000 graduates leave the continent, primarily for Europe. But they maintain strong links with home as most of their savings are paid out as remittances to their families. LDC countries that realise that migrants are "a great untapped resource" as Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Deputy Secretary-General Lawrence Agubuzu calls them. Some countries are beginning to prepare their populations for lives abroad.

In Senegal, for example, the state runs an employment agency to plan the movement of its migrants to countries that need labour. The Philippines – although not a LDC – does the same. The West African nation of Mali, where almost a third of the citizens live outside its borders, demonstrates the benefits of innovative thinking about migration.

"Maliens are everywhere. I've hardly been in a country where I haven't found a Malian," says Malian Minister Soumaila Cisse.

At first glance this would appear to be a great loss for a small country because migrants are a nation's most energetic, feisty and entrepreneurial citizens. They have always sent money home, but now their talents are being put to use as well. In districts such as Kaye, where migrants are drawn from, programmes are designed to keep migrants closely in touch with their villages and towns by participating in development projects.

Their funds are pooled to build schools, clinics and other forms of infrastructure such as roads. People from the same area get together in their adopted countries to plan how their collective remittances will be spent. This is done in consultation with elders and community leaders.

In this way, they become valuable partners in local development.

For example, between 1990 and 1996, Malians sent back almost \$US110 million – representing 4.2% of gross domestic product and a quarter of exports. This is referred to as "cooperative development" and can in time become an important complementary component of a national development strategy. To make it work, host nations in the developed world must participate.

"Host countries ought to allow migrants to be mobile, to go back and forth, without losing their rights," says Ndiaye. She believes an international conference on the subject should be held to propagate new ideas and to win commitments from developed countries, which maintain a deep circumspection toward migrants.

It is often hard to go home

Another aspect of the IOM programme has been to encourage professionals in the Diaspora to come home. Cisse himself is a returnee from the United States.

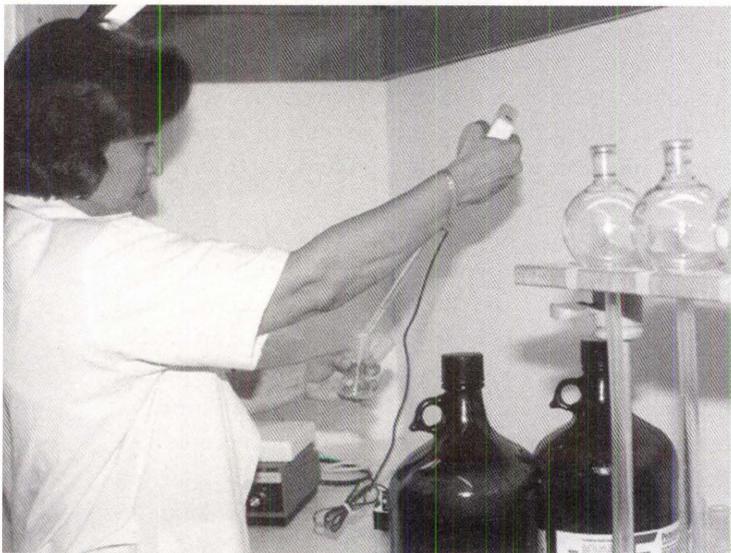
"There was a time when I didn't want to go home. I kept putting it off for eight years. I had a good job, a good house. I was never raided. But there was always a nagging sense of foreboding, of not belonging. One day I told my wife I was going home and she wanted to know to what job."

Cisse continues his story: "I don't care, I replied, but I will be at home." He has found quite a good job, as have over 2,000 migrants who have returned between 1983 and 1999.

But returning is often a less successful strategy than cooperative development. Some migrants have a romanticised vision of returning home. The reality is that once skilled emigrants are settled in western countries it is more difficult to get them back. In addition, the IOM is phasing out its returnee programme because it has proven to be prohibitively expensive.

Ricupero says mobilising the resources of migration for development will mean fundamental changes to how the world – particularly the rich world – views the movement of people.

"The situation today compares unfavourably with that of a hundred years ago," he says, recalling how easily his grandparents left Italy for Brazil, where their skills and verve were welcomed. "In fact, today compares unfavourably with Victorian times when between 40 to 60 million people left Europe. In those times governments paid for a family's travel. Today, migrants are badly received."



Return to Nicaragua

The past: a model for the future?

Historians cannot put a date on the earliest migrations from Africa to Europe. Evidence exists of an African presence from ancient times to the Middle Ages.

By **Dieudonné Gnamankou***

Soldiers, mercenaries and military leaders - the eighth century Muslim conquest of southern Europe saw the black population become more numerous and more visible. A century later began the trans-Saharan trade in African slaves to the Muslim Arab world, from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates. An African slave workforce was thus periodically transferred to the European ports on the Mediterranean. Notarial deeds from the period refer to the skin colour of the slaves traded. But black people were not alone in being sold as slaves in Europe at this time. Up until the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Portugal, to cite but one example, white slaves included in particular East Europeans, Jews and Arabs. But little by little, black slaves, hitherto in the minority, would become more numerous.

From 1450 to 1500, an estimated 700 to 900 African captives were sold every year in the ports and towns of



Abraham Hanibal, presumed portrait, 18th century (J.B. van Loo ?, Private collection of Ms Meille, Paris) : Hanibal was General of the Russian army, and the great-grandfather of Pushkin, Russia's greatest poet. Source : the writer's book Abraham Hanibal, Pushkin's Black Great-Grandfather (1996)

Portugal. In the seventeenth century there were more than 100,000 living in the Portuguese countryside and towns. In Lisbon alone there are believed to have been 10,470 in 1620. Yet a considerable number had their freedom since procedures for manumission or buying one's freedom existed. In all it is estimated that the black population totalled around 150,000 on the Iberian peninsula at the start of the sixteenth century.



The Ambassador of the King of Congo, Dom Garcia II to the Dutch governor of Brazil in 1643. © National Museum of Denmark, Department of Ethnography, Photographer John Lee.

Extending the black presence to all of Europe

From Lisbon on the Atlantic coast to the Urals in the Russian Empire, Africans are everywhere: in Spain, Portugal, France, England, Holland, Germany and Scandinavia. In Ottoman Europe (Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro...) and in the Russian Empire. How many people know for example that a small African community "speaking the Hausa language still exists in the former Yugoslavia" in Ulcinj in the southwest of Montenegro? Ivo Andric (1961 Nobel Prize for Literature) recounts the history of one such African in his novel *The Bridge on the Drina* (1945).

Many diplomatic missions were sent by African kings to Europe. In 1670 for example, King Kpayizonoun of Allada, Dahomey (Benin), sent his trusted adviser don Mateo Lopez to France. Lopez arrived in Dieppe on 3 December 1670, accompanied by his three wives, three of his sons, a trumpeter and four servants. He was received in Paris by Louis XIV at the Tuileries Palace on 19 December 1670. A host of troop units and the guard of honour were mobilised for the official welcome. The ambassador and his entourage were accommodated in the sumptuous Hôtel de Luynes. He proposed to Louis XIV a trade alliance with the King of Allada. The mission was interpreted in France as an African homage to the Sun King.

Impact of the Atlantic black slave trade

From the 16th to the 19th centuries, the development of the black slave trade to the Americas gave rise to an even greater number of Africans arriving in Europe, mostly by way of America, but also directly from Africa to Europe.



Paul, a Black living in Orléans, France in the 18th century, by J.B. Pigalle, 1760

These were not only slaves, but included free black Africans. In the 18th and especially the 19th centuries, young Africans were sent by their parents to France or England to study, undergo military training or simply to learn the French or English language and then return home. In addition, free black Africans sometimes left the colonies to settle in the European home countries or sent their children there.

In 1738 there were some 4,000 black slaves in France, although laws existed banning slavery on French soil. Towards the end of the 18th century they numbered some 10,000, plus another few thousand free black Africans. Roughly a thousand served in the army, in the *Pionniers Noirs* Battalion – created by order of Napoleon in 1802 – and rechristened the Royal African Regiment in 1806. London was home to a black population of around 20,000 in 1787, many of whom served in the army, above all in the Royal Fusiliers.

Freedom fighters: black rights in Europe

In 16th and 17th century Portugal and Spain, African slaves grouped themselves into religious fraternities and cultural associations. They set up institutions to defend their rights, buy their freedom and protect fleeing slaves.

Given that the practice of slavery was illegal on English, French and Dutch soil, slaves accompanying their masters to the home country did not hesitate to bring action against them, the most celebrated case being that of James Somerset who in 1772 won a case against his master.

In France, enslaved black men married to French women claimed and were sometimes granted their freedom despite fierce opposition from colonist lobbies. In 1716, the Mayor of Nantes called for the criminalisation of marriage between black men and French women. The State Royal Council then outlined the government's position in its Edict of October 1716 on the entry of black people into France. Major concessions were made to the colonists. Mixed marriage was not actually prohibited, but made subject to severe restrictions: no slave could marry without the consent of his master; if the master gave his consent the slave had to be freed at once. However, the Declaration of 1738 finally stripped slaves of their right to marry in France, even if a master gave his permission.

Free black people in Europe were the first to denounce the iniquity of slavery and the aberration of racial prejudice. One exception was the theologian Jacobus Capitein, an African graduate from the University of Leiden in 1742, who sought to justify slavery. He claimed that the state of servitude was in no way at odds with Christian liberty!



Free black Africans played their part in raising European awareness by making a direct political contribution to the abolitionist movement. In England, Olaudah Equiano, a former slave, published his autobiography in 1789 entitled *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, in which he recounted the horrors of the black slave trade and of slavery itself. As early as 1729, the African philosopher Anton Amo of Halle (Saxony) had presented a text with the telling title: *On the Rights of Blacks in Europe* (1729).

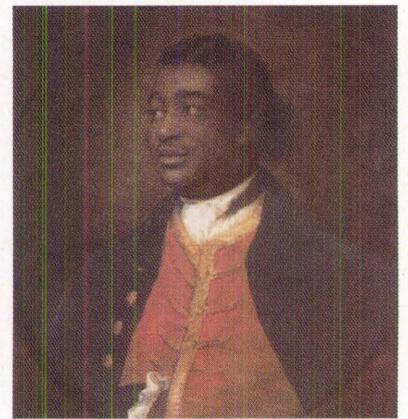
Racial prejudice

Surprising though it may sound, it would appear that black people in Europe had more rights prior to the proclamation of human rights. In the 18th and 19th centuries their rights were eroded in Europe and suffered a true regression in the Americas: a royal decree in France in 1777 forbade entry into the territory by black people, free mulattos and slaves following a chronic labour shortage in the colonies. Another decree of 1778 forbade marriage between black

(whether free or captive) and white people in France. Following the liberation of Santo Domingo by slaves, some 6,000 French colonists returned to the mainland where they waged war against the black population. France therefore, having been the first to abolish slavery in 1794 shortly after the Revolution, reintroduced the practice in 1802 on Napoleon's order.

In England during the same period, rather than introduce a genuine policy of integration for the black population who lived in miserable conditions, the solution was to send them to Sierra Leone. Nonetheless, black people enjoyed greater political weight there than elsewhere in Europe.

Prior to the 18th century, the fact that black people were sold into slavery in Europe could not in itself be taken as a factor of racial inferiority since both blacks and whites shared the same status of servility. The difference that emerged in the 17th century, becoming absolute in the course of the 18th and 19th centuries, was the fact that the entire slave population in the American and West Indian



Ignatius Sancho, man of letters, England, 18th century, by Gainsborough. Source: cover of the book, Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, An African, Edition, 1998, Penguin Books

*The poet Phyllis Wheatley, 18th century (The Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington)
Source : General History of Africa, Unesco, vol V, 1992*



Dido, a London Black,
by J. Zoffany
Source : cover of the book *Black London* by Gretchen Holbrook-Gerzina, Rutgers University Press

colonies was black, their owners being white. In the 19th century, by way of justifying the institution of slavery and preserving the notion of “racial purity”, pseudo-scientific theses on the alleged congenital inferiority of black people were circulated in Europe and America. African intellectuals living in Europe such as Edward Blyden or Africanus Horton fought vigorously against what they saw as false anthropological theories.

But racism took off, despite the various acts of abolition of the 19th century.

Having finally won their freedom, black people still found themselves faced with all kinds of discrimination in Europe, the Americas and even in Africa. The colonial machine which succeeded slavery in the second half of the 19th century inherited a great number of failings from the previous centuries. Europe, with its greater military and industrial might, proclaimed itself superior to all other peoples and its relations with Africa as an imperialist power were marked by inegalitarianism.

Contradictions

Europe chose to forget that Africans had been living on the continent of Europe for centuries and that they had at various times made remarkable contributions to the arts and sciences. English people today are unaware of the fact that more than three hundred years before the Second World War, the African population of Great Britain had been considered too large. Hostility towards black people was at such a level that Elizabeth I (1533-1603) ordered their expulsion from the country in 1601. The policy of exclusion and expulsion of Africans from Europe is not therefore a twentieth century invention. All the same, in around 1790, again in London, African dancing was to become very popular. But in 1850, an English writer considered it unthinkable that an English lady could marry a black man. Yet Shakespeare's *Othello* had been written 250 years earlier!

The history of African settlement in Europe is thus littered with contradictions. The evolution of ideas and attitudes has never followed a linear course and sometimes the past reveals models for the future.

** Senior Lecturer in Slavery Studies. The author's doctoral thesis in history and civilisation examined the history of Africans in Russia between 1670 and 1917. In 1996 he published a biography, Abraham Hanibal, Pushkin's Black Great-Grandfather (translated into Russian) and in 1999 he edited the joint work, Pushkin and the Black World.*

People of all classes

Not all Africans in Europe lived in servitude. Thousands were full European citizens. They were members of all social strata: servants, masters, workers, craftsmen, galley slaves, soldiers, sailors, officers, generals, students, philosophers, musicians, writers, painters, engineers, the landed gentry, dukes, princes, religious figures, saints, sportsmen, etc. From among these, outstanding figures emerged throughout Europe: there were many hundreds of true celebrities of their time between the 13th and 19th centuries. Not all these figures are known to us since research into famous Africans of European history has just begun.

England

In 1997, the National Portrait Gallery hosted an exhibition and a number of conferences dedicated to the life and work of Ignatius Sancho, a former African slave who became a celebrated man of letters in 18th century England. Sancho was a playwright, art and theatre critic, composer and patron to young writers. He wrote *Theory of Music* and his correspondence with well-known English figures, published after his death in 1780 – *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, An African* – was a bestseller of its day.

Italy

In the 13th century, an African, Jean le Noir, protégé of Frederick II, was appointed vizier of the Kingdom of Sicily. In early 16th century Venice, a black woman, Anne, known as the Italian Cleopatra for her great beauty, was mistress to the Cardinal de' Medici (the future Pope Clement VII). A son was born of this union, Alessandro de' Medici, known as the Moor, who became the first Duke of Florence.

Spain

The African Juan Latino (1516 – c. 1595) was one of the greatest poets and scholars of 16th century Spain. He taught Latin and Greek at the University of Granada. His Latin poem, the *Austriad*, dedicated to his patron and friend John of Austria, conqueror of the Turks at Lepanto (1571), is considered to be one of the monuments of 17th century Spanish literature.

Germany

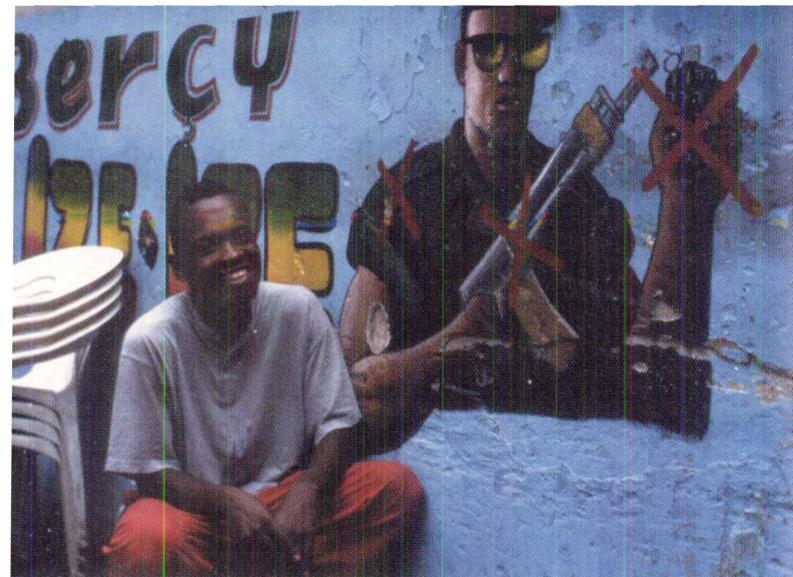
A native of what is now Ghana, the philosopher Anton Amo lived in Germany in the 18th century. Amo published three philosophical works and taught at the Universities of Halle, Wittenberg and Jena. He was adviser to the court at Berlin before returning to Africa in around 1753.

Russia

Abraham Petrovitch Hanibal (1696-1781) born in Logone, Cameroon, is the most famous African in Russian history. A learned engineer and author of the treatises *Practical Geometry* and *Fortifications* between 1725 and 1726, he became technical director and General-in-Chief of the Russian Imperial Army. Over a period of many years he directed all the major construction projects undertaken in Russia and founded the city of Elizabethgrad, (Kirovograd, Ukraine). Alexander Pushkin, Russia's greatest poet, was his great-grandson .

France

The great French author Alexandre Dumas was the grandson of an African woman who had been a slave in Santo Domingo.



25 year-old Arnaud has opened a bar and restaurant in Brazzaville with four other ex-fighters

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) helps States and individuals to solve migration problems through practical and humane solutions. In this article IOM's Press Chief Jean Philippe Chauzy reports on a programme to help rebuild lives in Congo Brazzaville after civil war.

“La Patisserie de la Paix” stands proudly in a shaded street in the heart of Makelekele, one of Brazzaville's most vibrant quarters and a former stronghold of the infamous Ninja militia. Evidence of the fighting, which erupted there in 1999, is now barely visible. Rebuilding has taken place on a large scale and only a few buildings bear the scars of the conflict. As peace has returned to Makelekele and to the rest of the country, many of those who were dragged into the fighting are now busy rebuilding their shattered lives with the help of a demobilisation and reintegration programme run by the IOM and the UN Development Programme.

Twenty-eight year old Ludovic Thodel has opened “La Patisserie de la Paix”, a very successful little bakery, with four other ex-comrades-in-arms. From the crack of dawn till late in the evening people stroll up to the bright blue hand-

Give peace a chance

printed billboard, attracted by the sweet smell of freshly baked bread and brioche. “It's a lot of work, but it's worth it,” says Ludovic. “Every day I get up at one o'clock in the morning to start preparing the dough. Then we bake until we open at 6 o'clock. These are long days.”

A few hundred metres away, on avenue Fulbert Youlou, the main thoroughfare in Makelekele, Antoine Miatchindila manages a veterinary pharmacy he recently set up with nine other former fighters. Antoine, who has a veterinary background, is grateful for the opportunity given to him. “You see, I came out of the jungle. I'm an ex-combatant. IOM has given me the means to become what I am today. And that allows me to care for my family, which is something I could not do before. It's a change for me.”

Laying down arms for good

So far, nearly 4,000 former militiamen have benefited from the reintegration programme, which has created close to 1,000 micro-projects and small enterprises. Some, like Ludovic and Antoine, have decided to pool their US\$350 reintegration grant to set up larger businesses. Others have decided to start their businesses individually, opening for instance a butcher's stall in one of Brazzaville's main markets.

All the former combatants benefiting from this programme say they have turned a page in their lives. Never again will they pick up a weapon. They have made a choice, to invest all their energy into making their businesses successful.

In order to qualify for a reintegration grant, former combatants have to hand in their weapons to IOM. André Bongouendé is the president of the Weapons Collection Commission. “The ex-fighters know this programme is available to them,” he explains. “They come to the IOM office directly to hand in their weapons. Others come to IOM to get a ‘laissez passer’ that allows them to bring in the weapons without fear of being stopped by the police.”

The other way for former combatants to hand in their weapons is through IOM facilitators. These ex-fighters, who were the first to join the programme, now have the task to “spread the word” and to help in the collection of weapons.

A total of 8,796 light weapons and ammunition have so far been voluntarily handed over to the IOM



25 year-old Jean-Gilles Odene is a tall and lanky former cobra militiaman. With five months work experience, he is probably the most knowledgeable IOM facilitator in Brazzaville. "In the beginning," he says, "it was difficult, very difficult to convince former combatants to hand in their weapons. Back in January I was only receiving two or three weapons per week. But now there is trust in the programme and every day several ex-fighters come to my house to hand in their weapons."

So far, the programme has succeeded in collecting more than 9,000 light weapons and ammunitions. IOM has now started collecting small arms outside the capital, mostly in the south of the country. Once collected, the weapons and ammunition are taken by IOM to a secure military compound in Brazzaville where they are destroyed under the supervision of a UNDP weapons destruction specialist. Guns are cut into several pieces, making sure the barrel and breechblock are sectioned. The ammunition is destroyed by detonation in an army firing range outside Brazzaville.

For Max Halty, head of IOM's office in Brazzaville, this programme makes a lot of sense since it addresses the most pressing issue former combatants have to face when they decide to surrender their weapons. "What the programme does is to give back independence to each of the ex-combatants. Independence from their warlords, their leaders, and their peer group. This is a crucial element in their reintegration into civil society. This programme reassures them that their destiny is in their own hands."

William Paton, the UN's co-ordinator in the capital, is a strong advocate of this type of programme. For him, "the international community is strong at delivering relief in an emergency and is equally strong at delivering development assistance when things are going well. But the international community is not always strong or fast at supporting a sudden and unexpected opportunity for peace." Paton is convinced that this programme is actively contributing to the rebuilding of a durable democracy in Congo Brazzaville and is therefore giving peace a chance.

The cost of civil war

During the wars of 1997 and of 1998/99 an estimated 25,000 young men, facing unemployment and uncertainty, were easily induced to pick up arms and join the various militias. An estimated 20,000 people died and another 800,000 were made homeless as a result of the fighting, which largely pitted President Sassou Nguesso's northern supporters against groups in the more densely populated south.

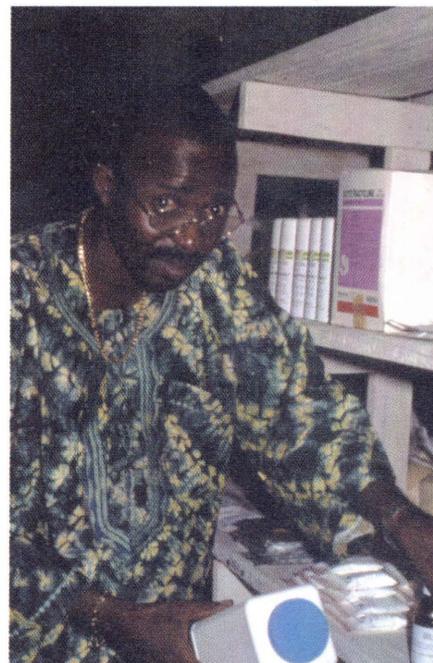
An accord signed in December 1999 ended several months of clashes between Government troops backed by Angolan forces and rebel militias supporting former president Pascal Lissouba and his last prime minister, Bernard Kolelas, a former mayor of the capital. In 1999, the Government announced a general amnesty for the militia

and at the beginning of 2000, a cease-fire took hold encouraging militia members to disband and disarm.

Reconciliation

This programme comes at a time when Government and opposition forces have embarked on a dialogue in search of reconciliation. To consolidate this process one of the crucial tasks to is to gather the weapons that have proliferated in Congo. Failure to do so will jeopardise security, the rule of law, recovery and economic growth.

This programme is jointly financed by the Governments of Norway, Sweden, and the United States and by UNDP's Trust Fund for the Reduction of Small Arms Proliferation. The European Union has committed an additional US\$750,000.



40 year-old Antoine, a former combatant, manages a veterinary pharmacy in Makelelele, Brazzaville.

* Chief, Public Information Division, Department for External Relations and Information, IOM. Internet: <http://www.iom.int>

IOM

The International Organisation for Migration started life in 1951 as the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, set up to cope with the aftermath of World War II.

Its mission

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. It acts with its partners in the international community to:

- assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration
- advance understanding of migration issues
- encourage social and economic development through migration
- uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

Its programmes

IOM provides help to refugees and migrants. It provides skilled manpower to countries, taking into account the priorities and concerns of the giving and receiving communities. It works to reverse the "brain drain" from developing countries. IOM offers advisory services on migration to governments, intergovernmental agencies, non-governmental organisations and others to help in the development and implementation of migration policy, legislation and management.

IOM furthers the understanding of migration through regional and international seminars and conferences which bring together those concerned with migration issues, in order to develop practical solutions.

The other side of the border

The island of Hispaniola is home to two countries which, despite their proximity, are worlds apart. To the west, the Republic of Haiti is one of the world's poorest nations; to the east, the Dominican Republic is experiencing one of the highest growth rates in Latin America. Against this background of "poverty/prosperity", the Dominican Republic has always appeared to Haitians as an Eldorado just over the border. But it turns out more often to be a mirage.

Valérie Michaux and Lisane André
InfoSud/Syfia

The green, uniform landscape stretches as far as the eye can see. On either side of the pot-holed road, the tall sugar-cane plantations seem never-ending. At the end of the track, lost amongst the vegetation, a few huts finally come into view: this is a *bateye* – Dominican Spanish for a type of hamlet, lost amid the sugar canes and completely isolated from the rest of the world. It looks more like an "encampment".

Thousands of Haitian *braceros* – farm hands – live in these huts, scattered throughout the sugar-cane plantations which cover the country. Conditions are often inhuman. It is impossible to get a precise number of Haitian migrants who arrive in the Dominican Republic in the hope of profiting from that country's prosperity, but who, in reality, fall victim to exploitation. Depending on the source, the figures vary: some mention 500,000 Haitians living on the other side of the border, others one million.

Haitians in the the sugar-cane fields



Valérie Michaux/InfoSud



Valérie Michaux/InfoSud

Border post between the Dominican Republic and Haiti

Haitian migrants are found in the tourism, coffee-growing and construction sectors. The only housing the construction workers have is the building they are in the process of putting up. Others get by as best they can in the informal sector, living in the district known as Little Haiti, in Santo Domingo, where they suffer repression. Then there are those living in the shantytowns on the outskirts where their relationship with local Dominicans is often tense.

The Haitian community is primarily involved in the sugar harvest: during every *zafra* (harvesting and cutting of the cane), 15,000 to 20,000 seasonal workers travel to the Dominican Republic. They are recruited in their hundreds in Haiti by Haitian or Dominican *buscones*, "recruitment scouts" who act as press-gangs to recruit the *braceros* in Haiti on behalf of Dominican factories. It is all completely illegal.

Continuous migration

Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic is not a recent phenomenon – far from it. Haitians had already begun to migrate to the Dominican Republic in 1915, when Haiti began to experience the repression of the years of US occupation, and the sugar industry was taking off just over the border. Migration became strictly one-way, fluctuating in accordance with the political and economic situation in Haiti, but it never stopped altogether.

The successive repressive regimes in Haiti certainly acted as a catalyst for this mass-migration reaction. The economic penury which followed, and which is currently more rife than ever, certainly did nothing to offset this exodus. Thousands of Haitians, therefore, took to makeshift rafts – the infamous boat people – heading for the coast of Florida, or else they climbed aboard packed lorries whose destination was the Dominican Republic.

For many Haitians who illegally cross the border, the Dominican dream quickly becomes a nightmare and they are often victims of the prevailing "anti-Haitianism", xenophobia and violence on the part of local Dominicans. In October 1937, between 12,000 and 15,000 Haitians



(depending on the source you consult) were massacred by the troops of former President Trujillo. President Balaguer (1966-1978) later described this quasi-genocide as “a necessary means to protect the border”.

Attraction/Repulsion

From that time onwards, Trujillo merely hardened anti-Haitian sentiments in the Dominican Republic.

Not only were Haitian people presented as being systematically different from Dominicans, but also as a threat to Dominican sovereignty. At the same time as Trujillo was maintaining this “anti-Haitianism”, he was also seeking to attract more Haitian *braceros*, who represented a cheap source of labour for the work of cutting sugar-cane on the plantations. It is no secret that this source of cheap labour was taken advantage of – and is still taken advantage of – on a large scale by both the Dominican and Haitian governments.

Upon the death of Trujillo, Joaquín Balaguer’s government followed the same policy as that of its predecessor: the maintenance of prejudice towards Haitians and the exploitation of the *braceros* on the sugar-cane plantations. At that time, the Duvalier government was the major beneficiary. The international and even the Haitian press condemned not only the conditions of slavery meted out to Haitian workers, but also the “slave trade” organised by the government of Jean-Claude Duvalier, which received vast sums as recruitment expenses by virtue of an agreement signed between the Dominican State Sugar Council and the Haitian government.

In the face of growing international pressure, the Balaguer government had no option but to improvise certain reforms. Therefore, in June 1991, the Dominican government voted in a decree whereby 6,000 children and hundreds of people aged over sixty were expelled back to Haiti. In this climate of insecurity, coupled with Aristide’s speeches promising a better future, 25,000 Haitians took to the road and headed home. Most of those who stayed to work in the Dominican Republic agree that they had a better fate.

However, such efforts as were made to improve the lot of Haitian *braceros* did not continue after the military coup d’état by General Cédras against President Aristide, in September 1991. Thousands of Haitians quickly returned en masse to seek exile in the Dominican Republic, fleeing repression in their own country. Only a small minority of them, however, was granted political refugee status, enabling them to benefit from the right to reside in the Dominican Republic.

Illegal and without rights

Currently, according to MOSCHTA, a Dominican NGO working with Haitian cane cutters, 80% of Haitians in the Dominican Republic are living there illegally. Their children, because they are born on Dominican territory, are already “dead” in the eyes of the authorities. Parents, who are themselves illegals, are producing stateless children. “The undocumented Haitian population in the Dominican Republic is large, and the failure or inability to register births in either the Dominican Republic or Haiti has created a problem of de facto statelessness among their children,” says a UNHCR document dated September 1999. Probably over 2,000 children get no schooling. The President of the Chamber of Deputies in the Dominican Republic, Rafaela Albuquerque, has rejected any bill granting Dominican nationality to these young people as laid down in her country’s constitution. “My family has been Dominican for generations. Dominicans should be in Dominica, Haitians in Haiti!” she declared on one occasion. Against this background, the country continues to benefit from cheap labour employed at low cost in one of the principal sectors of the Dominican Republic’s economy.

For some years now, however, the climate appears to be changing. The Dominican Republic and Haiti have begun to strengthen their diplomatic and trade relations. On 13 April 2000, a march begun in Santo Domingo by a group of Dominicans reached Port-au-Prince, where they called for an end to discrimination between the two communities and condemned the mass repatriation of Haitians. Bus drivers who run the shuttle between the two countries also think that the attitude of the Dominican soldiers has overstepped the mark. In late February, Juan Jiménez, leader of the transport trades-union federation in the North East, condemned what he called “persecution by the army”, which was arresting Dominican drivers upon discovering Haitians on board their vehicle. Yet despite the protests, the expulsions continue. In early 2000, the Dominican army was sending back “illegal” Haitians at a rate of between 500 and 600 per day, according to figures published by Haiti’s national office for migration. Levels were so high that industrialists in the sugar-cane sector began to wonder how they were going to cope with the next harvest!

Two elderly Haitians in a bateye
 “Thousands of Haitian *braceros* - farm hands - live in these huts, scattered throughout the sugar-cane plantations which cover the country. Conditions are often inhuman”



The “brain drain”

new aspects of the South/North exodus

The brain drain from developing to developed countries is becoming an issue of major international concern. It is not new in itself, but in the past it received only passing attention or controversial treatment, and barely made an appearance on the political agenda. A number of factors have contributed to an increasing awareness of the problem and increasing attention to possible counter-measures.

Jean-Baptiste Meyer*

Attracting universal attention

The United Kingdom and France, the two European countries receiving the greatest number of students and professionals from developing countries, have just concluded official studies on highly qualified immigrants and the dynamics of their migration. Meanwhile the countries of the European Union have been trying to reach agreement on a new, common policy on migration.

Further afield, a number of OECD countries have recently been showing a marked interest in the migration of highly qualified individuals. At the same time, in the developing countries themselves, the topic has been the subject of numerous meetings – especially in Africa. These have attempted to assess the extent of the phenomenon, the range and seriousness of its effects, and how to limit its damage.

This universal acknowledgement of the existence of an international problem is something new, though the problem itself is not new. It looks very much as though attitudes have now changed – and for two principal reasons. The size and nature of the phenomenon has changed, and so have its implications.

Getting the figures right

Measuring the emigration of highly qualified people has always been a major difficulty in studies of the subject – and things have hardly changed. Figures that are accurate, reliable, comparable and detailed are rare, and they illustrate

only part of the picture. There is a need to set up a sizeable and consistent statistical base in order to study the subject better and in a more co-ordinated manner.

Trends in migration

Nevertheless the figures that are available, even if they are less than wholly accurate, do illustrate some important trends. It appears that the emigration of highly qualified people towards economies relying heavily on knowledge has been on the increase for several decades – and has accelerated over the last few years in particular. This can be seen in the statistics of countries like India and South Africa (“source countries”) and the United States and France (“target countries”). It is also apparent from the increase in anecdotal references in the world’s press. There is further evidence in the text of laws passed or measures taken – almost simultaneously by a number of rich countries – to make temporary or permanent immigration easier for the kind of people who benefit their economies.

The explanation for this is clear. It lies in sustained economic activity that increasingly requires highly qualified human resources. Those segments of the labour market that contain the skills needed are increasingly important in OECD countries. The highly qualified proportion of the working population is continuing to grow. Today it represents more than one third of that population, compared with one quarter just two decades ago. In this context, the increase in qualified immigration simply reflects a global increase in the number of qualified personnel available in the working population.

For example, American figures show that the number of engineers of foreign origin working in the United States has grown considerably during the last twenty years. But their proportion among engineers has not changed at all. People of foreign origin represent 12% of the whole “highly qualified” segment of the American labour market. This percentage is very similar in many other western countries.

A small impact in the North but a big loss for the South

So in simple numbers the contribution of the developing world to the developed is relatively marginal. It is nevertheless strategically important, since it eases shortages on the labour market in the target countries. But above all it is crucial for the

source countries. For them the volume of skills involved is sizeable. What constitutes a small proportion of personnel in the North is a large one for the South. For instance, at least one third of researchers and engineers originating from developing countries nowadays work in OECD countries. Moreover their average productivity is five times greater than that of their counterparts who remained “at home”.

In other words the majority of scientific and technical results attributable to citizens of developing countries are achieved and turned to account in the North. The other side of the same coin is that their relative value is much greater in the South than in the North. In those economies where skills intensity is still low, the proportion of highly qualified personnel is much smaller than in the OECD countries. Even a minimal drainage of skills from the developing countries may be critical for them.

A global phenomenon

The minor role of the Southern Hemisphere and its limited influence on markets could have concealed the problem confronting developing countries for a long time. But the skills exodus is not a localised phenomenon. It affects all countries in one way or another. It is no longer an exclusively North/South phenomenon, as it now affects North/North and South/South relations. In addition, there are substantial flows from countries in the former eastern bloc.

Here is just one example to illustrate this new, complex and global dynamic. South Africa receives numerous Zambian and, above all, Cuban doctors. It is an acknowledged fact that its own health professionals emigrate to the United Kingdom and to Oceania. Specialists in New Zealand's biomedical sector choose to emigrate to the US and Canada. In turn Canada laments the large numbers of

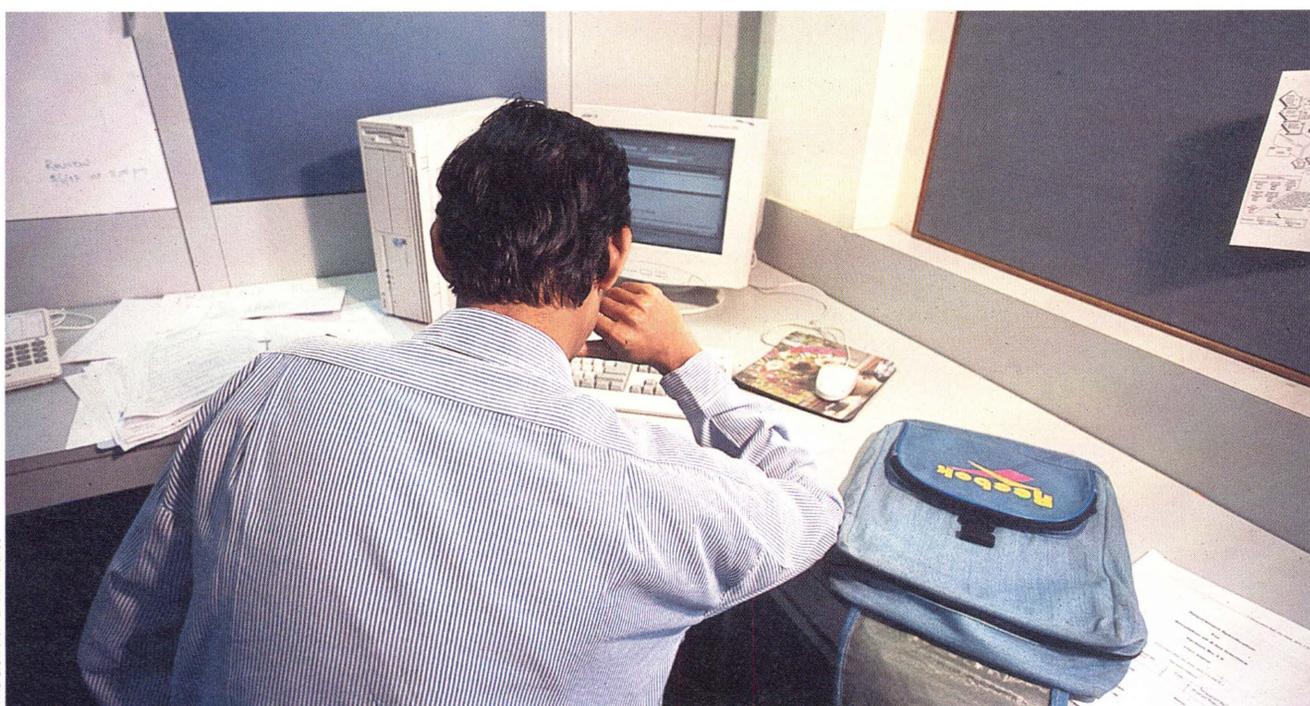
its talented citizens who choose to take themselves off to their neighbour south of the 49th parallel. The problem is even more common in the information technology and science sectors. Here Indian or North African specialists, for instance, offset the defections of French, British or German citizens to the United States.

The brain drain has become a global phenomenon, highlighting two trends: a blurring of frontiers and, at the same time, greater recourse to knowledge. As a result of its increasing economic importance, the possessors of knowledge are being called upon to mobilise to suit market requirements. The prevailing, favourable view of all this is that the movement of knowledge facilitates cross-fertilisation and benefits all those involved.

A one-way flow

The term “migration” in this context is being progressively replaced by “mobility”, which includes less permanent forms: an outward and return journey, or remote communications where the notion of permanent loss is gradually disappearing. Nevertheless this mobility should not be idealised. The downside is all too evident. The geopolitical direction of the current movement of those who possess skills is very clear, resembling that of a staged cascade. There is a flow from the less advanced countries, which are at pains to produce and retain their own highly qualified personnel, towards intermediate-income countries. These in turn experience a flow towards highly industrialised countries, which themselves may also exchange talent, depending on which sectors are in need.

The only winners are those countries that have a positive, permanent and temporary migration balance. The United States is currently the only country with a positive balance vis-à-vis all the other countries in the world at the same time.



Skills replace raw materials as the key to growth

It is a well-established fact that knowledge is now the fundamental source of the creation of wealth and the primary factor in international competitiveness. This has given rise to a greater awareness of the seriousness of a generalised skills exodus. No country can ignore it and accept a systematic loss of skills accumulated within its borders, without reviewing its development capabilities and its place in the global society that is taking shape.

Proposals for growth in Southern Hemisphere countries stress human development, as distinct from a conventional fund of natural resources, as the way forward. The loss of "grey matter" is the current cause for concern to these countries, just as the concern of the past was a lack of earning power linked to deterioration in the terms of trade for raw materials.

"Body shopping"

Nowadays it is not uncommon for an Indian IT professional to move from an Indian company to an American one without leaving his own country. A labour force is taken on, without physical movement, to produce software for a company a great distance away. The American firm employing him is described as "body shopping". This expression highlights an evolutionary step. It also speaks volumes, recalling an earlier trafficking in bodies – slavery. Obviously the conditions are fundamentally different, but the principle is the same: the capturing of a workforce – in this case a highly qualified workforce – and its virtual or actual relocation to undertake productive work for a foreign master.



Tapping into the "diaspora"

The issue of the international movement of skills has thus taken centre stage in concerns surrounding global trade and, in particular, trade between zones where levels of development are different. Those involved in development co-operation are looking for ways to arrest the losses as best they can. One very promising route is currently available: making better use of the "diaspora". The presence of considerable numbers of expatriate intellectuals from the South (and from the East), scattered throughout the OECD countries but connected by the Internet, has made possible the setting-up of networks working to promote development in their countries of origin.

There are now more than forty such networks throughout the world, working with thirty-five developing countries. They are trying to use the knowledge their members possess to make a remote contribution to activities that benefit their place of birth. These activities include joint research projects, technology transfers, information exchange, joint ventures, training sessions and so on. This "diaspora option" for recovering skills shows that a physical return is not the only alternative to a skills exodus.

One crucial advantage of this option lies in the fact that it is not detrimental to the interests of either the target or the source country. The expatriates involved belong to both of them and are promoting the development of constructive links between them.

Partnership with immigrant groups

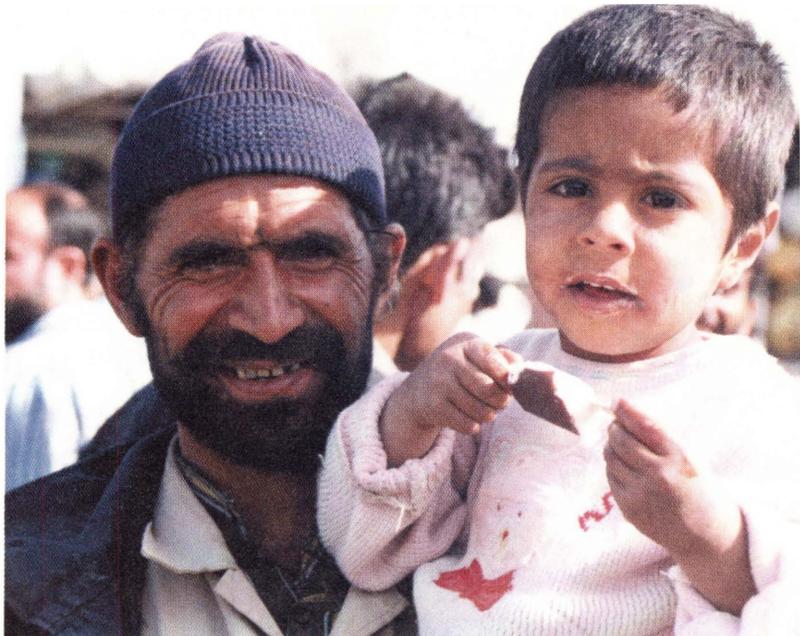
European countries (France and the UK in particular), the European Commission and international bodies, such as the International Organisation for Migration, have realised the potential represented by such cooperation, in partnership with immigrant populations and their associations. Experience shows, however, that it is not an easy route to follow. It requires all kinds of technical, political and organisational investment from those involved, in both the target and the source countries.

A systematic study of various diaspora projects is attempting to measure their achievements and will soon make it possible to assess their possibilities more realistically. It is already demonstrating that, although the current skills exodus has taken on new and unexpected dimensions, it may also offer unexpected prospects for a solution. It also indicates that, if a paradigm of mobility is set up, it may be more than a mere reflection of the global state of the market. It is to be hoped that it will include a contribution from those involved in diaspora projects and from the associations they are setting up as part of their cooperation strategies.

** Socio-economist
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Australia under pressure

C. Nekrawesh/IOM 2000



Afghan 'returnees'

The latest figures show that it is increasingly from the Middle East, and particularly from Iraq and Afghanistan, that illegal immigrants are coming to try their luck in Australia

Australia has a long history of immigration. According to the UN, it is one of the top three countries of refuge. It is becoming increasingly difficult to gain resident status there – these days, only the very highly qualified need apply. Yet Australia has become an El Dorado for thousands of refugees seeking to gain entry at any price.

This is an issue which regularly makes front-page news.

By Stéphane Hiscock

In the small hours of 4 April 2001, two buildings of the temporary detention centre for illegal immigrants in Curtin are ablaze. Police reinforcements are called in to try to restore order among two hundred asylum seekers who have decided to riot against the conditions in which they are being held. “We’re treated like criminals,” is how one of the detainees puts it. “Four people tried to kill themselves here within the space of one day.”

Riot scenes such as these at the Curtin centre in Western Australia are by no means an isolated occurrence. Throughout the country’s six centres for illegal immigrants, detainees complain of the appalling conditions in which they are held. Revolts are rife, and hunger strikes and escape attempts are common. The signs clearly point to a major problem - one the government must get to grips with.

Illegal immigration is booming in Australia and is a real headache for the Canberra authorities. According to the immigration services, no less than 6,000 illegal immigrants landed on the northern and north-western shores of the country during the first six months of 2000, and not a week goes by without news of another ship being stopped and its cargo of boat people apprehended. Between 1 December 1999 and 3 January 2001, 59 boats were intercepted along the coastline. The statistics are soaring.

An unavoidable first stepping stone

Australia is often described as a country of refuge. It continues to hand out thousands of refugee visas every

year. Yet the immigration authorities are swamped with applications, and asylum seekers’ aid associations condemn the system for being excessively slow. The unavoidable first stop for illegal immigrants is one of the temporary detention camps, while they wait for the authorities to assess their applications. For some, this wait in a camp - often located in the middle of the desert and surrounded by barbed wire - will be brief. For others, the wait might go on for several years. It is not unusual for children to be born in these camps.

In 1997, alerted by a number of refugee-rights organisations, the UN Human Rights Commission decided to look into the problem. The result was a damning report sent to the Canberra authorities. According to the UN, the temporary detention system in Australia is wholly inappropriate. It also criticises what it deems to be Australia’s reductive definition of the term refugee. Asylum seekers who would qualify for a refugee visa in other countries are turned away by Canberra. In most other countries with similar legislation to Australia – Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom or New Zealand, for example – there is no systematic detention of illegal immigrants. In Australia, on the other hand, as soon as they are stopped on land or in Australian waters, asylum seekers are sent to the detention camps, where most of them apply for a refugee visa. Only then are the customary checks carried out on the identities and legal histories of the immigrants. Afraid of being sent straight back to their countries of origin, many illegal immigrants destroy their passports before entering Australia. The immigration department therefore has great difficulty identifying them, which delays the processing of applications.

According to Minister for Immigration Philip Ruddock, not all illegal immigrants are “genuine” potential refugees. “The majority of these people arriving illegally in Australia have family here and are asking for

asylum. So they do their utmost to hinder our inquiries. This is the main reason why the system is so slow. Illegal immigrants monopolise the time and resources of the immigration services at the expense of those who are in real danger, in Iraq or Afghanistan, for example.” Criticised for its policy of being tough on illegal immigrants, the government justifies itself by saying that it is sending out a clear message to trafficking rings. According to Amanda Vanstone, Australian Minister of Justice, such rings pour US\$7 billion every year into the coffers of crime syndicates, and it is time that the international community did something about it. Criminal organisations quickly cottoned on to the fact that there was as much money to be made from the trade in human beings as from drug trafficking.

Dealing with the problem at source

In an attempt to combat this scourge, Australia has just opened a new office in Jakarta, Indonesia. Here, Australian immigration officers and intelligence agents now work side by side with their Indonesian counterparts to try to break up smuggling rings. In Australia, these criminals can incur a maximum sentence of 20 years’ imprisonment and hefty fines. In spite of this, ever greater numbers of them are organising clandestine trips between Indonesian ports such as Kupang or Lombok and the coasts of Australia. Because of its proximity to Australia, Indonesia is where many of the candidates for migration congregate. The crossing from Kupang to Ashmore Reef,

for example, can be made in less than 48 hours.

The latest figures show that it is increasingly from the Middle East, and particularly from Iraq and Afghanistan, that illegal immigrants are coming to try their luck in Australia. The Minister for Immigration has toured several countries in the region to try to discourage potential candidates for migration. In Jordan, he took with him a video showing the dangers to which illegal immigrants are exposed during their journey. It was a deliberately shocking video, full of images of sharks and rickety old boats violently tossed on the high seas. Another item in the Minister’s “illegal immigration kit” was a pamphlet detailing the risks run by immigrants once they set foot on Australian soil. The pamphlet explained that illegal immigrants had a very high chance of rapidly succumbing to prostitution or drug-taking, and of falling prey to attacks by Australians fed up with footing the bill for their stay. This pamphlet, however, remained firmly tucked away in Philip Ruddock’s bags. It was described as blatantly racist by several Australian refugee aid associations and ended up being scrapped prior to distribution. The fact is, however, in the words of the Minister for Immigration, “the reason Australia is having such difficulty coping with its refugee problem is that the trade in illegal immigrants is booming.”

Internet links

- *UNHCR Report on Australia’s refugees:* www.unhcr.ch/world/asia/australi.htm
- *Website of Mr Philip Ruddock, Australian Minister for*

A Fijian in Australia

Valérie Bichard is in her sixties and works as a radio reporter for SBS in Sydney. Her Fijian mother and French father used to live in Suva, capital of Fiji. Then the Bichards decided to try their luck in Australia, eager to take advantage of the opportunities on offer there at the time.

In those days, however, Australia did not open its doors to just anyone. Its “White Policy” actually prevented non-whites from obtaining an immigration visa. The Bichard family therefore chose to settle first in New Zealand, until 1973, when Australia abolished its “White Policy”.

Valérie Bichard remembers her family’s arrival in Sydney, where they still live today:

“My parents were among the very first Fijians to emigrate to Australia. They were fortunate in being rich enough and sufficiently well educated to do so. Our family back in Fiji doesn’t hold it against us – they have always respected our decision and my parents’ burning desire to better themselves socially. Also, my parents managed to send money back to Suva right from the start, and this enabled the rest of the family to buy a house and land in Fiji.

In the beginning, it was difficult for us in Australia. We were really isolated, so my mother forced us to assimilate Australian culture as fast as we could. Today, multiculturalism is celebrated, and all the various communities which make up the country can express themselves. Back then, though, it was very different – you had to integrate yourself.

My grandmother comes to visit us quite regularly. It’s funny, because in Fiji she’s the head of the family, the matriarch. But when she comes here, it’s completely different. She’s much more timid here. It’s because the pace of life is so different. Here, everything is too fast for her. She doesn’t go out much when she comes to stay.

My advice to any young Fijians wanting to come and settle in Australia today would be to watch out for the huge culture shock in store for them when they get here. It’s better if they are educated before they leave. You see a great many young Fijians living in appalling conditions in Sydney. The reality is that it’s tough, even for those who come from what are considered to be well-off backgrounds in Suva....”

Fact or fiction?

The story of Koko...

when dream turns to nightmare

At first glance, he looks no different from other young Africans living in France. In jeans, trainers and anorak, he walks, unnoticed, through the streets of Paris, where he arrived three years ago, after a great deal of travelling. Nevertheless, he is far from being a normal Parisian.

Originally from Côte d'Ivoire, hence the nickname "Koko" given to him by his friends, he was embarking on his third year of law studies at the University of Cocody in Abidjan when the friend of one of his cousins came to see his father and put to him a fantastic proposal: "I've got a friend who could get someone to Germany and enable him to study in Bonn". Koko's father, his trust won over by this man, did not hesitate, particularly since university studies in Côte d'Ivoire are reputed to be poor, the lecturers not being well-paid and students very often on strike. The prospect of studying abroad guarantees a better future for the country's young people, and they can therefore entertain hopes of leaving a country under-

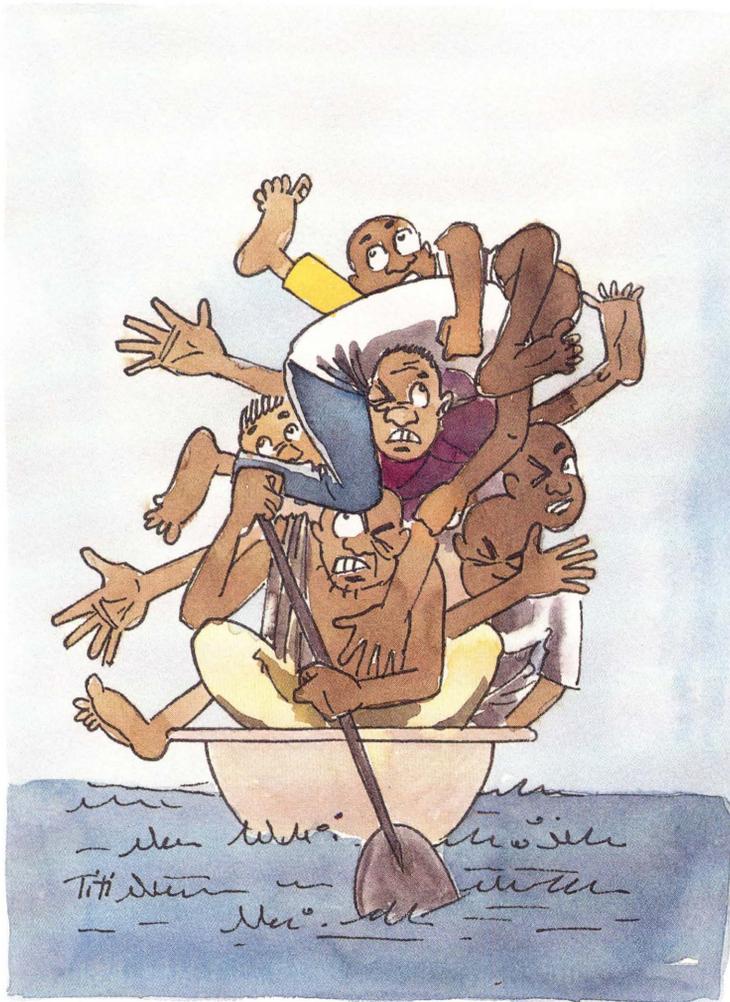
mined by unemployment, where economic crisis is endemic. Koko, therefore, suddenly left behind his studies, his family and his country, to travel towards what he thought would be happiness.

A passport costing € 2285

To realise this dream, his parents (father a retired teacher and mother a housewife) put themselves into debt and sold part of the oil-palm plantation they farm, and they were thus able to raise the CFAF 1.5 million (FF 15000/€2300) demanded by the "middle man".

Armed with a French passport bearing his photo, our chap therefore reached Frankfurt airport without incident, and there he was met by two individuals: one from

Cameroon and one from Nigeria, two people he had been told would take care of him, find him a room and help him to register at a German university. However, it was when these two "compatriots" explained his true situation to him that Koko's nightmare began: firstly, they advised him to destroy his false passport, telling him that, if the German police found him with such a document, he risked ending up in prison. They then said that they could put him up for a week.... no longer! Just enough time to find him a relative living in another European country where there were plenty of blacks,



because, in Germany, without papers, it is impossible to elude the police. Koko therefore contacted a distant cousin who had lived in Paris for about fifteen years and told him his tale of woe. The cousin told him that he was unable to do anything at all for him.

With his hosts in Frankfurt, the week passed quickly and he was given two days' notice to leave the apartment, the two accomplices having convinced him that it was preferable for him to go to France where an illegal African attracts less attention on account of the large number of Africans living there. They offered to help him cross the border.

Servant's quarters and clandestine employment

This was how Koko became an illegal in France. He arrived, lost in Paris, fresh off the Thalys (the high-speed train linking Cologne and the French capital). This was March 1998, and the weather was bitterly cold. He spent his first night at the Gare du Nord, and was later able to meet up with one of his childhood friends who had left Abidjan two years earlier. This friend picked him up and accompanied him to the Gare de Lyon, to servant's quarters on the 7th floor of a dilapidated building which he shared with two other Africans, from Mali. The small room, barely two metres by three, sub-let without permission, had no heating and was now home to the four Africans, all illegals. Yet one has to feed oneself, clothe oneself and make plans.

Without papers, one cannot get a job in France, open a bank account, register at a university or receive a registered letter at the post office.

This was the cruel reality confronting Koko. Thanks to his three co-tenants, he picked up the tricks of the trade and embarked upon a clandestine life. From time to time, he rents papers: for a small sum of money, he moves around carrying a photocopy of the residence permit of a Togolese – a legal immigrant – and with this “document” he manages to get employment of some sort. Now and then, it is sufficient for him to present a photocopy of a social-security card for a dubious boss to take him on knowing he is an illegal and just wanting to cover his back in the event of a check, but not providing him with any social cover.

Sometimes, he works squarely in the informal sector, having no papers to present, but these are very hard, temporary jobs, such as demolishing buildings, where the risks of accidents are enormous and the wages ridiculously small.

Like all illegals, Koko is exploited by unscrupulous people who take advantage of the precarious nature of their existence. Koko's life can be summed up as a series of obstacles. Every day he has to hug the walls, and avoid

going to certain places where he might be picked up by the police. Every day he risks expulsion from France if subjected to even a minor police check. To avoid this, he is careful to pay his way on public transport and tries to dress like a second-generation immigrant.

The man who does not exist

He is not registered anywhere, and the French authorities do not even know he exists. If he were to disappear, no one would even notice. What solution is now open to him? To legalise his position, he would need to have been in France for a long time. On a visit to the *Collectif des sans-papiers* (a support association championing the rights of illegals in France), he was told that the only ways in which he could obtain papers were the following: either he could marry a French girl (or a citizen of the European Union, or simply a legal-immigrant African girl), or father a child, or “live out his sentence”, ie continue to be an illegal for 10 years and then take any papers to the *préfecture* to request legalisation of his situation in due form. Otherwise, he could return to Côte d'Ivoire.

However, Koko does not wish to return to Abidjan, bringing shame upon himself and his family. Shame at having been taken in by conmen who promised him the moon and who ruined his family. He now dreams of meeting a woman who will enable him to obtain papers, but things are not so easy. If he had money, he would have paid for a marriage of convenience, but what he earns enables him simply to pay his “rent” and to feed himself. He hopes, after his situation has been legalised, that he will be able to get a proper job and send money home to reimburse his parents' debts. Perhaps he could even go back to his studies. His dream of bringing his fiancée Myriam over to France – she is in Abidjan, simply awaiting a sign from him – will obviously not be realised.

For the time being, he has borrowed a suit from one of his comrades in misfortune and has posed for photographs in front of the Arc de Triomphe, the Eiffel Tower and Notre Dame Cathedral. He has sent the pictures to his parents, together with a letter telling them how well he is doing in Paris!

All this is untrue, but it helps to keep the dream alive for young people from poor countries embarking on the adventure to Eldorado at the risk of their life in the bottom of a ship's hold, in an aircraft's undercarriage, in the cold of a refrigerated lorry, or even aboard cockleshells in the Straits of Gibraltar. The tragic chronicle that is clandestine immigration continues.

Dramane Sadio

EXODUS



Sébastião SALGADO / AMAZONAS Images / CONTACT PRESS IMAGES

Rwandan refugee camp, Benako. 1994

Migration is the subject of a major exhibition of photographs by the Brazilian photographer Sébastião Salgado. Throughout the world people are moving on an unprecedented scale. Many are fleeing to save their lives, to escape conflict, persecution, or natural disaster. Others are driven by desperation – to escape destitution and find a better life in more advanced countries.

*“Exodus and the children of the exodus”
1 June -29 July - Botanique, Brussels, Belgium*



Sebastião SALGADO / AMAZONAS Images / CONTACT PRESS IMAGES

Refugee from the Zepa enclave. Kladanj, central Bosnia. 1995

Since the fall of communism, nationalistic, religious and tribal conflicts have erupted in Africa, Asia, and eastern Europe. In Bosnia alone, it is estimated that more than two million people – half of Bosnia's pre-war population – were driven out of their homes.

About half of them remained in the country, taking refuge in abandoned houses or camps.

The remainder – 1.2 million people – became refugees in other countries.



USA-Mexico border. Tijuana, Mexico, 2000. Immigrants settle near the border, ready for an attempt to cross.

No wall can stop them...

All history is the history of migration. People have constantly moved, their presence often greatly enriching the host country.

Now borders are even more blurred due to increasing globalisation, ease of air travel, and information flows. Yet physical barriers seek to contain the flow of humanity.

As barriers mount, increasingly desperate measures are taken by people prepared to risk their lives to circumvent them.

Huge profits are generated by human traffickers. The risk is small for the trafficker, but many clandestine migrants endure terrifying – and often fatal – journeys.



Mozambique, Metangula. Refugees boarded on a military ferry-boat to their destination. 1997

In reality, few people migrate: out of the world's 6 billion population, an estimated 150 million live outside their country of origin, according to the International Organisation for Migration. Apart from the estimated 22 million refugees,

cause for great concern is the estimated 30 – 40 million clandestine migrants.

They are vulnerable to exploitation, and have few rights. They are unlikely to be able to send money back to their country of origin.

Such remittances make an important contribution to the development of their country.

Migration is at the heart of development. As long as under-development persists, wealthier countries will continue to be a magnet for people who have no economic perspectives at home. In an increasingly interconnected world, neither privilege nor poverty can be contained within borders.

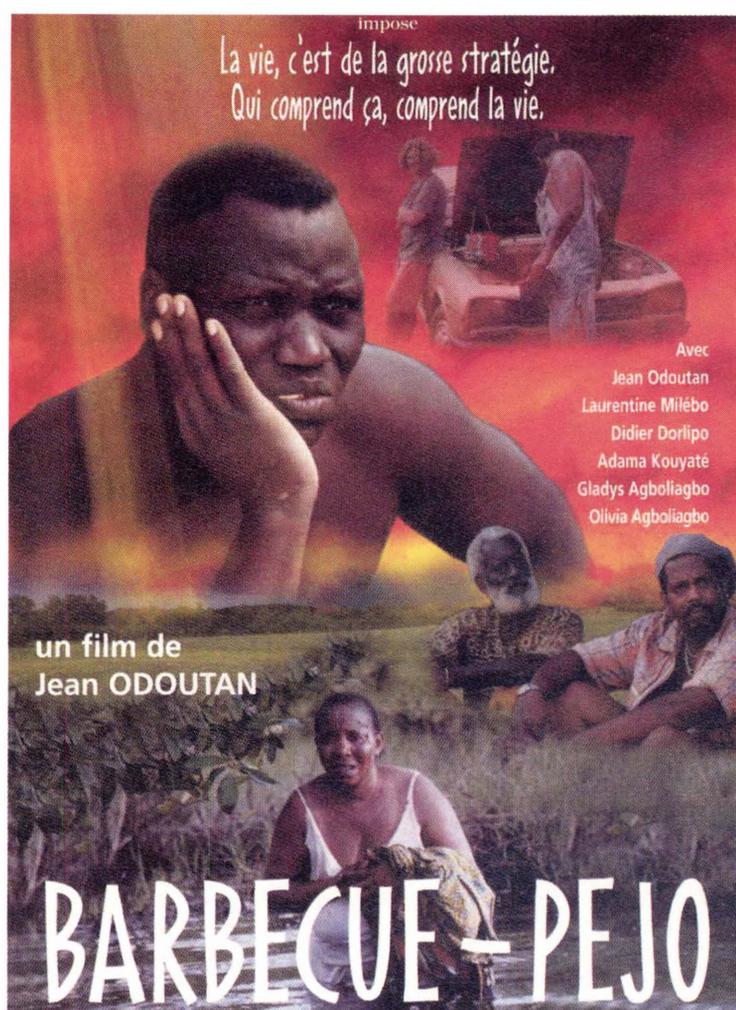
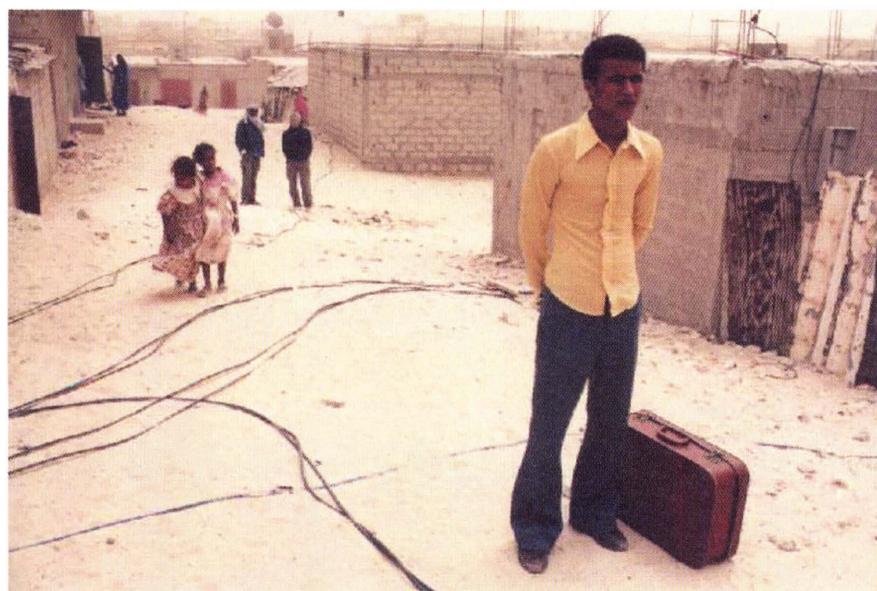
D.M.

Europe and ACP cinema

Between 1992 and 2000, the European Commission helped finance around a hundred films produced by film-makers from ACP countries. This discrete but nonetheless vital support reached out to a vast audience – a showcase and “mouthpiece” for creative talent in the ACPs. Cinema continues to be treated as an important issue, and the various experts in charge of the project are giving it their full attention.

Alfonso Artico

The European Commission recently commissioned an evaluation report, to look at its financial support for film-making in ACP countries. The report came up with several suggestions, relating to, *inter alia*, improvement of the administrative procedures for aid. It also suggests replacing the existing, somewhat archaic, system by a new one guaranteeing transparency, neutrality and professionalism and ensuring better monitoring of the productions in progress. The European Commission took on board the proposals in the report, and created its ACP cinema Support Programme and at the same time a Technical Assistance Mission (TAM) was set up on 20 January 2000. The Programme will span three years and has a budget of €5 million for assistance with productions and €1 million for aiding distribution and promotion.



Working along with the relevant European Commission department (AIDCO/C/4), and within the framework of the European Union's policy of support for ACP cinema, the members of the Technical Assistance Mission can now provide in-depth knowledge of the workings and current state of film-making in ACP countries. The TAM also serves as a link between ACP film-makers and the European Commission (Delegations and Headquarters). It provides expert appraisal of the film projects being considered for support – with the assistance, in particular, of a panel of readers who produce note sheets, – supervises the film projects selected and deals specifically with grants for production or distribution of films.

28 September 2000: the cameras start rolling, the clapperboard snaps shut and the director shouts “action!”

This was the publication date of the first call for proposals (closed on 6 November). Two more calls for proposals will be published before the end of 2002 (the next publication is scheduled for July 2001). The ACP cinema Support Programme is part of a strategic support policy, and it is the logical corollary of cultural relations

▲ “Barbecue-Pejo” directed by Jean Odoutan (Benin). Distribution support.

“Heremakono” directed by Abderrahmane Sissako (Mauritania). Production support



"Lumumba" directed by Raoul Peck (Haiti). Post-production/distribution support.

between the European Commission and ACP countries. Indeed, Lomé IVa (1995-2000, 8th EDF) consists of three important phases:

- a) Recognition and promotion of cultural identities;
- b) Protection and development of cultural heritage;
- c) Access to the marketplace for cultural productions.

Support is also given to the Pan-African Film Festival (Fespaco), held every two years in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (the next one will take place in 2003).

Thus the European Commission, the leading sponsor of ACP culture in general and of ACP cinema in particular, has a key role to play in the promotion and distribution of work by dynamic local film-makers. Several of the films it has supported have enjoyed international success. The list includes *Le grand blanc de Lambaréné* directed by Bassek ba Kobhio (1994, Cameroon), *Buud Yam* by Gaston Kaboré (1997, Burkina Faso), *Kini and Adams* by Idrissa Ouedraogo (South Africa), *La genèse* by Cheik Oumar Sissoko (1999, Mali) and *Lumumba* by Raul Peck (2000, Haiti).

The new support programme has a selection committee of nine people (five Commission officials and four outside professionals – two from ACP countries and two from EU Member States).

Since January 2000, the selection committee has approved a total of 29 projects. 12 films were given the go-ahead at the meeting of 2 March 2000, for a total sum of €2,334,800. Another four were given the green light at the meeting of 19 December 2000, for a total sum of € 880,000 and 13 more at the meeting of 16 February 2001, totalling €2,170,000.

In spite of the generally modest financial means at their disposal, most ACP governments do try to support their countries' artistic projects. They understand the importance of the film industry, its specific economy, its role in convey-

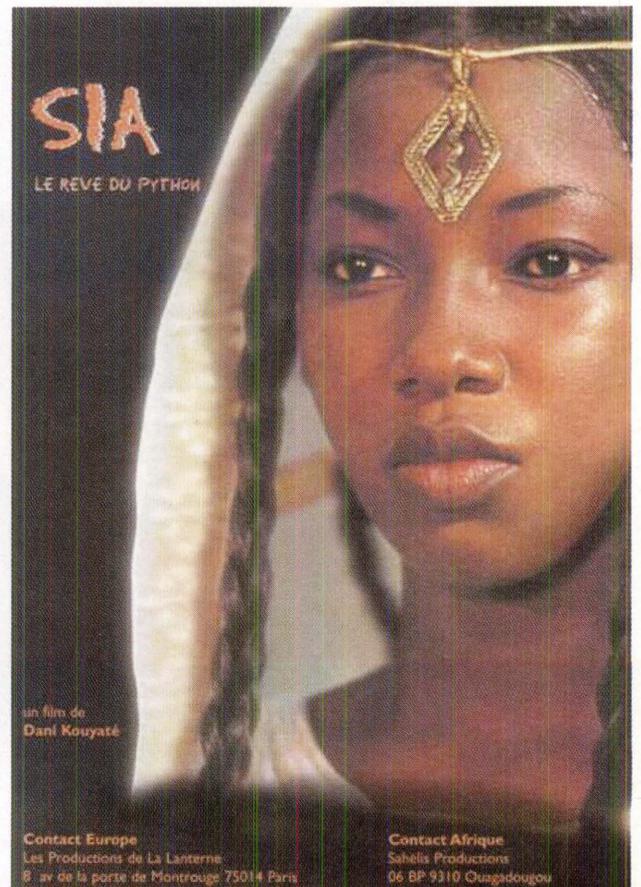
ing knowledge and communicating to others an image of oneself and of one's country. There are, of course, more important priorities, such as education, health, and so on. Most of the countries have no real policy on supporting culture in general and cinema in particular. This is one of the reasons why the European Commission is taking great care to distribute the aid fairly and in a geographically balanced way across all the ACP countries. At the same time, it is doing its best to encourage initiatives to be taken at national level. It takes more than just political will, however. There is also the problem of poor distribution networks and a lack of cinema screens in ACP countries. For this reason, the Cotonou partnership agreement between the European Communities and its ACP partners establishes promotion and support for this important sector as an integral part of cooperation (Article 27).

There are plenty of ideas under consideration for the future, such as the creation of a professional film school in West Africa, and plans for training courses in television and radio.

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"Sia, le rêve du python" (*Sia, the python's dream*) directed by Dani Kouyaté (Burkina Faso). Post-production support. Winner of the 2001 European Jury prize at Fespaco.



The Labyrinthine world of art

How does an artist live in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) these days? Let's take a look at one of the most illustrious representatives of the rising class in an attempt to paint a realistic picture of the situation.

Djo Tunda Wa Munga

Meko

His work is big in scale. He thinks big and is considered a big name....

In his field, Meko Christophe is the best-known artist in Kinshasa. Born in 1970, this young "monumentalist" found fame in a remarkable way by winning two major competitions in the last decade. 1991 saw him construct the *Paix et liberté* (peace and liberty) monument on the prestigious Mandela square in Kinshasa, and in 1993 he constructed the *Monument de la réconciliation* (reconciliation monument), built to mark the close of the national conference and which stands tall over the square of the same name – Place de la Réconciliation, also in Kinshasa. What better way to launch a career, given that he was still a student at the Kinshasa school of art and architecture at the time!

Ten years later he won the competition to design the mausoleum of the late President Laurent D. Kabila.

But what future faces a young artist in a country like the Democratic Republic of the Congo, torn apart by war and the victim of an economic crisis that was largely the result of 32 years of dictatorship and of Mobutist pillaging?

Terminology

"Monumentalism" is perhaps not the official term for his work; the academic term is sculptor. At the Kinshasa school of art and architecture, the term sculptor was considered inappropriate and outdated by the professors who made the school what it is today. Gradually the term monumentalism crept into common use to describe the art of constructing monuments, and before long the term was fully accepted into the language and minds of the people, in much the same way as architecture, painting and sculpture.

In concrete terms...

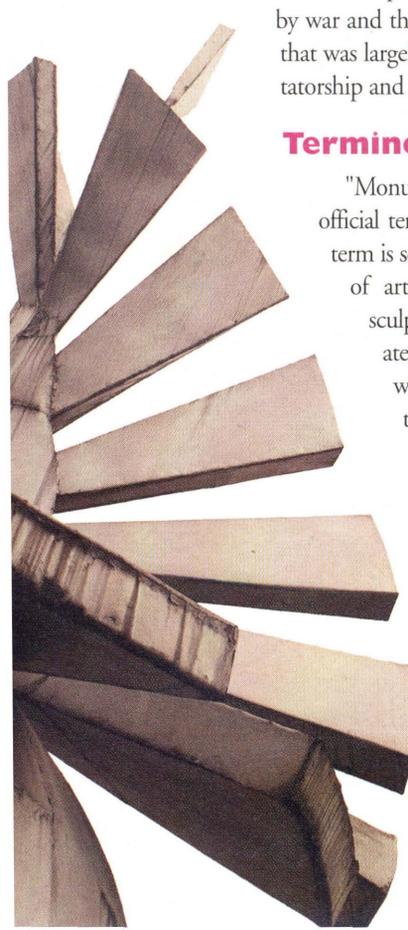
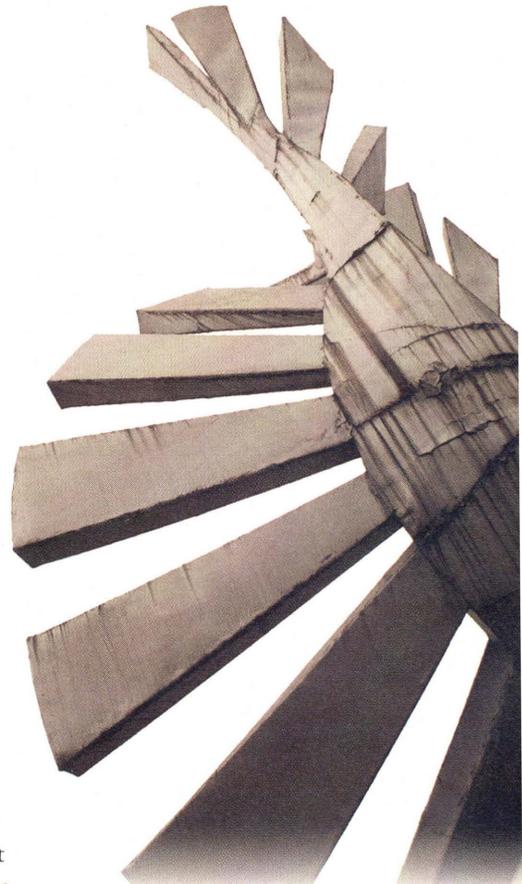
When constructing this kind of monumental work, the first step is to build a scale model that has to be just as accurate as the finished piece, and small enough so that it can be transported by hand. Then the project has to be submitted to financial backers who have to decide on its viability. It is not hard to imagine the many conflicts of opinion that can arise from such a situation, given that nine times out of ten the decision is made by people who most likely have no artistic training and a distinct lack of artistic vision. They will probably give the artist a whole series of recommendations and suggested modifications – which can risk destroying the essence of the work. The artist has to reach a reluctant compromise in order to secure funding, which often takes far too long. Once funding is in place, work can begin. The artist abandons the comfort of his studio to take up the role of foreman supervising the workers, and experiences firsthand the sweat, mud and hard work involved in producing the final work.

Art and business hand-in-hand

As we have seen, there are many and varied stages involved in the physical construction of the work. But the artist's work is not yet finished. Before art can become a reality, another process is required. Although from an ethical point of view it leaves a lot to be desired, it is vital to the artist's cause. We are of course talking about marketing. In the DRC more so than in other countries, marketing is broken down into three stages. The first stage is the search for information. It is vital to know which projects are going to be financed over the next few months so as to be able to present them to the right person, someone who knows how to get in touch with the most influential person, who, in turn, must be able to favourably influence the decision-maker when the time is right. However, so many people are now using this technique that it is no longer quality of workmanship that is important but an ability to get round this figurative obstacle course in record time! Where is the corruption in all that? Generally not too far away!

The second stage; 'showbiz'. The equatorial African version bears little resemblance to the Cannes festival or MTV Awards. Here, you can achieve much more. Whereas in the West a number

Detail of the Reconciliation Monument



of structures are in place which form a barrier between politics, finance and art, such mechanisms here are weak, creating a situation whereby the artist may find himself at the same table as ministers or heads of companies and therefore in a position to be able to discuss his ideas directly with the highest relevant authority. The disadvantage is that refusing to take part in such showbiz antics will give others a chance to get in first with their projects and leave you with nothing. Institutions never get a chance to perform the role they were created for, vote-catching gimmicks reign and the artists who fail to get their careers off the ground will never get anywhere, except in the case of a miracle, if indeed such a thing still exists.

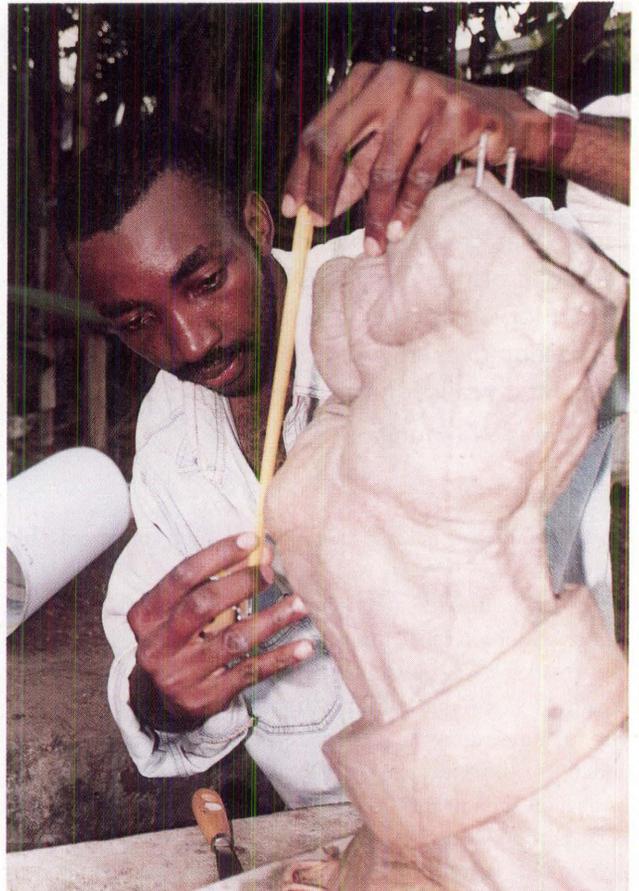
The final stage; status. This is a natural consequence of the other two stages. To be able to join those who move in influential circles, you have to be able to call them – given the fuel and transport problems, attempting to travel somewhere without an appointment is like trying to catch flies with chopsticks – but there are virtually no “normal” telephones left in the DRC given that the OCPT (Congolese post office and telecommunications service) is moribund. The government is trying to get it back on its feet again but the results are slow in coming. The only phones that work properly are the portable ones. As things stand at the moment, there are six private telephone networks: Starcel, Comcell, Celtel, Celnet, Oasis and Afritel. Of course, all these networks are in competition with one another and are therefore for the most part not connected up to one another. To get hold of the various people you wish to speak to, two or three phones are often required – obviously not a solution open to everyone – and bills are often paid in dollars. Art, marketing and the political/financial imbroglio, not to forget corruption, are inextricably linked, creating an extremely oppressive atmosphere.

Where is the artist?

He is hanging on in there! Reality is such that he is forced to find different forms of expression to ensure his survival. Meko cannot adopt the exclusive role of “monumentalist”, as an artist from the north would do. He has to try his hand at everything if he is to keep his head above water. He has dabbled in technical drawing for publicity campaigns, sculptures to adorn houses and perhaps soon even television. An African artist has to spread his talents very thin and does not have the stability to be able to “make it” in more structured countries. He does exist, however; and his style is instantly recognisable. The various media and means of expression he adopts are irrelevant. What counts is the soul that he pours into his work. At the end of the day, the form he chooses is of little importance. It is merely the shell housing the spirit.

Complex situation for artists in the DRC

Meko is lucky enough to be able to continue practising his art. He has just about got the measure of it. But the com-



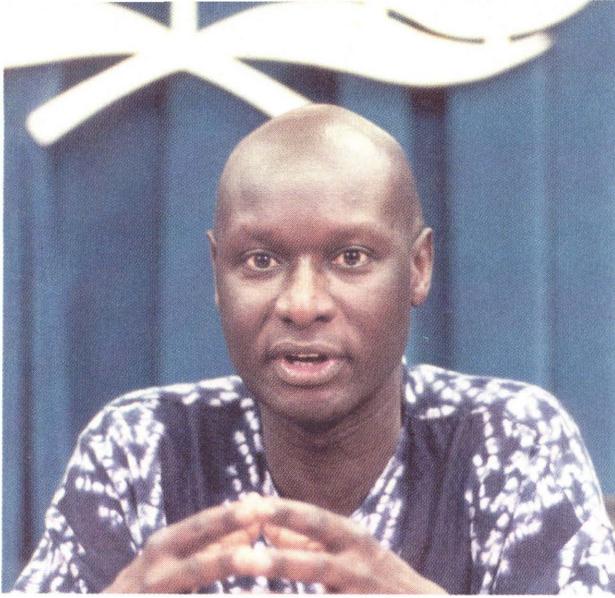
Detail of the Mausoleum

plexity of the situation leaves no room for pleasure. Being one of the few who actually make it is certainly nothing to be proud of. The system as a whole does not work: any structures put in place have collapsed, artists are taking up acrobatics just to con-

tinue working and this is seen as perfectly normal! This perverse situation is extremely dangerous because it leaves no room for quality in the long term. Since art and culture are an unavoidable reflection of the state of society, African society risks waking up one day and finding itself completely hideous and deformed. Repercussions on other aspects of society will be just as damaging and it will take more and more time for Africa to get back on track. The artist can opt to leave Africa and find a better home in which to develop his art, but the brain drain is a gangrene that has left Africa in the hands of complete novices. The level of underdevelopment is readily apparent today. The only real solution is to stay and to continue to fight for improvement, not for personal gain but for a system that will benefit everyone.



Monument « Paix et Liberté »



Meet the children's champion

Olara Otunnu was appointed by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan as Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in August 1997. As an advocate for the rights of children in conflict situations, he promotes measures for their protection in times of war and for their healing and social reintegration in its aftermath. *The Courier* interviewed Mr Otunnu in Brussels at the end of November 2000.

What is the purpose of your visit?

This is part of my ongoing consultations with the Brussels-based institutions. I think regional organisations have a crucial role in promoting the protection of children affected by conflict. The EU is one of the most important, engaged and sophisticated regional organisations. From the outset, I wanted to cultivate interest here – within the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament. Working together we have made very important progress so far.

What do you hope to achieve in concrete terms in your discussions?

I want to raise awareness generally and make the issue of children affected by conflict a subject of advocacy. A number of European Parliament members are now deeply engaged and there have been hearings and resolutions, especially on the question of child soldiers.

We have also been cooperating closely with ECHO on these issues, and are working hard to integrate this into the practical aspects of the Commission's work – in particular at budgetary level. We are also discussing how the Commission might help UNICEF in Sierra Leone with the rehabilitation of child soldiers. We are moving from a principled commitment to some very practical measures.

I was engaged with the ACP-EU Joint Assembly and the ACP Secretariat during the run-up to the adoption of the Cotonou Agreement. I am pleased to say that after long discussions we have an article devoted to youth issues that includes a section on helping children affected by conflicts. Part of what I am discussing now is how we can

translate this into activities that benefit children on the ground.

The EU has played a very important role in putting in place the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.

The Optional Protocol is an example of the strenuous efforts to strengthen international rules for the protection of children. Is this useful given that when conflicts erupt respect for legal norms is often the first casualty?

The starting point is to agree on common or universal standards. In the case of the Optional Protocol, it was very important that the age limit for participation in conflict be raised to 18. We achieved this. We were not successful in having the same limit for recruitment but it is now 16, which is an improvement.

Having established a common standard, we must now move to the next level, to make it work in practice. How do we ensure that the realities on the ground reflect this higher standard of protection? One way is to take these standards into the field and deploy them as advocacy tools. We have to say very clearly to fighting groups: "You must not use children below 18. There are now international standards that make this unacceptable."

We must also address the factors that make it easy for children to be exploited as child soldiers. For example, socio-economic collapse may make membership in armed groups attractive simply because there are no better alternatives. There is also the appeal of ideology that draws children to these groups and makes them feel they are contributing to a struggle.

It is vital to focus on improving capacity on the ground for responding to the needs of former child soldiers. The means for receiving, rehabilitating and reintegrating these children are inadequate. We need to give more support to UNICEF, the relevant NGOs and to national governments for the rehabilitation and reintegration of these children.

The real struggle is on the ground and I was keen to get the Optional Protocol adopted so that we could redirect our energies there. I am still pressing very hard for all countries to sign and ratify the Protocol as soon as possible. We need ten ratifications for it to enter into force.

Now that the situation in Kosovo has been stabilised, are you satisfied with efforts to restore normality to the lives of the children who were displaced so abruptly in 1999?

Kosovo is a good example of the new awareness created about post-conflict situations. We are beginning to devote special attention and resources to the needs of the children and in this sense Kosovo has been a beneficiary of our advocacy work. It is also beginning to pay off in Sierra Leone and East Timor.

The work began in Albania and Macedonia after the Kosovars were expelled and is ongoing during their return and resettlement. But one aspect continues to trouble me. At the moment, we have a highly polarised situation in Kosovo and young people have been drawn into it. We must find a way to break the cycle through education, radio and television broadcasts and other targeted programmes designed to make them part of the reconciliation process and not part of the continuation of the war.

It must, at times, seem an uphill struggle. Do you ever feel discouraged?

It is a huge and very daunting task. My experience in the last few years shows, however, that we have been able to make tangible progress in pushing the agenda forward.

I have inevitably witnessed a lot of suffering, hatred and despair in the conflict areas I have visited. But I have also encountered extraordinary efforts undertaken by local people, often women, to protect and defend children.

The level of public awareness has risen considerably, while political leaders are paying more attention to the protection of children in conflict situations. The UN Security Council has affirmed that the protection and security of children is a legitimate peace and security issue. We are working with the peace and

security sector of the UN, as well as with regional groups, to incorporate the protection of children into peacekeeping mandates and activities.

An innovative step has been the creation of "child protection advisors" who are directly attached to peacekeeping missions to safeguard the interests of children. Reports to the Security Council on conflict areas contain sections devoted specifically to children. The African Charter of the Rights and Welfare of Children came into force a year ago.

We are also working to develop training programmes to sensitise peacekeeping personnel, both military and civilian, to the protection and respect of the rights of children and women.

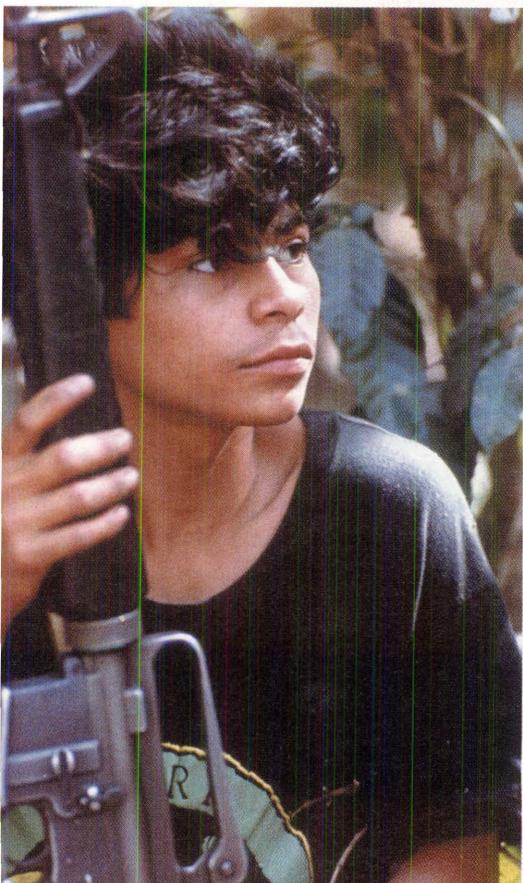
NGOs have been galvanised into action. The NGO coalition to stop the use of child soldiers contributed significantly to the adoption of the Optional Protocol. Also very gratifying is the way in which they are developing activities in the field to respond to the needs of children affected by conflict.

We must consolidate the progress made so far and create a critical mass of activities out of these efforts to translate them into realities on the ground

I have inevitably witnessed a lot of suffering, hatred and despair in the conflict areas I have visited. But I have also encountered extraordinary efforts undertaken by local people, often women, to protect and defend children. Many of these people have never heard of the Geneva Conventions and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child or of our various agencies. I could give you examples from Juba to Burundi to Kosovo. These are the people who sustain my hope. We need to learn more from them and to reinforce their efforts.

Born and raised in Uganda, Mr Otunnu is a lawyer by training. He was his country's Permanent Representative to the UN from 1980 to 1985, has served as Foreign Minister of Uganda, and has had a distinguished academic career. From 1990 until 1997 he was President of the International Peace Academy. Interview by Simon Horner, Press and Information, EU Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO)

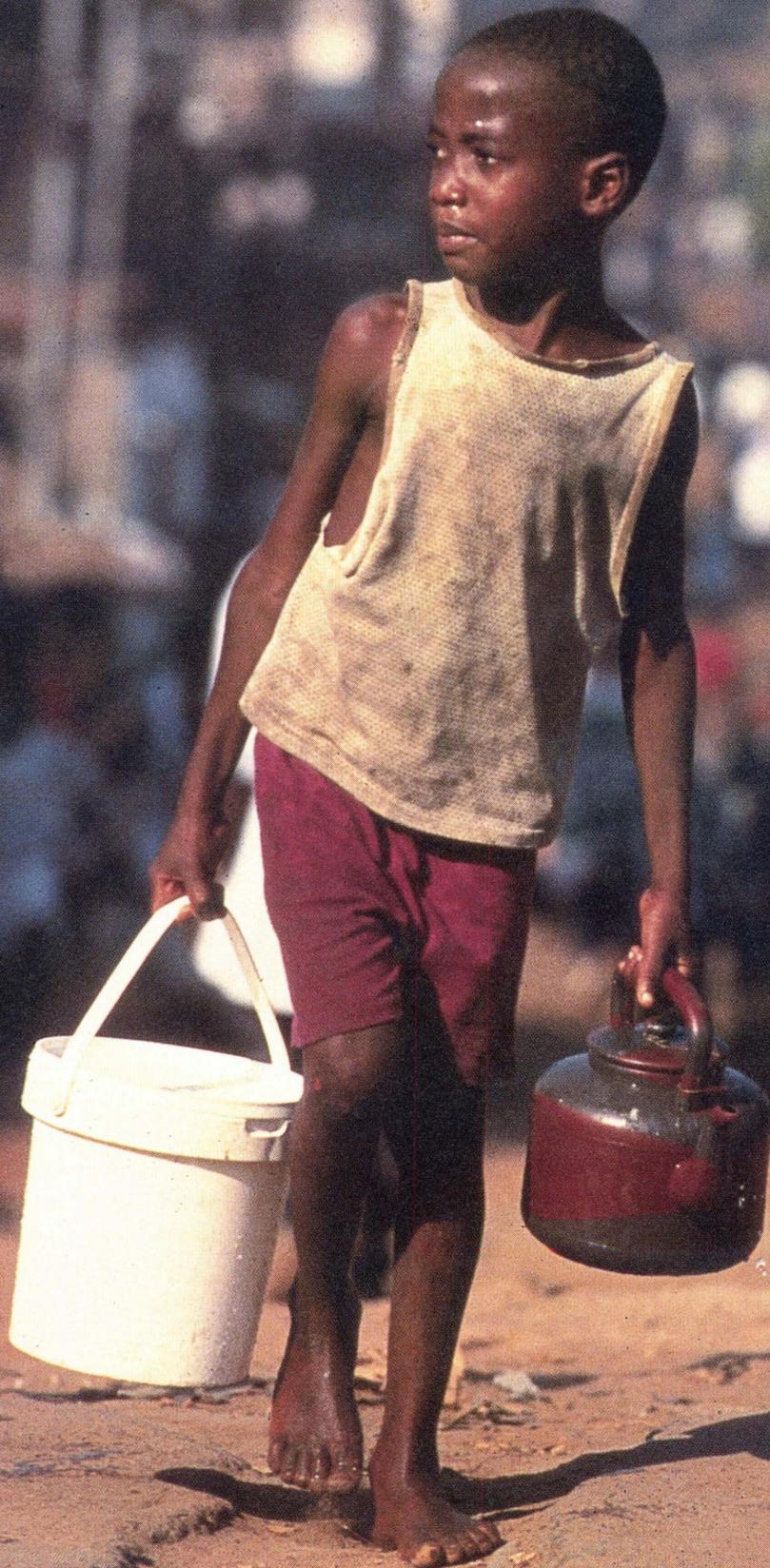
The UN will hold a special session on children from 19-21 September at the United Nations in New York
<http://www.unicef.org>



UN Photo 159528/J. Bleibtreu Doc. 10242

Child soldier

Country report
Sierra Leone





Sierra Leone

A journalist in search of a human interest story sadly does not need to look far in Sierra Leone. Almost everyone you meet in this troubled land has a tale to tell. The universal backdrop is the struggle to survive and the canvas is then filled with myriad accounts of suffering and anguish, pain and endurance.

Simon Horner*

The recent tragic history of Sierra Leone contrasts starkly with the optimism that accompanied its independence from Britain in 1961. At that time, it was seen as a country of great promise, with diverse natural and mineral resources and good development prospects. Development proved illusive, however, and while relative stability was maintained until the early 1990s, political tensions grew under the one-party rule of the All People's Congress (APC) which took power in 1978.

Decade of conflict

In 1992, the APC administration of Joseph Momoh was overthrown in a coup ushering in a decade of bitter conflict. From 1992 to 1996, Sierra Leone was governed by the military through the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC). Captain Valentine Strasser became Head of State but his grip on the country was seriously challenged by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) which took control of large tracts of the country's interior and mounted regular attacks in government-held areas. In 1996, the NPRC handed power back to a democratically elected civilian administration and Ahmed Tejan Kabbah of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) became President. The war with the RUF con-

tinued, however, and just over a year later, the government was ousted in a new military coup. Working with the RUF, the army elements involved in the takeover formed the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and Major Johnny Paul Koroma was sworn in as President. The international community reacted strongly to this turn of events, demanding the restoration of the elected government. On the military front, Nigerian-led ECOMOG troops from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) joined the fight against the AFRC/RUF alongside the Kamajors, a loosely-organised group of civil defence militias who stayed loyal to the elected government. Freetown was recaptured in February 1998 and President Kabbah returned to power. Fierce fighting continued for many months. In July 1999, hopes were raised with the signature of the Lomé Peace accord which envisaged a government of national unity including RUF ministers. Nigeria progressively withdrew the bulk of its forces and a United Nations Peacekeeping Force (UNAMSIL) was formed.

Since the Lomé agreement, there have been numerous setbacks to the peace process. Instead of participating in government, the RUF returned to the bush and resumed its attacks. In late 2000, it effectively called a ceasefire within Sierra Leone and began operations across the border, drawing the Guinean army into the conflict for the first time. Liberia, which has its own internal difficulties, is also part of the equation. The UN has accused the Monrovia regime of being involved in the trade in illicit diamonds from rebel-controlled areas of Sierra Leone. This trade has made some people very rich and generated money to purchase arms.

In this unpromising environment, UNAMSIL struggled initially to fulfil its peacekeeping mandate. At one stage, several hundred of its troops were held hostage by rebels.

Recently, the signs have been more promising. UNAMSIL has succeeded in deploying further inland in RUF-controlled localities - though not where the diamond mines are situated. British troops, stationed in Freetown to train the reconstituted Sierra Leone Army (SLA), have bolstered the confidence of people living in the Western area. The RUF has even spoken about the war being over and an agreement with

- ▲ *View of Freetown: A large population is concentrated in the capital*
- ▲ *Helicopter gunship in the government-held enclave of Bumbuna in the Northern Province*
- ▼ *Years of conflict have exacted a terrible toll*





▲ Residents of the transit camp in Kabala
A third of the country's people have been displaced as a result of the fighting



IDP camp near Kenema, Eastern Province ▲

the government to disarm both rebel soldiers and Civil Defence Forces (loyal to the government) has led to an increase in the numbers of fighters handing in their weapons. But hopes have been dashed many times in the past and people are understandably cautious about whether the momentum can be sustained. There are still many unresolved issues and competing factions whose interests must be reconciled.

Terrible toll

Years of conflict have exacted a terrible toll on the people of Sierra Leone. Tens of thousands of people have died in the fighting and with the resulting collapse of health services, many more have succumbed to preventable diseases. Random acts of brutality have been widespread including amputations of limbs carried out by armed group as a punishment or to 'encourage' loyalty. Many women, including young girls, have been raped or sexually assaulted. One of the most shocking aspects of the conflict has been the conscription of large numbers of children as fighters.

From a humanitarian standpoint, the displacement of people poses one of the biggest challenges. It is estimated that a third of the population are either refugees in neighbouring countries or internally displaced (IDPs) within Sierra Leone. In the interior, large areas have been depopulated while Freetown and the Western area have had to cope with a huge influx of homeless people. Thousands have

become long-term residents of camps. In Guinea, recent clashes have forced many refugees to seek safety elsewhere.

What most of these people have in common is that they are destitute, depending on support from humanitarian agencies for their very survival. For many other Sierra Leoneans – those who have not been displaced – the situation is

not much better. The war has destroyed much of the country's economic base resulting in mass unemployment and chronic poverty.

Rich in mineral resources

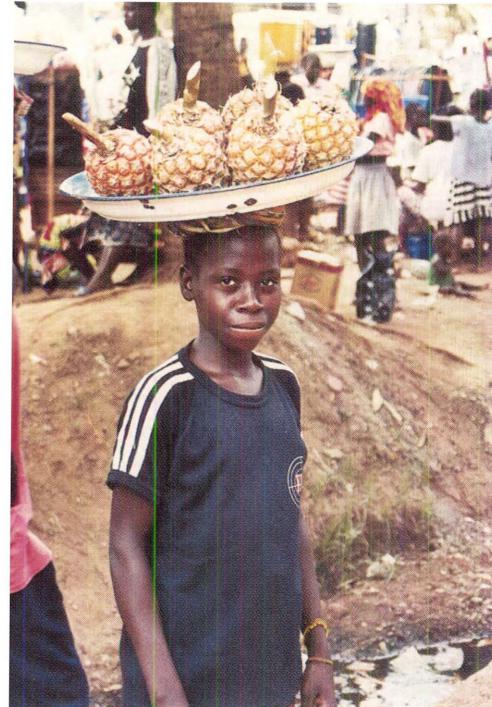
The irony is that Sierra Leone should be one of the richest countries in Africa. Those who argue that diamonds have proved to be more of a curse than a blessing may have a point. In the south-east, these are found on or close to the surface and little capital investment is needed for their extraction. The high-value stones can also be smuggled out relatively easily providing a ready source of income for those who control the territory in question.

Surface mining of diamonds will always be more difficult to regulate but if this activity could be legitimised the financial benefits for Sierra Leone could be significant. The country has potential for deep-mining of diamonds, but this requires major investment (almost certainly from overseas), currently almost non-existent on account of the security situation.



A diamond dealer's premises in the government-held town of Kenema
The desire to control the diamond producing areas has fuelled the war

Foreign investment is also the key to reviving the rest of Sierra Leone's mineral sector. Before the war the biggest export earner was not diamonds but rutile (titanium dioxide) which is used in paint pigments and other protective coatings. The rutile mine in the north-west closed in 1995 following rebel attacks, and efforts to reopen it since then have been regularly thwarted by upsurges in fighting. EU support is envisaged



Agriculture provided a living for most Sierra Leoneans prior to the war and will be crucial again if a lasting peace can be established.

war and will be crucial again if a lasting peace can be established. Most rural people are subsistence farmers and assuming that the bulk of those who have been displaced can return to their home areas, getting the land back into production will be a priority. Rice is the main subsistence crop while cash crops include cocoa, coffee, ginger, groundnuts and oil palm. In the less fertile north, the focus is on cattle and there is also some artisanal fishing along the coast.

Reviving manufacturing, which used to be quite extensive in the Western Area around Freetown, is probably a longer term project, given the substantial investment that will be needed. This sector could play an important part, however, in consolidating stability, on account of the demographic situation. Urbanisation is a common phenomenon in many developing countries and Sierra Leone was no exception in the pre-war period with a steady influx of people to the Freetown area. The conflict has accentuated this process and while many of the displaced will go back to their villages when these become accessible, there will still be a large population concentrated in the capital. Job creation in the formal sector will be needed if urban poverty is to be tackled.

It may be difficult to imagine given the current state of Sierra Leone, but another area with potential (100% unrealised at present) is tourism. In more peaceful times, the country was quite a popular destination for longer-haul tourists, with its beautiful beaches in and around Freetown set against the backdrop of the Peninsula Mountains. Tourism collapsed when the fighting erupted and only a few hotels have stayed in business, catering mainly for UN and external aid agency staff visiting the country.

It is clear that the ending of hostilities could deliver a huge "peace dividend" across all economic sectors. War, by definition engenders unnecessary suffering but it is all the more frustrating when it is so easy to contrast the reality with "what might have been".

to help get this facility up and running again but everything depends on ending the conflict.

In addition, Sierra Leone has important deposits of bauxite, (1.5 million tonnes mined in 1989) as well as iron ore, chromite, gold and kimberlite.

While minerals offer the best potential for export earnings, agriculture provided a living for most Sierra Leoneans prior to the

Economic development is, of course, essential for the renewal of the country's social sectors. Health, education and other basic infrastructures have been badly affected and, in many areas, completely destroyed. There has also been a "brain drain" of the most qualified people whose skills are vital if Sierra Leone is to achieve a lasting recovery.

Complex society

The potted history provided above of recent events in Sierra Leone gives some indication of the complexity of this society. It contains at least 15 ethnic groups, the largest of which are the Temne and the Mende. Even before the war, the territories occupied by the various groups were not clearly defined and, in the chaos of the past decade, the waters have become even more muddied. In ethnic terms, a further fault line is said to have contributed to tensions. This was between the people living in or near the capital and those inhabiting the interior. Many of the former are descended

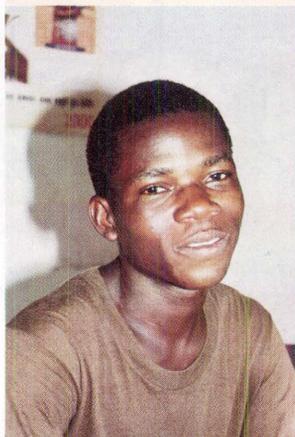
Restoring hope for the children who went to war

ECHO, the EU's Humanitarian Aid Office, has provided relief for the war victims of Sierra Leone for a number of years. Funding, directed through operational agencies working in the country, has been used among other things to support residents of IDP and refugee camps, and to supply basic health services. Another important area of activity is the rehabilitation of child soldiers. Here we report on a centre near Freetown which has received financial support from ECHO.

The coastal community of Lakka, just south of Freetown, seems a good place to locate an Interim Care Centre (ICC). It is a tranquil spot, far removed from the horrors of war, where former child soldiers can take the essential first steps towards reintegrating into society.

The beachfront premises have been adapted to accommodate children who were involved in the fighting. Having emerged from "the bush", the youthful ex-combatants enter the DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Rehabilitation) programme and are then sent to an ICC where they receive psychosocial support and basic education.

The centre is one of three in Sierra Leone run by the Italian NGO COOPI which has received financial support from ECHO among others. Philip Kamara, who is a child protection officer at Lakka, explained some of the techniques used to ease the trauma



Hassan, a former child soldier and resident of the Lakka ICC

from freed slaves from the Americas who were settled on the peninsula at various stages during the colonial period. They speak Creole, a dialect of English, and used to provide most of the country's educated elite.

Political loyalties reflect ethnicity to some extent but again, the situation is fluid. While the parties represented in Parliament draw their support mainly from particular groups or regions, they have an obvious interest in broadening their base. The RUF, which has still to contest an election, is presumed to have some support in the interior although its opponents argue that they rule in their areas through fear and coercion. The picture is one of powerful personalities and shifting alliances, rather than a contest of ideas.

Perhaps the most complex issues relate to the various armed groups operating in Sierra Leone. The British are training the regular army to be a professional, non-political force but it remains to be seen if this will work, bearing in mind the SLA's history. Efforts are still underway to convince the RUF to lay down its arms and enter the arena of legiti-

matic stress suffered by the centre's residents. Each new arrival is allotted a "care-giver" who is trained to cope with difficult behaviour and fulfils a kind of parental role. The care givers offer counselling or simply a friendly ear to their charges once they are ready to talk about their experiences. They provide guidance and help the young people rediscover some of the pleasures of childhood through games and organised activities. Basic schooling is also offered including some vocational teaching. The centre has its own small farming operation, raising livestock and chickens, and is involved in artisanal fishing.

Philip stresses the importance of following up on the progress of former residents who ideally only stay for six weeks in Lakka before going back into society. Efforts are made to contact and sensitise the children's families and there are relatively few cases of rejection where contact is established. Alternative "independent living" arrangements are sought for those who cannot rejoin their families.

We also spoke with one of the centre's residents, 16-year old Hassan, who was a child soldier for four years. He told us he was "glad to be out of the bush" and expressed the hope that others still bearing arms would soon follow the same route. He would like to return to his home area of Magburaka, where he still has relatives, and is interested in taking up carpentry.

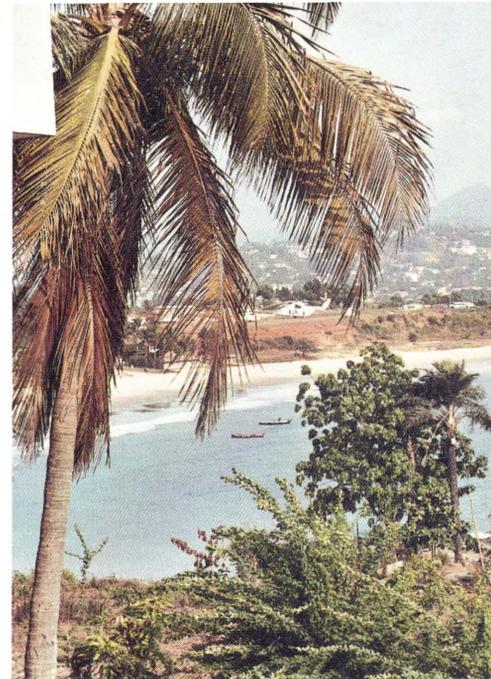
A former child soldier, who may have been forced to commit acts of extreme brutality, is unlikely to find it easy to adjust to normal living. This means that the time spent in an ICC can only be the first stage in a rehabilitation process that could last a long time. It is a crucial stage, however, and it is through the dedication of those who run the Lakka ICC and other similar centres, that hope is restored for the children who went to war.

mate democratic politics but this is no easy task when so much blood has been spilled and trust is at a premium. In this context, there is the difficult question of how to deal with those suspected of war crimes. Brutal acts have been committed and justice demands that the perpetrators be held to account, but how can this be balanced against the need for reconciliation? Then

there are the Civil Defence Forces who remained loyal when parts of the army switched sides. These are essentially irregular fighters, without a central command, who claim a privileged position because of the part they played in restoring President Kabbah. Is the reward of peace enough to persuade them to give up their right to bear arms?

Despite the formidable difficulties, the government has one major advantage, which is near unanimous backing from the international community. This has been reflected in practical assistance, most notably through UNAMSIL and ECOMOG before it, which has arguably tipped the military balance (even if UNAMSIL has only a peacekeeping mandate). The 1997 coup leaders almost certainly underestimated the global reaction and, in the final analysis, they were unable to withstand the pressure.

Given that this international approval was strongly based on the government's democratic legitimacy, it is perhaps unsurprising that President Kabbah should now wish to secure a new mandate. Observers question, however, whether Sierra Leone will be in a position to run a countrywide election by the end of 2001. The government is pressing on with its plans, conscious that its life has already been extended beyond the constitutional five-year deadline. Cynics might argue that an early election favours the incumbents given that opposition support is more concentrated in rebel-occupied areas, but the counter-argument is that a flawed election might be worse than no election at all. The government no doubt wants to win at the ballot box but it also wants the international observers to report that everything was done properly. This means getting the polling stations open in as much of the country as possible, and ensuring that most Sierra Leoneans, including hundreds of thousands of displaced people, are registered to vote. It is a race against time, the outcome of which will ultimately depend on the progress that is made towards peace and disarmament.



Considerable potential for tourism, but only if the war can be ended

**Press and Information Officer, ECHO*

DR KADI SESAY, MINISTER FOR DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC PLANNING

Key elements for a lasting peace

Dr Kadi Sesay was a lecturer in applied linguistics and literature at the University of Sierra Leone prior to her appointment as Chair of the National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights, one of the institutions set up to manage Sierra Leone's transition from military to civilian rule in the mid-1990s. In November 1999, she was appointed Minister for Development and Economic Planning.

Simon Horner interviewed her in March, in her office in Freetown.



The Courier

Dr Kadi Sesay, Minister for Development and Economic Planning

Sierra Leone's long-running conflict means that you are operating against a very difficult backdrop. What are the key elements needed to achieve lasting peace here?

The first is to have a strong, professional and loyal army with a first class intelligence network, to serve as a deterrent. Second, we need to consolidate our democratic and human rights institutions, which includes holding free and fair elections. This is important to build confidence that the country is once again on a democratic path. And we must have an effective poverty-reduction programme. A lot of people believe that poverty is an underlying cause of the war and we need to tackle it if we are to sustain the peace.

Those who are currently fighting must also be willing to embrace peace and here, the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme is crucial. Reconciliation and forgiveness are also essential. Fortunately, I believe that the people are keen to move on and achieve reconciliation despite all the terrible things that have happened. But of course it depends on the attitude of the fighting forces. If they are willing to come out and embrace peace, then the people will be willing to accept them.

Is that realistic at the moment? The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) may not be very active militarily inside Sierra Leone but there have been major clashes with Guinean forces in the border areas. That suggests that the RUF is still in fighting mode.

Yes, but we are hoping that all the international pressure on their supporters will have an effect. The fact that we have had very little fighting within Sierra Leone for a long time now is a good sign. We keep hearing from RUF members that they are tired of fighting and want to lay down their arms. Another encouraging aspect is that UNAMSIL is now deploying in certain areas previously held by the RUF. So I think the signs are positive.

Is the United Nations pressure on Liberia assisting the process?

Absolutely. The UN has collected evidence of Charles Taylor's support for the RUF and Liberia's involvement in the "blood" diamonds trade. We believe strongly that if the pressure is kept on Liberia, including the threat of sanctions, the RUF will lose their source of funding. The diamond money pays for arms and ammunition which are then used to kill innocent people in Sierra Leone. If we can cut that link, I think there will be sustainable peace in this country.

On to the issue of elections in Sierra Leone, some people are critical of the decision to extend the life of the Parliament and Government beyond the official term. Others wonder if it will be feasible to stage the elections even by the end of the year. What are your views?

Let's be clear here. The possibility of extending the life of the Parliament and Government for a further six

months is in the Constitution. Most people accept that, with large parts of the country still under RUF rule, or at least behind their lines, it is impracticable to hold elections now. Once UNAMSIL has deployed more widely and civil authority has been restored in these areas, it should be possible to organise the polls. Under the provisions of the extension, this should happen once the six-month period has expired. Things are progressing well at the moment with UNAMSIL moving into new areas and we are hoping that soon, the whole of the north will be taken over – and eventually, the diamond mining areas in the east as well.

Don't forget that Sierra Leone has a strong democratic history. We have always fought for democracy. Even during military rule, we went on to the streets and insisted that the people have the right to determine who governs them.

Everybody knows and accepts that elections must be held. In fact, the ruling party would almost certainly have preferred to have the ballot now. They are in a stronger position because the other parties need more time to prepare. But it has to be a practical proposition. It would be foolish to do anything that might further endanger people's lives.

What about the voting system? A decision must be taken between the proportional list system used exceptionally last time and the "first past the post" constituency method envisaged in the Constitution. Do you have a personal preference?

That's a difficult one. When I was with the National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights, one of our tasks was to help educate the voters about the system chosen for the 1996 elections. At that time, because of the insecurity, it would have been impossible to hold a constituency-type election which is why the country opted for proportional representation using national lists.

Today, I know there are still people who want to retain proportional voting. But if the situation is more secure, with access to most of the country guaranteed, I have the feeling that most would prefer to go back to the constituency system.

Each system has advantages and disadvantages. There is no doubt that PR helped calm the emotions that we used to see at election times, simply because you didn't have one-to-one contests between candidates. Because people voted for party lists rather than individuals, the atmosphere was not so confrontational and there was a lot less violence. On the other hand, there are reservations about the kind of candidate who gets into Parliament under PR and there are those who would prefer to re-establish the direct link between the voters in a particular area and their elected representatives.

At the end of the day, I think a lot will depend on the security situation. But the people will make their

views known and the government will listen to what they have to say.

Turning to your own departmental portfolio, the IMF has given a reasonably positive assessment of recent economic development in Sierra Leone, despite the security problems. How do you plan to sustain the momentum?

It is true that, at our last meeting with the IMF and World Bank, they were amazed that we have managed to achieve macroeconomic growth during such a difficult period in our history. I believe the government must continue with the prudent fiscal and monetary policies that have brought about this situation.

At the same time, we are working hard on poverty reduction. We now have a final draft of an interim poverty reduction strategy paper which is being examined by the Cabinet. After Cabinet endorsement, it will be submitted to the World Bank and IMF. The aim is to move from the fairly expensive "post-conflict" facility, which is what we have now, to the "poverty reduction and growth facility" which is a lot cheaper. This will also enable us to gain access to the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative and thus to debt relief.

So we are developing good tools to move the country from its current difficult situation towards a more viable economy. We are making plans and addressing the various sectors that need strengthening for us to move from the emergency relief to the development phase.



The Courier

Police station in Kabala, destroyed in a rebel attack. "People are keen to move on and achieve reconciliation despite all the terrible things that have happened"

We are also working on a longer-term strategy – a shared national vision for the next 25 years which is called "Vision 25". This has just been launched and we will be going round the country listening to the people and holding workshops and debates with every sector. After such a long war, we need to start planning the way forward, and this can only be done effectively with a "bottom-up" approach.

So the approach is a combination of sound macro-economic policy and effective poverty-reduction programmes designed to alleviate the suffering and, in the process, address some of the causes of the war.

Can you give some concrete examples of what can be done to reduce poverty?

We don't want to impose anything from the top, but from the consultations we have had so far, it is clear that agriculture will be a key area. This is a very agrarian community – more than 80% of the population is involved in farming. So we need to strengthen this sector. It is especially important for women given that they produce more than 60% – and some say up to 80% – of the crops that are grown in Sierra Leone.

Education is another vital area because it is a tool for reducing poverty. We have a literacy rate of about 30% which means that 70% of the people need help. And only about 40% of school-age children are actually in education.

Health is obviously a priority that people have identified. We need to provide affordable health care and clean drinking water, particularly in rural areas.

Then there are a lot of other issues that have been raised such as good governance, infrastructure, energy and transport.

However, the most important issue that people talk about is security. We are all acutely aware that if we don't have this, we cannot achieve any of the other things that I have mentioned.

In the past, Sierra Leone had a big mining sector and the resources are still there, even if they are not being fully exploited. What is being done to get mining back on stream?



The Courier

Mining has enormous potential, but the country has not benefited as it should have done from these resources. Take diamonds, which have traditionally come from alluvial extraction. They are relatively easy to find, which means that it is difficult to control the process. But we also have the potential for deep mining using the kimberlite process. In fact, we had begun making arrangements for this to start when the conflict intensified. That operation is currently on hold but it is a promising area for the future.

Unfortunately, most of the diamond areas are still under RUF control. Once they have been taken over and civil authority restored, we need to put in place a workable policy that ensures that the benefits flow down to the people. The kimberlite operation should be straightforward because it will be given to big companies that will pay their dues.

Rutile is another important mineral resource. In fact, Sierra Leone used to get a bigger return from this than from diamonds. The government is very happy with the support we are now getting from the EU, through the Sysmin facility, to resuscitate Sierra Rutile. We hope operations will recommence very soon. This will not just bring revenue to the government but will also create much-needed jobs.

We are also now prospecting for offshore oil, and of course, there is a lot of gold in the country.

The key is to have stringent policies to ensure that the people benefit from these resources

With so much conflict in Sierra Leone over the past decade, there must have been times when you wondered when it would all end. How optimistic are you now about the country's prospects?

I think we are beginning to see a turnaround which is due, among other things, to the backing we are getting from the international community. Institutions like the European Union have stood by us and now that the new head of the Commission delegation has begun work, we are making a lot of progress in implementing EU-supported projects. Britain has strongly supported us, helping to train a professional army and assisting in other areas. The Americans, Canadians, French and others have helped too.

Even with the RUF, I think the disarmament process will ultimately succeed. I believe that UNAMSIL, with the support of Britain and other nations, will deploy successfully to more and more areas of the country. It is just a matter of time.

So yes, I am optimistic. I think we are coming to the close of a sad chapter in our history and that Sierra Leone will soon undergo a renaissance.

*Staff dispensing medicine in Kenema hospital.
"Health is obviously a priority that people have identified."*

“There is a long-term future for this country”

SAYS **RAYMOND KAMARA**, PARLIAMENTARY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION **UNPP**

The Courier

In a country where political battles have for so long been fought with armaments rather than arguments, the idea of a “loyal opposition” may appear strange. In Sierra Leone’s Parliament, however, the governing People’s Party (SLPP) has only 27 of the 68 elected seats. The remaining 41 are held by five different political parties which won representation in the elections held in February 1996. A further 12 places are reserved for paramount chiefs, one from each of the country’s districts. We spoke in March with Raymond Kamara, parliamentary leader of the United National People’s Party (UNPP) which came second in the 1996 poll, winning 17 seats.



Although the survival of President Kabbah’s administration does not necessarily depend on what happens in the legislature, whose main role is to scrutinise the actions of the executive, the parliamentary arithmetic suggests that the governing party’s position is insecure. Was this in fact the case, we asked? Mr Kamara explained that the SLPP could usually rely on support from the 12 paramount chiefs and while this still left the other parties with a majority of two, “this is often not reflected because people are frequently absent for one reason or the other.”

Where did the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) fit into the political equation, we wondered? “Normal” democratic politics were surely impossible while the RUF remained in control of large tracts of the country. Mr Kamara acknowledged that everything was currently “in limbo”. Under the Lomé peace agreement, it had been envisaged that the RUF would transform itself into a political party so that it could participate legitimately in the political development of the country. Indeed, the first steps had been taken towards registering the RUF as a party, but then hostilities were resumed and the process came to a halt.

We met Mr Kamara shortly after a government announcement postponing elections until the end of 2000. He confirmed that the UNPP and other political groups supported the move, citing the security situation. In simple terms, he felt that it was not feasible to stage country-wide elections while the RUF continued to occupy so much of Sierra Leone. There was also the problem of registering large numbers of internally displaced people, not to mention the hundreds of thousands of refugees still in camps in neighbouring countries. “You cannot

imagine how an election can be free and fair in these circumstances,” he argued.

The UNPP’s position is understandable given that it and other opposition parties draw much of their support from parts of the country where the government’s writ does not run. However, Mr Kamara was critical of the way the announcement had been handled. “Many of us feel that ministers should have explained the situation more clearly to the country,” he said.

The postponement was almost certainly inevitable but the government seems determined to press ahead with its plans for elections towards the end of the year despite the many potential pitfalls. On the thorny issue of which voting system should be used, Raymond Kamara indicated that he favoured proportional representation (used in 1996) over single member constituencies, but based on regional lists rather than a single national one. He hoped that this would help meet the concerns of those who felt that parliamentarians were too remote from their electors. The whole question is obviously somewhat academic for Members of Parliament sitting in Freetown whose home areas remain inaccessible. Mr Kamara’s argument was based on the fact that Sierra Leone now applied the “separation of powers” principle in its Constitution. “A lot of people honestly believe that we should go back to the constituency type of election, because they think it is necessary to ensure a stable majority for the government. What they don’t understand is that the government will not fall if it loses a motion in the legislature. The fact that the executive no longer resides in Parliament,” he continued, “means that it is more important to have a system that delivers a properly representative chamber

reflecting all shades of opinion. I think that this would be a better way of safeguarding the peace and stability of the country.”

A question of management and priorities

On the economy, Mr Kamara frankly admitted that there was no fundamental difference in terms of ideology between the UNPP and the government. As he put it: “When our economic situation is so desperate, it is more a question of management and priorities.” He stressed the need for “strong discipline in tackling the economy” to ensure that revenues due to the government were all collected and not simply “frittered away”. In terms of priorities, Mr Kamara’s party wanted a greater emphasis on providing education and jobs for young people, putting this into the context of the difficult security situation. “Many young Sierra Leoneans are idle. They have neither work nor training, and when the future looks so bleak, they are more likely to get caught up in violence. If we can take care of them by directing them into community development and environment projects, I think we can go a long way to restoring stability.”

Mr Kamara also complained about regional imbalances. “We feel that there are parts of the country, particularly from where we draw our support, that have not been properly catered for.” The government’s response, perhaps not surprisingly, is that there is little it can do in areas not under its control, but Mr Kamara believes that a bigger effort could be made to help the many people from the occupied areas who have

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“The fighting has gone on far too long and we simply cannot continue like this”

been displaced and are currently living in the Western part of the country.

The future

After a decade of dashed hopes, is Sierra Leone finally over the worst? Raymond Kamara was understandably circumspect. “I wish I could be sufficiently inspired to give you an optimistic prediction. But it is only six months since people were saying that the worst was past and then we had another crisis. Things are quiet again at the moment but there is still a lot of tension.

We have a kind of insurance within the Western area thanks to UNAMSIL and the British, but until we see UNAMSIL deploying further into the country, I don’t think I can honestly say, in my heart of hearts, that the problems will be behind us in a year’s time. Having said this, I am convinced that there is a long-term future for this country because it has

so much potential. The fighting has gone on far too long and we simply cannot continue like this.”

Mr Kamara’s reference to the country’s potential led us into a discussion about diamonds. Were these such an asset, given that so much blood had been spilt in the struggle to control this valuable resource? “They have been our undoing”, was Mr Kamara’s frank appraisal. “We know the forces that are involved and it is not just the RUF”, he said, citing the “Liberia connection”.

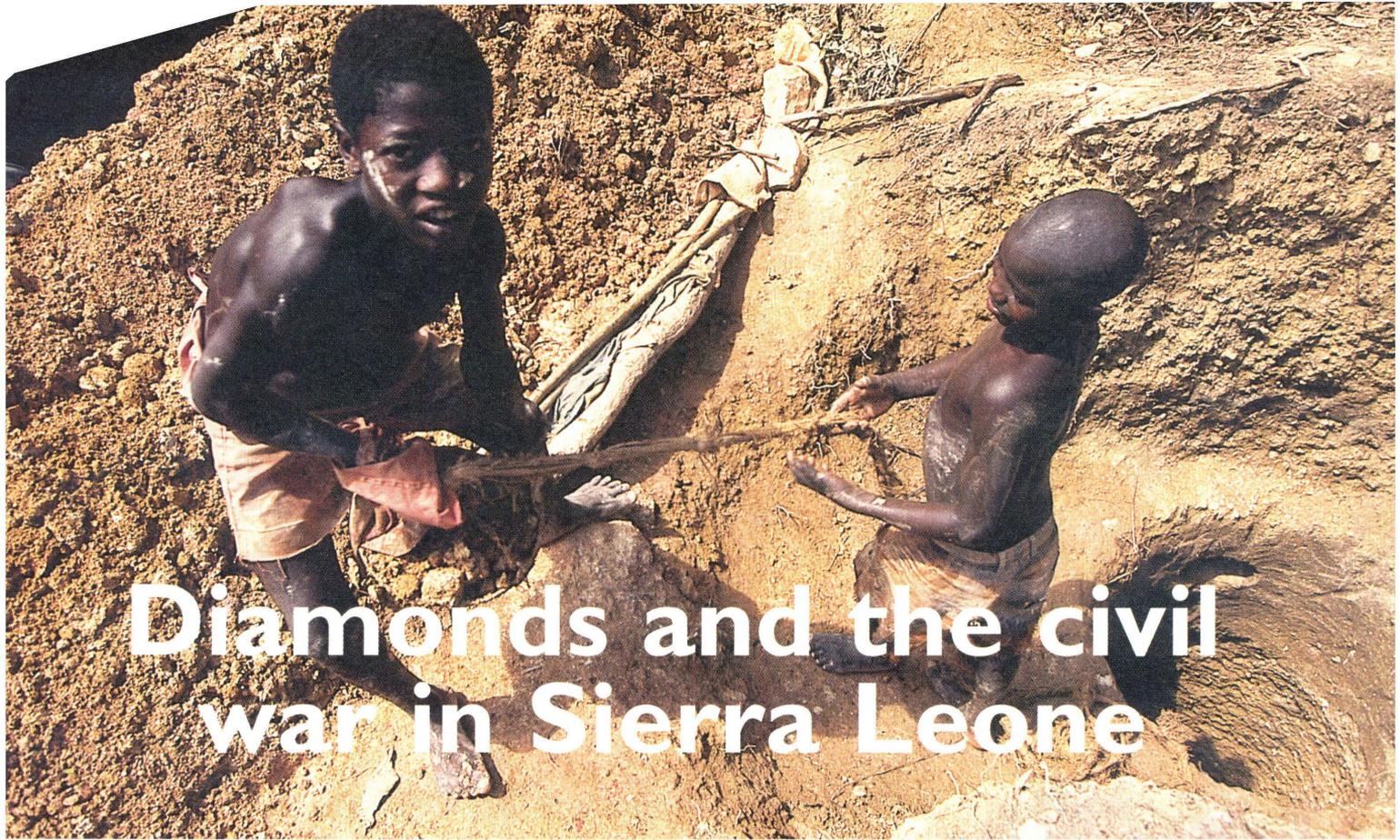
He expressed particular concern that “the Angola scenario, where UNITA has become entrenched and institutionalised in certain regions” might be replicated in Sierra Leone. Angola, of course, is another diamond-rich nation which has seen bitter conflict over many years.

The UNPP is officially led by John Karefa-Smart who was runner-up to President Kabbah in the 1996 election. But there is speculation that Dr Karefa-Smart, who is based in the USA, may not continue much longer on account of his age. As opposition leader *in situ* we wondered whether Raymond Kamara might put his name forward as a possible presidential contender. “There will obviously be a contest sooner or later, and when that happens, I will make my intentions known to my party” was the careful reply. “After that,” he said with a wry smile, “I will let you know.”

Simon Horner

Teaching carpentry skills at a care centre near Freetown.

“Many young Sierra Leoneans have neither work nor training and when the future looks so bleak, they are more likely to get caught up in violence”



Diamonds and the civil war in Sierra Leone

Jon Spaul/Panos Pictures

The 10 year-old, brutal civil war in Sierra Leone has been seen largely as a conflict over the country's rich diamond resources. They have certainly fuelled the war but are they its primary cause? Or are fundamental grievances and social injustice at the root of the conflict? Does the focus on diamonds have more to do with protecting the legitimate diamond trade and the arms industry?

David J. Francis*

A flawed analysis

International attention has focused rather too much on how "conflict diamonds" are fuelling civil wars in Africa. This kind of analysis has been applied not only to Sierra Leone, but to the violent and protracted civil wars in former Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo - DRC) and in Angola. It is argued that strategic minerals such as diamonds, oil, copper and gold are fuelling wars in Africa because the proceeds from their sale are used to buy arms and drugs, and even to cultivate strategic alliances at home and abroad. This analysis establishes a link between diamond exploitation on the one hand, and criminal complicity between the international diamond industry and Africa's political elites, warlords and multi-national companies on the other.

A flawed international response

The international community has responded by targeting conflict diamonds and denying them access to the world market. The rationale is that since greed is the cause and driving

Child diamond miners near Kenema, Sierra Leone

force for these violent civil wars, targeting the illicit extraction and sale of diamonds would be the best way to end them. I argue in this article that the international community has wrongly diagnosed the civil war in countries such as Sierra Leone. I believe that failure to understand the root causes of African conflicts has led to inappropriate international policy responses and misguided attempts to manage and resolve these civil wars. The problem has been over-simplified.

"Conflict diamonds"

The expression "conflict diamonds" describes those diamonds that originate from territories controlled by rebel forces fighting to overthrow a legitimate and internationally recognised government. Some analysts expand the definition of conflict diamonds to include those that originate in areas controlled by government forces trading in illegal diamonds. The crucial element in the definition of conflict diamonds is the role played by the illegal diamond trade in fuelling wars in Africa. It is a role played by the rather unusual criminal networks (forged between rebel factions, warlords, corrupt politicians and so forth). Some people also use the terms 'blood diamonds' and 'war diamonds' to describe their currency.

"Old wine in a new bottle"

The recent international debate on how conflict diamonds or strategic resources fuel wars in Africa is nothing new. It is more like an "old wine in a new bottle", because the exploitation of war economies, as represented by conflict diamonds, is as old as warfare itself. The wars in former Zaire and Angola in the 1960s and 1970s were about the domestic

and international exploitation of strategic minerals. But the role played by these minerals – diamonds, oil, uranium, cobalt, gold and copper – in fuelling conflicts was veiled during the Cold War because of the focus on East-West ideological conflict. But superpower rivalry in countries such as Angola and Zaire was not only about ideology and shaping post-colonial African diplomacy. At its heart was control over strategic resources.

A security vacuum

The issue of conflict diamonds has only now become internationally prominent because a security vacuum has been created by the absence of superpower rivalry. This vacuum has been filled by the warlords, rogue states, arms and drug traffickers and multi-national companies, who have exploited the economic opportunities of globalisation. The case of Sierra Leone is a classic example of the exploitation of war economy. The emerging informal network of barter – arms for diamonds – extends beyond the borders of war-torn Sierra Leone to include neighbouring states such as Liberia. What we see emerging is a growing informal economy, inextricably linked to the globalisation of legal trade.

Diamond fortunes

Conflict diamonds as the currency of war have generated huge personal fortunes for warlords, rebel movements and their regional and international clients. According to *West Africa* magazine, the sale of conflict diamonds by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel group was estimated at \$70 million by 1999. In the case of the Angolan rebel group UNITA, an estimated \$150 million worth of rough diamonds was mined in UNITA controlled territories. In the DRC approximately \$35 million worth of diamonds were produced in rebel-held territories.

The proceeds from the sale of conflict diamonds have been mainly used to buy weapons. The son of the former president of France, Jean Christophe Mitterrand, is currently under criminal investigation for his role in the sale of arms to Angola. Men like Foday Sankoh of the RUF, Charles Taylor of Liberia and Jonas Savimbi of UNITA are alleged to have set up trans-continental smuggling and commercial networks that link them to the global market.

Fear of a consumer backlash

The global significance of conflict diamonds has forced the international community to target them. The focus has been on how these civil wars are financed. Some analysts argue that international policy makers have neglected this aspect. In effect they say that economic motivations, as represented by conflict diamonds, are the primary cause for wars such as Sierra Leone's.

As a result western governments and NGOs have become involved in trying to make people more aware of the role played by conflict diamonds. The international debate brought to the fore the dilemma between the protection of the legitimate diamond trade and how to stop diamonds financing wars in Africa. The World Diamond Council has collaborated with diamond conglomerates and diamond producing and importing countries to organise a series of international conferences aimed at self-regulation. The fear of a consumer backlash, as happened to the fur trade, seems to be the driving force behind their proactive stance.

It would seem common sense that, if proceeds from conflict diamonds are used to purchase arms which rebel factions then use to continue the war, the logical step would be to target the arms industry. Few key western governments have made this constructive link between diamonds and the illegal shipment or sale of arms.

Fundamental grievances more important than greed

Identifying conflict diamonds or greed as the main reason for the civil war in Sierra Leone is rather simplistic. But this is the analysis that has most influenced international policy responses to the conflict. The spectacular failures of the peace settlements in Sierra Leone lend support to the belief that inadequate understanding of the war has invariably led to inappropriate responses and ill-defined solutions.

There is no denying of the fact that conflict diamonds have fuelled and perpetuated the war. But that does not make them the primary cause. A more plausible explanation is that economic and political exclusion, perceived injustice and fundamental grievances are at the heart of conflict.

Banning conflict diamonds

The rationale for denying conflict diamonds access to the world market is that it must reduce the profitability of war. It provides a useful entry-point for the international community. It is realistically 'do-able' – a short-term response with an exit strategy.

It is therefore not surprising that the international community has imposed a UN ban on buying diamonds from the RUF controlled areas of Sierra Leone and from Liberia, the principal backer of the RUF insurgency. This has led to the establishment of an international certification scheme to regulate the illegal diamond trade. The purpose is to deny the RUF the financial resources needed to continue their war.

Practical difficulties

But will this kind of international response succeed? The certification scheme is fraught with practical difficulties because it might show only where diamonds were bought, not where they were mined. Furthermore the gems are small, portable and easy to hide. The porous nature of Sierra Leone's

borders and the continuing border skirmishes with Guinea and Liberia create major problems in implementing the scheme. Implementation does not extend to rebel-controlled territories and the RUF continues to control the diamond areas.

Potential for violence would remain

But even if the UN ban and international certification scheme were effective the question would remain: will the potential for relapse into further violence remain as long as the fundamental grievances and perceived injustices are unresolved?

The answer to this must be “yes”, because the civil war in Sierra Leone is not just about greed. It is essentially about fundamental political, economic and socio-cultural grievances. In support of this view I would ask: if diamonds were the primary reason for the war why did Sierra Leone not degenerate into civil war until 1991, even though diamonds were discovered in the 1930s.

Protecting the diamond trade and the arms industry

I suspect that the prime motivation behind the focus on conflict diamonds is the protection of the legitimate diamond trade and of the arms industry. This approach seems to have both a public and a private face. While the public face is about international efforts to help Africa, the private face also protects the legitimate diamond industry. It is clear that no constructive effort has been made to link conflict diamonds with the need to stop the illegal shipments of arms to Africa. There seems to be a limited concern about the role of arms smuggling and drug trafficking in fuelling the civil war.

This noticeable neglect gives the impression that the West is primarily concerned to protect the legitimate diamond trade against a potential consumer backlash and to safeguard

Jon Spaul/Paros Pictures

the arms industry. Both of these are multi-billion dollar commercial enterprises vital to their economies. Some cynics would argue that the political and economic self-interest of western governments is the driving force behind the campaign against conflict diamonds.

Diamonds are not the only currency of war

Extensive research on the exploitation of the war economy in Sierra Leone has shown that diamonds are not the only currency of war. The focus on conflict diamonds has neglected other aspects of the war economy. A complex barter system has evolved. Timber and agricultural products such as coffee and cocoa are traded by the RUF for arms and logistical support. Although the revenue generated from this trade is limited it does contribute to the perpetuation of the war. Closing world markets to conflict diamonds will only begin to be successful if the other range of issues involved in the war economy are addressed.

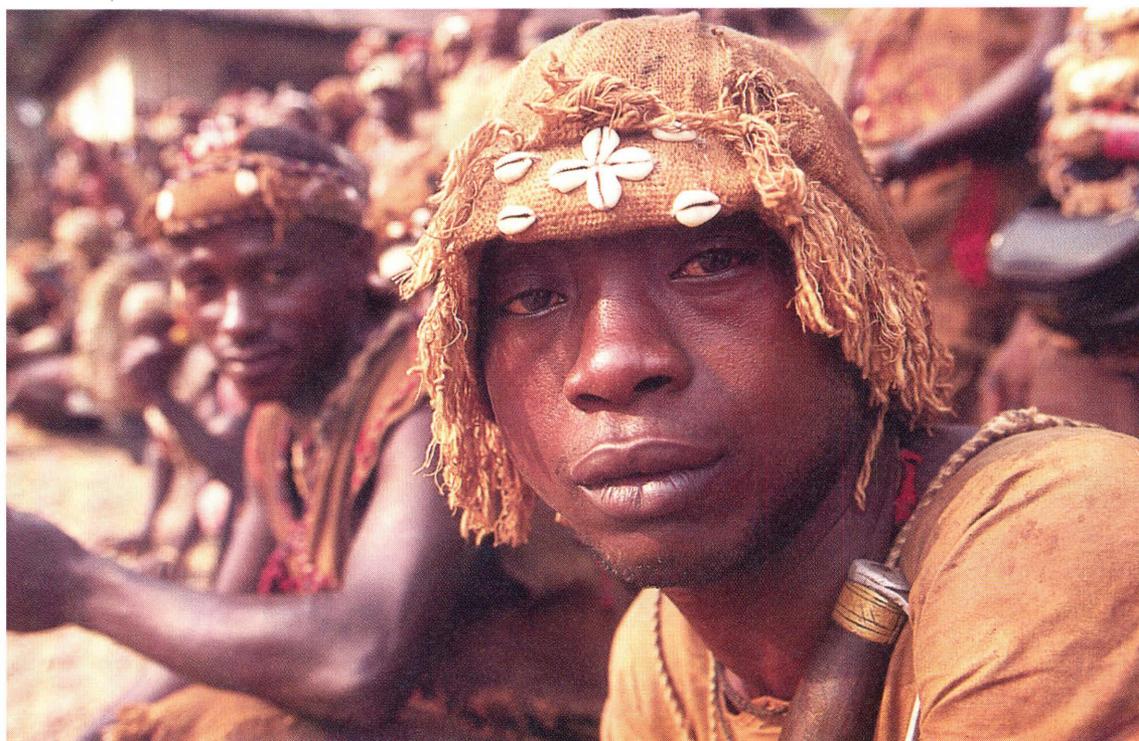
Obscuring the search for lasting solutions

It is clear that the excessive focus on conflict diamonds is unhelpful in understanding the fundamental causes of the civil war in Sierra Leone. It has shifted the debate away from the traditional analysis of African conflicts as mere tribal or ethnic wars to a resource-based approach. At a speech last year to the German Foundation for International Development, the former finance minister of Sierra Leone, Dr. James Jonah, described the war as “simply about diamonds”. This is perhaps not surprising given the role played by key western governments in leading the campaign against conflict diamonds. Among these governments are Sierra Leone’s main financial backers. I believe that the excessive focus on conflict diamonds has not only diverted attention from a proper understanding of the fundamental causes of the conflict. It has also obscured the search for lasting solutions that lead to peace and development.

It has also obscured the search for lasting solutions that lead to peace and development.

** David J. Francis lectures in the Department of Peace Studies at Bradford University (UK).*

Kamajors, pro-government militia force.



Post war reconstruction in Sierra Leone

The conflict in Sierra Leone began in 1991. After three peace agreements there are now at last encouraging signs that the country may have started on the path to peace and security. Disarmament, a crucial factor, was slow to get off the ground under previous peace agreements. Now, with international diplomacy, supported by ECOWAS and the UN, a new and hopeful attempt at disarmament is underway. At the beginning of May the different parties – the RUF, the government, and the pro-government civil defence forces – agreed on the immediate disarmament of all combatants. In mid-June, 4,000 had already handed in their arms, out of an estimated total of 25,000.

Difficulties in operating in conflict situation

The ten-year conflict caused great difficulty in carrying out projects. Lack of access to the interior for security reasons resulted in projects being abandoned or closed or at the least, delayed implementation. On three occasions, in 1997 because of the military coup, and in 1998 and 2000 because of deterioration in the security situation, expatriate and local staff had to be evacuated. This caused serious delays in project implementation and preparation. Despite the difficulties, the EC never officially suspended cooperation with Sierra Leone.

Some Financing Agreements such as road rehabilitation had to be modified. Work had sometimes been planned in areas, which subsequently became inaccessible. Work then had to be transferred to sections in accessible parts of the country.

While a lot of progress was made in getting projects approved, in general, because of the conflict, disbursement remains low.

Challenges ahead

The challenges ahead are enormous. There is as yet no inventory of the damage done behind “enemy lines” but purportedly thousands of small villages have been serious-

ly damaged by the RUF, while child soldiers were “recruited” and terror inflicted on their populations.

The destruction of villages was usually a combination of looting whatever was worthwhile and not too heavy to remove, and targeted destruction of the property of those perceived to be enemies (government officials) or people with whom the RUF had personal vendettas.

In some other districts, particularly Kailahun, near the Liberian border, almost every building has been damaged, and in the District of Kambia, on the border with Guinea, where heavy shelling has taken place, whole villages have been flattened.

Selling food in IDP camp



Giuseppe Pirozzi/Panos Pictures

Koidu town in Kono, the District headquarters, does not have a single house with a roof on it anymore.

There are now an estimated one to two million displaced persons and refugees who need and want to return to their villages. Post trauma stress disorder (PTSD) among the victims of war cannot be underestimated as it can lead to a prolonged state of depression, rendering people totally inactive and unproductive.

The rehabilitation and reintegration of physically disabled people will need to be addressed in post conflict programmes over a considerable period of time. Because of the destruction of clinics and hospitals and the disruption of health services – especially in the provinces – many people are suffering from untreated diseases acquired during the conflict (Malaria, bilharzia, diarrhoea etc).

The rehabilitation of Sierra Leonean society has many facets. Included is the reintegration of ex-combatants, who may quite easily revert to armed robbery if not reintegrated properly. The EC-funded rehabilitation and reintegration project addresses this problem, but the amount of unemployment and underemployment is so great and society is so poor that even with the best of efforts it will be difficult to address the whole issue in a satisfactory way. Sierra Leonean people are survivors, but the difficulties are enormous.

It can safely be anticipated that unemployment and underemployment will increase unless village life is made sufficiently attractive for youngsters to return to their villages, and unless a sense of responsibility to communal life can be restored.

The EU approach

Sierra Leone is a case where the EU is called upon to ensure coordination between emergency relief and rehabilitation and development. An integrated approach to rural infrastructure rehabilitation is necessary, covering social infrastructure such as homes, schools, clinics and administrative offices of rural capitals as well as economic infrastructure. A €30 million resettlement and rehabilitation project is underway. Re-building of basic infrastructure is one of the key elements – houses, schools, and clinics, as well as agricultural buildings. People returning to their former homes need support; a re-settlement package will provide basic tools, seeds, and even livestock. Underlying this is the need to provide a livelihood, through paid employment, and to revitalise the local economy, through using local businesses. For this reason, everything will be tendered locally.

Vocational training in hairdressing, tailoring, carpentry, blacksmith skills, and livestock-rearing are activities included in the rehabilitation and reintegration project. This training is open to all, including ex-combatants, (many of whom were child soldiers) and returning refugees.

Support to government

To help stabilise the economy, the EU is providing budgetary support, along with the IMF, the World Bank, and the UK. €34,75 million was made available by the EU for 2000 and 2001, to help the government finance, *inter alia*, social services.

Support for the Ministry of Finance aims at improving expenditure control and budgeting. As a result of this support, domestic revenue doubled over a period of one year and some 7,500 “ghost workers” were removed from the payroll, making more funds available for the recurrent budget.

The security forces - comprising an army of 14,000 and a police force of 7,000, - and peace operations such as disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants absorb more than 40% of domestic revenue. Interest payments on foreign and domestic loans are in excess of 50% of domestic revenue, leaving very little for normal recurrent expenditures on government operations. 50% of the recurrent budget and all development expenditure is financed by grants and loans from donors. All humanitarian, rehabilitation and development expenditure is financed by donors.

Tackling the root causes of the conflict

Government has an enormous challenge ahead to expand its delivery of social services throughout the country. For historical and political - and more recently, security - reasons, the Western area, and Freetown in particular, were always favoured. The Provinces always had the worst doctor/population, teacher/pupil and school enrolment ratios.

At independence Sierra Leone had a democratically elected government – including local government, which was later abolished – rich natural resources and an educated population. The slide into war was precipitated by governance issues, the inability of government to respond to the people’s needs and expectations, especially in respect to the rural population. This led to the marginalisation of rural youth – amongst whom discontent festered – and disillusionment with an excessively centralised and corrupt government.

Poverty inhibits human resource development and a lack of human resources inhibits economic growth. It is a vicious circle.

Sierra Leone may now be on the verge of peace and stability. The challenges ahead are enormous, for the government as well as for its international cooperation partners.

Bart Kuiter (Sierra Leone Delegation)
Linda Hales (DG Development, Brussels)

Looking through her eyes

Sierra Leonean women are participants in "Sierra Leone at 40 – Looking Through Her Eyes", an audio documentary project that reflects on events since independence in April 1961. They reminisce about Independence Day and think about the way forward for their troubled country.

Text and photos: Cathy Aitchison*



“About midnight on the 26th of April we were hopeful that something good was going to happen when we saw the Union Jack lowered and the Sierra Leone flag hoisted. A gentle wind blew just then and we saw the flag floating in the air.” (Gladys Okoro-Cole)

"I was ten years old and at primary school. We had to study songs, marches and the national anthem. On Independence Day we went to the recreation ground. In the afternoon, after the formal ceremony, there was lots of food and drinks. It was all joy because our expectations were so high." (Seray Kellay)

"It is absolutely essential that women, as well as men, be involved in the way the country is run. We know better today that some of those beliefs we had - that woman had her place in the kitchen or in the backyard somewhere - are no longer valid." (Arabella Muttin)

The audio documentary was Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff's idea, a lawyer, leading campaigner on women's issues in Sierra Leone and West Africa and the daughter of a former vice-

▲ *Mother and daughter: Gladys Jusu-Sheriff interviews her daughter Yasmin. A lawyer and leading campaigner for women's issues in Sierra Leone, the audio documentary was Yasmin's brain-child.*

Hannah Foullah interviewing at Radio Democracy



president of Sierra Leone. It is no accident that she chose the country's 40th anniversary as the project's launch date.

"Forty is a significant milestone for anyone, especially women," she says. She was in Freetown in January 1999. "I spent my 40th birthday underneath the bed hiding with my children with a rebel attack going on thinking this is really appalling. At that point you think you have to try to take some control of the situation."

Says Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff: "This anniversary should be a time for reflection. "We have just wasted 40 years of independence, so what are we going to do about it? We need to take control of our own destiny now."

Her idea was to interview Sierra Leonean women living in Sierra Leone and around the world. "Women haven't been given the opportunity to participate in public life over the past 40 years. We've tried every other solution so maybe now we should try listening to 51% of the population."

Radio as a development tool

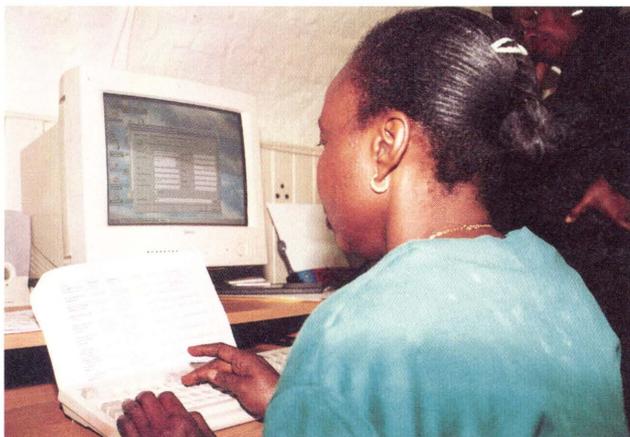
The recordings had to be broadcast quality for stations such as the BBC and Voice of America. Gladys Jusu-Sheriff, Yasmin's mother and leader of the Sierra Leone Women's Forum (UK), approached Women's Radio Group (WRG), a London-based arts charity experienced in training women to use radio as a development tool.

"We are very committed to this kind of work. Radio can be a very effective tool for development, helping to empower women," says WRG Director Julie Hill.



To interview Sierra Leonean women living in the US, Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff enlisted the help of Josephine Kamara, a Sierra Leonean journalist with Voice of America in Washington DC. Hannah Foullah at Radio Democracy (FM 98.4) in Freetown interviewed women across Sierra Leone and Gladys Jusu-Sheriff interviewed Sierra Leonean women living in London.

The edited material was sent to BBC producers, which resulted in Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff being interviewed on two programmes on the 27th April: Network Africa (a BBC World Service programme very popular in Sierra Leone) and Woman's Hour (an influential daily programme popular with women and men in the UK).



At the office of the Sierra Leone's women's forum (UK)

Reaching out to the grassroots

The documentary, produced on cassette and CD, will be available free to Sierra Leonean communities, women's organisations and other interested groups around the world. Next, more women will be interviewed, particularly younger women, illiterate women and those living in rural areas of Sierra Leone. The material will then be translated into local languages.

Another key tool is the website, where people can listen to excerpts of the interviews. It publicises the project and encourages more people to become involved.

A key effect of the project is its role in bringing together Sierra Leonean women across the country and around the world. "I think the force we are trying to create is a regenerated Sierra Leone Women's Movement," says Gladys Jusu-Sheriff. "Many women in Sierra Leone are demoralised. We need to change this and reach out to the grassroots."

Gracie Williams, a retired school principal, said in her interview: "People who live in urban areas and in top positions are okay. But our sisters in the provinces, villages and towns, are miserable. We need to enhance their lives so they don't kill themselves with work. We need to get together and close the gap."

There is enthusiasm for change among young people, says Frances Bendu, a young woman from Kono. "They

want to move the country forward. If women had the opportunity to go to school and university, we would see great developments in the country and a lot of things would change – if only their voices are heard."

**Cathy Aitchison is a freelance media consultant, researcher and trainer who specialises in radio and online communication, especially for use in development.*

Sierra Leone at 40 - Looking through her eyes

Listen to excerpts of the interviews at <http://www.slwf-uk.org>

To order a cassette or CD copy of the programme: sl.at40@refugeesonline.org.uk

To participate in the project, find out more about the women's movement in Sierra Leone or discuss ideas for radio training and online networking projects, please contact one of the addresses below:

Sierra Leone Women's Forum (UK)

UK charity supporting Sierra Leonean families, especially asylum seekers and refugees.

The Crypt, St Mary Magdelene's Church, Holloway Road, London N7 8LT, UK

Tel/Fax: +44 20 7700 0540

slwf@refugeesonline.org.uk

<http://www.refugeesonline.org.uk/slwf>

Women's Radio Group

UK arts charity offering training and networking for women interested in radio.

Unit 13, 111 Power Road, London W4 5PY, UK

Tel: +44 20 8742 7408

wrg@twiza.demon.co.uk

<http://www.twiza.demon.co.uk/wrg>

Refugees Online

UNHCR project set up with funds from the EU's Refugee Integration project. It offers training and support in using online communication for refugee journalists and refugee community organisations.

c/o Aitchison Media & Development, 21 Hilary Avenue, Mitcham CR4 2LA, UK

Tel: +44 20 8685 9928

info@refugeesonline.org.uk

<http://www.refugeesonline.org.uk>

Funding for this project has come from Sierra Leone Women's Forum (UK) and WRG and from the European Social Fund. Participants are seeking funding to take the project across Sierra Leone and translation into local languages.

Profile PROFILE

SIERRA LEONE



General information

Area:	73,326 km ²
Population:	4.6 million (estimate)
Population density:	55 per km ²
Capital:	Freetown
Other main towns:	Provincial headquarters: Makeni, Kenema, Bo District headquarters: Kambia, Port Loko, Magburaka, Kabala, Sefadu, Kailahun, Moyamba, Pujehun, Bonthe,
Languages:	English (official language of government and business), Creole and numerous indigenous languages.
Ethnic Groups:	16 indigenous ethnic groups, the largest of which are the Temne, Mende and Limba.
Religions:	Christian, Muslim, traditional beliefs

Political structure

President:	Ahmed Tejan Kabbah (elected in 1996) Presidential system. The President appoints the cabinet and the actions of the executive are scrutinised by the legislature. There is a unicameral Parliament with 80 members, 68 of whom are directly elected by universal suffrage for five years. Next presidential and parliamentary elections: foreseen for the end of 2001 (security permitting)
Current composition of the Parliament:	- Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) 27 seats - United National People's Party (UNPP) 17 seats - People's Democratic Party (PDP) 12 seats - All People's Congress (APC) 5 seats - National Unity Party (NUP) 4 seats - People's Progressive Party (PPP) 3 seats The remaining 12 seats are elected from among the paramount chiefs

Economy

Currency:	Leone €1 = approx. 1,700 leone
GDP per capita:	US\$ 150
GDP growth:	an average of -6.4% between 1990 and 1998
Inflation rate:	26.9%
Total external debt:	US\$1,243 million in 1998 (almost 200% of GNP)
Main (potential) economic sectors:	Mining: rutile, diamonds, bauxite Agriculture: cocoa, coffee, ginger, groundnuts, piassava, cattle Fishing

Social indicators

Life expectancy at birth:	37.9 years
Adult literacy:	31%
Population with access to safe water:	34%
Enrolment in education:	24%
Population growth rate:	1.9% between 1975 and 1998. Projected figure of 2.3% for 1998-2015
Infant mortality:	182‰: Under 5s: 363‰
Human development index rating:	0.252 (174th out of 174)

Sources: UNDP Human Development Report (2000) – mainly 1998 figures.

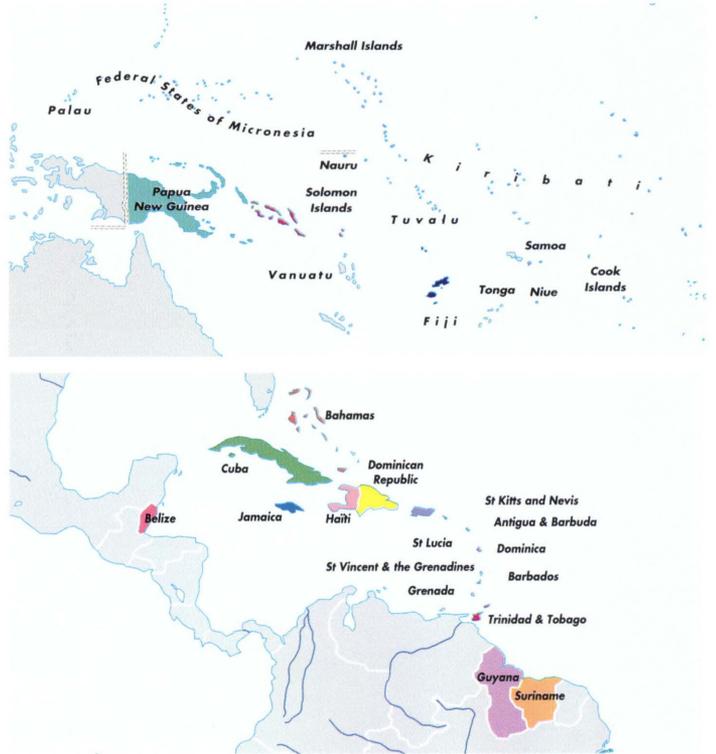
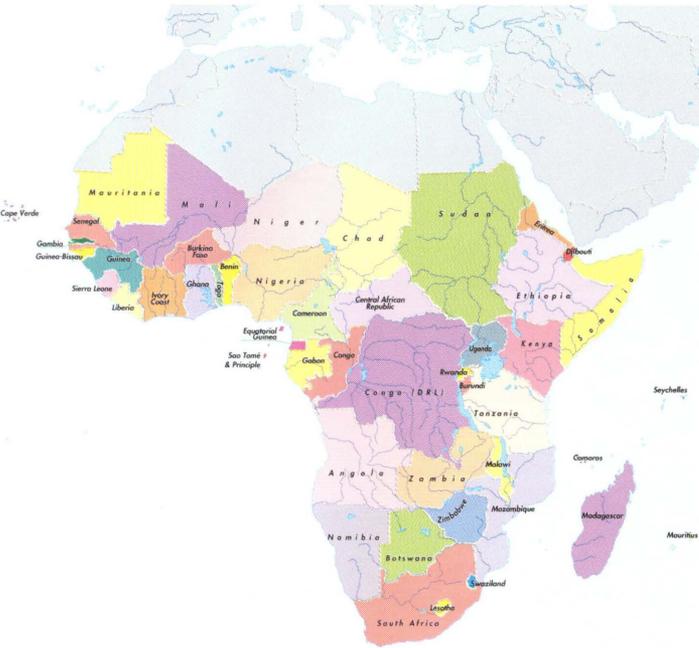


Austria
 Belgium
 Denmark
 Finland
 France
 Germany
 Greece
 Ireland
 Italy
 Luxembourg
 Netherlands
 Portugal
 Spain
 Sweden
 United Kingdom
France
Territorial collectivities
 Mayotte

St Pierre and Miquelon
Overseas territories
 New Caledonia
 and dependencies
 French Polynesia
 French Southern and Antarctic
 territories
 Wallis and Futuna islands
Netherlands
Overseas countries
 Netherlands Antilles:
 Bonaire, Curaçao, St Martin,
 Saba, St Eustache
 Aruba
Denmark
Country having special
 relations with Denmark
 Greenland

United Kingdom
Overseas countries and territories
 Anguilla
 British Antarctic Territory
 British Indian Ocean Territory
 British Virgin Islands
 Cayman Islands
 Falkland Islands
 Southern Sandwich Islands
 and dependencies
 Montserrat
 Pitcairn Island
 St Helena and dependencies
 Turks and Caicos Islands

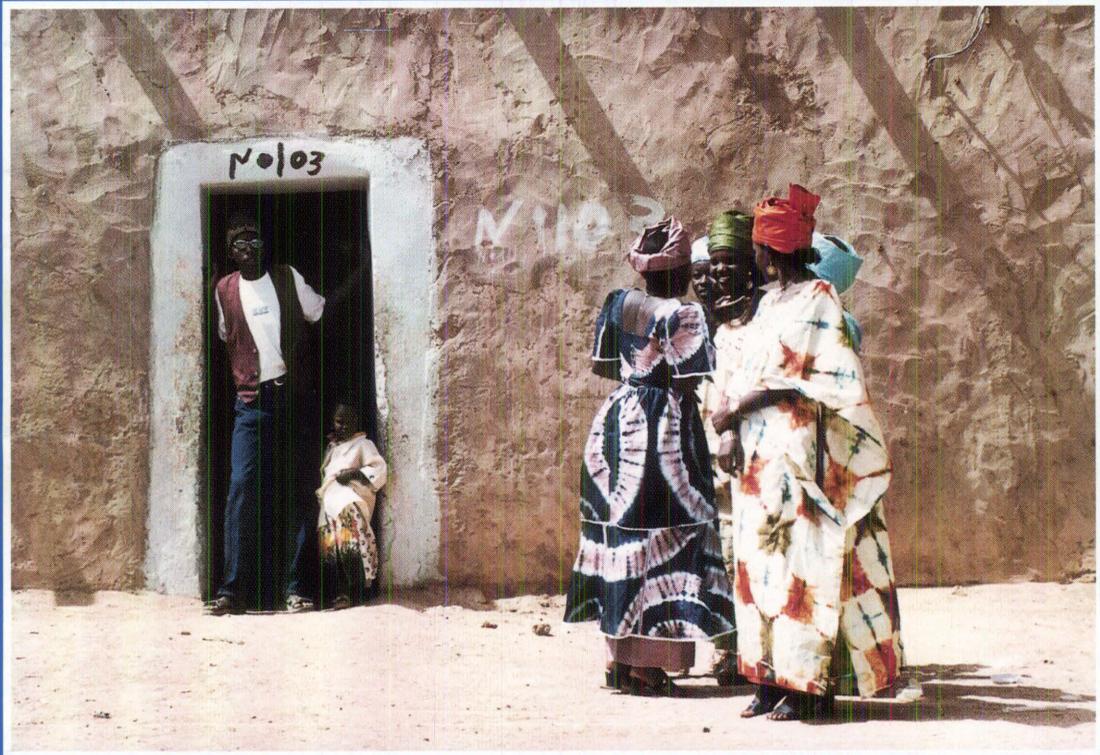
The European Union



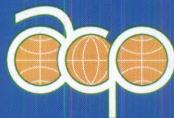
The 78 ACP States*

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| Angola | Dominican Republic | Malawi | Senegal |
| Antigua and Barbuda | Equatorial Guinea | Mali | Seychelles |
| Bahamas | Eritrea | Marshall islands | Sierra Leone |
| Barbados | Ethiopia | Mauritania | Solomon Islands |
| Belize | Fiji | Mauritius | Somalia |
| Benin | Gabon | Micronesia | South Africa |
| Botswana | Gambia | Mozambique | Sudan |
| Burkina Faso | Ghana | Namibia | Suriname |
| Burundi | Grenada | Nauru | Swaziland |
| Cameroon | Guinea | Niger | Tanzania |
| Cape Verde | Guinea Bissau | Nigeria | Togo |
| Central African Republic | Guyana | Niue | Tonga |
| Chad | Haiti | Palau | Trinidad & Tobago |
| Comoros | Ivory Coast | Papua New Guinea | Tuvalu |
| Congo | Jamaica | Rwanda | Uganda |
| Cook Islands | Kenya | St Kitts and Nevis | Vanuatu |
| Cuba* | Kiribati | St Lucia | Zambia |
| Democratic Republic of Congo | Lesotho | St Vincent and the Grenadines | Zimbabwe |
| Djibouti | Liberia | Samoa | |
| Dominica | Madagascar | São Tomé & Príncipe | |

* Cuba was admitted as a new member of the ACP group in December 2000, but is not a signatory of the Cotonou Agreement.



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