

the Courier

the magazine of ACP-EU
development cooperation

The new ACP-EU Agreement

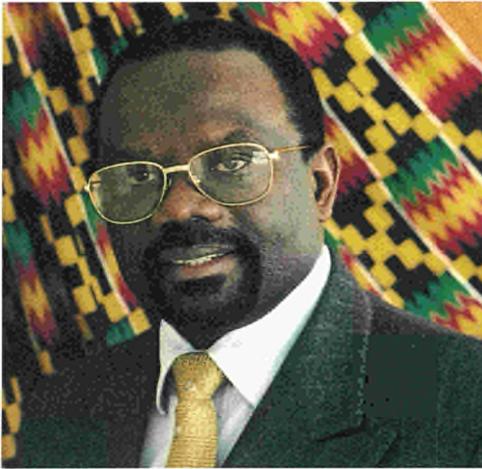
NGO Focus

**The Millennium Forum
in New York**

UK development aid

Mali Zimbabwe Pacific

Cotonou Agreement signed 23 June

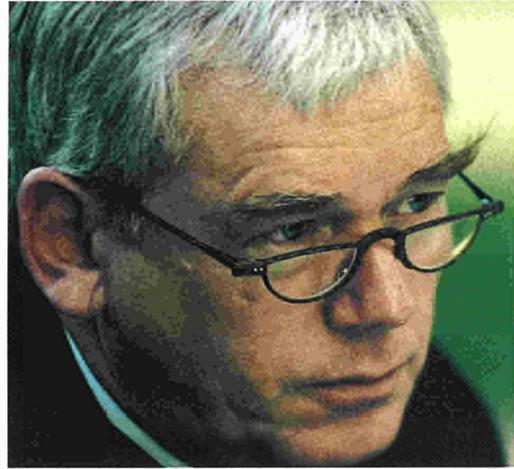


The Cotonou Agreement is strikingly different in its philosophy from the previous Yaoundé and Lomé Conventions. Its expression of partnership is eloquent.

Engagement and mutual responsibility are implicit features of the new agreement. The most important objective is the fight against poverty, and its principal tool is dialogue. Dialogue on development policy will allow errors to be corrected and cooperation improved.

Emphasis is also put on effectiveness, to be achieved by simplifying the procedures, speeding up the allocation of resources, and by involving a greater layer of society in the partnership, notably the non-governmental organisations and the private sector. The gradual insertion of the ACP countries into the global economy is the objective of a strategy aimed at reinforcing regional integration. This will enable the ACP countries to benefit from globalisation, and not be subservient to it.

Jean-Robert Goulangana,
ACP Secretary General



On 23 June, a new Partnership Agreement was signed in Cotonou, linking the 77 ACP countries and the European Union. This date represents a major historical and political event. It is a clear demonstration that after the disappointing results of Seattle, in a globalised world there is still room for a true and deep relationship between the North and the South. Agreement was reached on how to address the major challenges facing ACP countries, such as poverty, conflicts and wars, environmental threats, risks of economic and technological marginalisation. This was achieved thanks to a shared political willingness to give an ambitious response to these problems, building on the *acquis* of 25 years of cooperation under the Lomé Conventions.

The new Agreement centres on reducing and eventually eradicating poverty, and the gradual integration of the ACP countries into the world economy.

We must show the rest of the world that we have a shared vision of the future of this relationship and that we will deliver.

Poul Nielson,
Commissioner for Development
and Humanitarian Aid

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Cover

Mali - camel traders on market day at Boni
Photograph: Ray Wood, Panos Pictures

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T h e A C P - E U C o u r i e r

is the main publication of the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and the European Union. The EU provides ACP countries with preferential access to EU 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 to promote sustainable development and the reduction of poverty.



The 21st Century has started well for the ACP-EU partnership.

In February 2000 we concluded an agreement that is a landmark in development cooperation: the new ACP-EU Partnership Agreement, set for another 20 years.

Building on the success of Lomé, this agreement is the most comprehensive and ambitious partnership between developing and developed countries.

It renews and strengthens our commitment to working together to combat poverty, the principal aim on our development agenda, and provides a powerful and effective mechanism for political dialogue. It is also a framework for new partnerships for trade and investment and the gradual integration of ACP countries into the world economy.

At the centre of the partnership is capacity building to establish real ownership. For the first time, non-state actors are brought into the process - NGOs, civil society, the private sector are all involved, because the partners believe that to get results on the ground, all those involved must take part and not just governments. Alongside the renewed commitment to principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the Agreement also promotes good governance as a fundamental objective and gives priority for both partners to fight against corruption.

The Trade Development and Cooperation Agreement with South Africa was concluded in October 1999. It is a major achievement that in time provides for the creation of a free trade area between the EU and South Africa, which will complement the trading links both parties have with the other ACP countries. We can build on this Agreement to help promote trade and investment in the ACP countries and in southern Africa as a whole. And we can learn from it in designing new trading arrangements between the EU and other ACP regions.

Political dialogue at the highest level took place at the first ever General Summit of EU and African Heads of State in Cairo, in April, and echoed the concerns dealt with in the Partnership Agreement. The search for peace, democracy, regional integration and development were at the centre of debate, and there was a real sense of international commitment and communication.

The Commission is now looking critically at its development efforts. It began the new Millennium with a decision to work on its own organisational and policy reform and in May agreed on a substantial reform of its external General Directorates, which organise and manage development cooperation.

No single donor is able to address the whole spectrum of development: donors and developing countries must work together to succeed. The Commission's new development policy spells out six key priority areas for our operations: trade, regional integration, support for macroeconomic policies with a particular focus on health and education, transport, food security and institutional capacity building. These are areas where the Commission believes it can and should add value whereas in other areas of cooperation we will seek to support initiatives led by the national authorities, in conjunction with other donors and civil society partners.

In two and a half years as Director General of Development within the European Commission, I have been aware of the huge challenges facing our partner countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific - the daily insecurity suffered by those who live below the poverty line, the damage inflicted on people and their homelands by conflicts, the diseases which continue to threaten millions and the menacing consequences of environmental degradation. I have, however, also witnessed immense courage and commitment to improve things for people in both the ACP and European partner countries.

The task we have set ourselves - the eradication of poverty - may not succeed in this generation but I believe we have equipped ourselves with the right tools. We have agreed on the principles and the rules, now we have to get on with it. There is a lot to do. The Commission is sharpening up its development policy and reforming its internal structure for development assistance. The European Union, as the World's largest aid donor, has the experience and the expertise to make a difference. Acting as a reliable partner to so many countries whose future depends on Europe's continued support, the Commission, alongside the Member States of the European Union, must help them to make the push for real progress. That progress can only be measured by their capacity to build a sound and competitive economy in a free and stable society able to combat poverty effectively. It is with economic sovereignty, that political sovereignty will be strengthened.

Philip Lowe
Director-General, DG Development
until June 2000

Time for change

by Kenneth Karl



Many people predicted an uncertain future for ACP-EU cooperation. Some went so far as to call it moribund, obsolete - incapable of sufficiently absorbing the many changes of the dying years of this century to have any hope of effective renewal. The pessimists were wrong. The European Union and the ACP States have just embarked upon a new partnership, with a term of 20 years plus a five-yearly review clause. At the joint ministerial conference in Brussels on 2 and 3 February, the 71 African, Caribbean and Pacific States and the 15 Member States of the European Union succeeded in reaching agreement on the future terms of cooperation between them, to replace the Lomé Convention that had been in force since 1975.

Driven by the fruitful and wide-ranging debate prompted by the Commission's Green Paper, negotiations opened in September 1998 and ended only a few days before the expiry of the fourth Lomé Convention. These discussions - protracted, contentious and sometimes difficult - nevertheless took place in a constructive atmosphere that accurately reflected the determination of both groups of partners to deepen and improve relations between them by making the necessary - even unavoidable - adjustments. The negotiations, and the reshaping of the model of North-South partnership regarded as unique in the world, were based on a determination to safeguard the undeniable achievements of a quarter of a century of cooperation, implemented through four successive Conventions, and the

contrasting results of those Conventions. Despite the many comparative advantages offered by the Lomé system, the overall balance-sheet of ACP-EU cooperation has always been patchy, as the Green Paper itself concludes. Today, more than half of the ACP group members (39 of them) are ranked among the least developed countries (LDCs). Although some countries in the group have made skilful use of the opportunities offered by Lomé, several of them have been unable to achieve economic lift-off. Not all the initial objectives of the Lomé Convention have been achieved, and the path towards efficient application of some of its provisions has been full of obstacles. It has become imperative, therefore, for the states bound by this agreement to come up with alternative paradigms.

Between adaptation and innovation

From Lomé I to Lomé IV - not forgetting the two Yaoundé Conventions, preceded by the Association system that followed on from the Treaty of Rome - the two groups of states have constantly looked for ways of improving cooperation between them as each has grown larger and been confronted by global geopolitical and economic changes. While the end of the Cold War that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 brought a new framework and philosophy to North-South relations, it inevitably influenced relations between the European Union and the ACP States. The shift in the Union's priority issues towards other zones of political and economic involvement (Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean States), and the Union's desire to rationalise its external spending, hinted at a gradual abandonment of its historical partnerships.

The two groups of states have reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining relations between them by opting to pursue this cooperation despite their awareness of the need for

necessary adjustments. Furthermore, the changes in the global economy, highlighted by the acceleration of globalisation in recent years and the relative inability of the ACP States to take part in world trade or to derive the maximum possible growth and socio-economic development from it, have compelled the partners to redefine cooperation priorities. The agreement concluded in early February this year in Brussels, and signed in Cotonou in June, thus forms part of a very different philosophy. It envisages new alignments, the strengthening of sectoral strategies and implementing mechanisms geared to more efficient cooperation.

The dossier that follows, while by no means comprehensive, is an attempt to analyse the major changes underlying the new Agreement - changes based on five central pillars, which will govern cooperation between the EU and ACP States at the dawn of the third millennium.

One of the main innovations in this Agreement is the opening up of the partnership to include new actors, and more particularly non-state actors. The Lomé Convention had traditionally been based — in theory and in practice — on forms of consultation giving preference to inter-governmental relations. The emergence of civil society during recent years and the need to promote a genuinely participative form of development better suited to the involvement of local actors resulted in the negotiators looking beyond the simple governmental framework towards greater decentralisation of aid. This approach, however, requires both sides to accept the challenges, and to do so on several levels, both strategic and active. Gilles Desesquelles contributes a detailed analysis of the problems to this dossier.

The new Agreement also recommends a stronger political dimension to the partnership, to be achieved by the establishment of a continuing and open dialogue between the partners.

Although this theme did make its appearance in the last Lomé Convention, new subjects such as conflict prevention, management and resolution, together with issues associated with good governance, have been added on this occasion, thus boosting the political content of cooperation, as Sophie Da Camara of ECDPM explains.

Furthermore, concentrating on reducing poverty is explicitly a central objective of the new partnership, as envisaged by the general provisions of the Agreement and the broad outlines of the Union's global development cooperation policy. In contrast to the earlier conventions, an integrated and coordinated strategic approach to combatting

From Lomé I to Lomé IV, not forgetting the two Yaoundé Conventions, the two groups of countries have consistently tried to improve cooperation between them

poverty has been defined, and special emphasis has been placed on social and human development, and also on regional integration and cooperation. Guggi Laryea of Eurostep, a network of more than 20 European NGOs, introduces us here to the various issues. The aim of eradicating poverty, and in particular the EU's determination to promote the gradual and harmonious integration of the developing countries into the global economy, as stipulated in Title XVII (Article 130 U) of the Maastricht Treaty, have also brought about changes in the trade framework. The system of trade preferences granted by the EU to the ACP States, with no duty of reciprocity, by way of derogation from the rules governing world trade, and measures which it was hoped would encourage them to diversify their exports and so increase their market shares, have had a limited impact. New trade agreements aiming at the

gradual introduction of regional trading partnerships compatible with WTO rules are planned following a preparatory period of eight years during which the various arrangements will be discussed. The new trade agreements discussed in this dossier by Peter Gakunu, form part of a global approach which closely involves support activities by the EU for the development of the private sector in the ACP States. Furthermore, the complex and cumbersome procedures for implementing the Lomé Convention, responsible for the mass of unused resources, persuaded the negotiators to reform the financial cooperation arrangements. Guiding principles were established, most notably more efficient cooperation instruments, and revision of the planning system and simplification of implementation procedures, as briefly outlined for us by Cecilia Eld-Thorffin. The financial resources, which will be better managed under the new Agreement, are allocated as follows: €13.5 billion to the 9th EDF, including €10 billion for the long-term arrangement, €1.3 billion for regional cooperation and €2.2 billion for the investment facility. The left overs from the earlier EDFs, furthermore, are assessed at €9.9 billion, to which must be added the EIB's own estimated resources of €1.7 billion. The new Agreement also contains a compendium of reference texts with political and economic guidelines defined in the major objectives and strategic priorities to be adopted by the ACP-EU Council of Ministers. In the interests of flexibility - another striking innovation in comparison with the earlier Conventions - this compendium will be adapted and updated to meet the changing needs of cooperation. In view of this wide range of adjustments, the new Agreement is clearly looking to a different future, and the 86 partners have declared their determination to work together to ensure it is implemented more efficiently than it has been in the past.

The non-governmental actors

by Gilles Desesquelles*

The new Convention enshrines the principle of participative development, extending the partnership concept to include a very wide range of actors (civil society, the private sector and local authorities). The idea is not just to involve these actors in implementing projects but to bring them into the political dialogue and make sure they participate in defining and evaluating development strategies and programmes. Decentralised cooperation is thus destined to become an essential aspect of the ACP-EU partnership. However, for this approach to become operationally effective, it is necessary for the actors concerned to confront a number of challenges.

An inevitable trend

Post-independence strategies have made the state a controlling influence in development, often at the expense of other actors. This development approach was also behind cooperation policies. Thus, the Lomé Conventions have been the preserve of central government. Despite recent innovations (such as the decentralised cooperation introduced under Lomé IV in 1989) ACP-EU cooperation largely kept decentralised actors out. During the consultation process preparatory to the Green Paper (1996), the need to extend ACP-EU cooperation to other types of actors was seen as a main political priority. Two processes of change made this inevitable: first, the ascendancy of a broader range of actors (civil society, the private sector and local authorities) anxious to make a larger contribution to development, and secondly the emergence of a new role for the state with the implementation of political reforms and support for the processes of liberalisation and decentralisation. In the first stage, development cooperation enabled certain

actors to be involved in the implementation of projects and programmes. Today, they want to participate in both the formulation and implementation of development and cooperation policies. There are a number of factors that underline the need to progress from the mere involvement of these actors to their genuine participation in the administration of development policies and programmes. Recent events (the public demonstrations in Seattle and Washington) emphasise the part that an active and organised civil society expects to play in international cooperation. The challenges posed by globalisation, the fight against poverty and sustainable development do indeed suggest that we should abandon the "State versus market" debate and emphasise the mobilisation of the various actors, resources and capacity and the concept of new public/private partnerships. It is now acknowledged that the necessary adaptation of the development processes requires the involvement of all the groups of actors. The EU and other donors are currently undertaking a radical review of cooperation policies and approaches to cooperation. The political interest of the EU in more participative development was also reflected in its negotiating mandate for the period after Lomé in the other cooperation agreements (MED and ALA), and in a whole series of recent initiatives designed to introduce new rules governing transparency to facilitate public access to information and the definition of European policies laid down in the Amsterdam treaty. The problems associated with the role and involvement of civil society in every day life arise not just in the South but also in Europe. In this respect, it is worth recalling the guidelines set out by the President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, in his address "Shaping the New Europe," given to the

European Parliament on 15 February 2000:

"The challenge is to radically rethink the way we make Europe. To devise a completely new form of governance for the world of tomorrow. Let me be clear here. The enlarged Europe will certainly need strong institutions, but they must be democratically legitimate institutions that operate in a transparent and accountable way and enjoy the full confidence of the citizens. People want a much more participatory, hands-on democracy. They will not support the European project unless they are fully involved in setting goals, making policy and evaluating progress. And they are right. I believe we have to stop thinking in terms of hierarchical layers of competence separated by the subsidiarity principle and start thinking, instead, of a networking arrangement, with all levels of governance shaping, proposing, implementing and monitoring policy together."

The message is clear: for Europe to be an energetic driving force it needs to be transparent, responsible and therefore trusted in its relations with the public. The opening up of ACP-EU cooperation for the decentralised actors may therefore result in major advances. It offers an alternative to the top-down approaches that offer little scope for local adjustment, creation of responsibility and viability. It may improve the processes of (sectoral) policy formulation and programme implementation, while promoting synergistic effects between public and private actors. It is also crucially important for the achievement of the aims of ACP-EU cooperation (the fight against poverty, the advancement of the private sector, support for local governance). Following this line of reasoning, the broadening of the partnership should not be perceived as a threat to the ACP governments. On the contrary, experience suggests that sustainable development cannot be split between states and markets, central and local governments, public actors and society, but requires genuine civil interaction.



New opportunities

It is precisely this interaction that future ACP-EU cooperation intends to promote. The first point to be made is that the legal provisions of the new Agreement represent an important step forward. The "participation" of various types of actors is defined as one of the four "fundamental principles" for implementing the partnership. An entire chapter is devoted to the "partnership actors" divided into two main categories: the public authorities (local, national and regional) and the non-state actors (the private sector and the economic and social partners, including trade union organisations and civil society in all its forms, depending on the characteristics of each country). This section contains specific commitments to ensure the participation of the decentralised actors in:

- supplying them with appropriate information on the ACP-EU partnership Agreement, especially in the ACP states
- ensuring that civil society is consulted on the economic, social and institutional policies and reforms that will be the subject of EU support
- facilitating the participation of the non-governmental actors in the implementation of the programmes and projects

Djibouti.
Women actors in the partnership. Civil society emerges from its shell



Cape Verde, March 2000.
Africa-Europe Civil Society Forum

- supplying them with appropriate support to boost their capacities
- encouraging networking and the establishment of links between the ACP and EU actors.

References to non-state actors are also to be found in other sections of the new Agreement, covering in particular the complementary nature of their role and their potential contribution to the aims of cooperation (for example, in the promotion of human rights, the processes of democratisation and governance, and conflict prevention), and their advisory role in the decision-making bodies of ACP-EU cooperation (for example, as regards dialogue at the level of the Council of Ministers and the Joint Assembly).

The institutionalisation of Decentralised Cooperation (DC)

The new opportunities mentioned above reflect the ascendancy of the Decentralised Cooperation approach. Experiments with this line of approach have taken place through the Community budget (budget line B7-6430 Decentralised Cooperation) and, in some countries, in connection with the EDF. These experiments made it possible to clarify the concept and operational implications of DC, to inform the various actors and improve their awareness, to promote partnerships between public and private actors, to institute pilot programmes, to test new,

decentralised administrative mechanisms and to improve integration of Decentralised Cooperation with the political decentralisation processes taking place in various ACP states. Even though its implementation was often complex and slow, initial results confirm the potential of this innovative approach. More sophisticated and diverse decentralised cooperation programmes - going beyond the traditional microproject approach - have been launched in a number of countries (Benin, Ghana, Uganda, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Zimbabwe, Senegal, Guinea Conakry and Madagascar). By degrees, there are also signs that minds are becoming more receptive to this new approach, both among the ACP-EU political leaders and among the decentralised actors (who, for their part too, have often preferred to work in isolation rather than in partnership with other actors).

Decentralised Cooperation within the framework of the EU is not yet another instrument or outlet for financing small grass-root projects, but a specific approach to cooperation based on five central ideas:

- active participation and responsibility of all groups of actors;
- greater coordination between various actors through dialogue, the quest for synergies, and an attempt to establish consistency between the various actors' initiatives;
- delegation of administrative - including financial - responsibilities to the closest possible hierarchical level of the actors concerned;
- the adoption of a process approach with a view to ensuring genuine participation and local adjustment;
- the prioritisation of reinforcing capacities and institutional development with a view to boosting the potential for action and control of local initiatives.

In practice, Decentralised Cooperation programmes can be conceived as mainly following

two priority axes of intervention:

- as support for the process of decentralisation, aimed at the establishment of legitimate and effective systems of local government;

- as support for local development initiatives and processes, making it possible to ensure consistency between isolated activities (micro-implementations, NGO activities, twinning) within a given spatial framework.

The challenge is to find complementary and synergistic effects between these two axes which, overall, represent legitimacy and credibility.

The practical challenges

The moment of truth will come when these new principles relating to the actors are put into practice. We must be realistic: the implementation of a pluralistic partnership concept will take time, political courage, institutional creativity and on-the-job learning. Twenty-five years of centralised administration have shaped the attitudes, instruments and procedures of ACP-EU cooperation. The involvement of the decentralised actors in defining and implementing policy is, in many ways, a cultural revolution. Council Regulation 1659/98 rightly observes that the purpose of DC is to help to "bring about a real long-term change

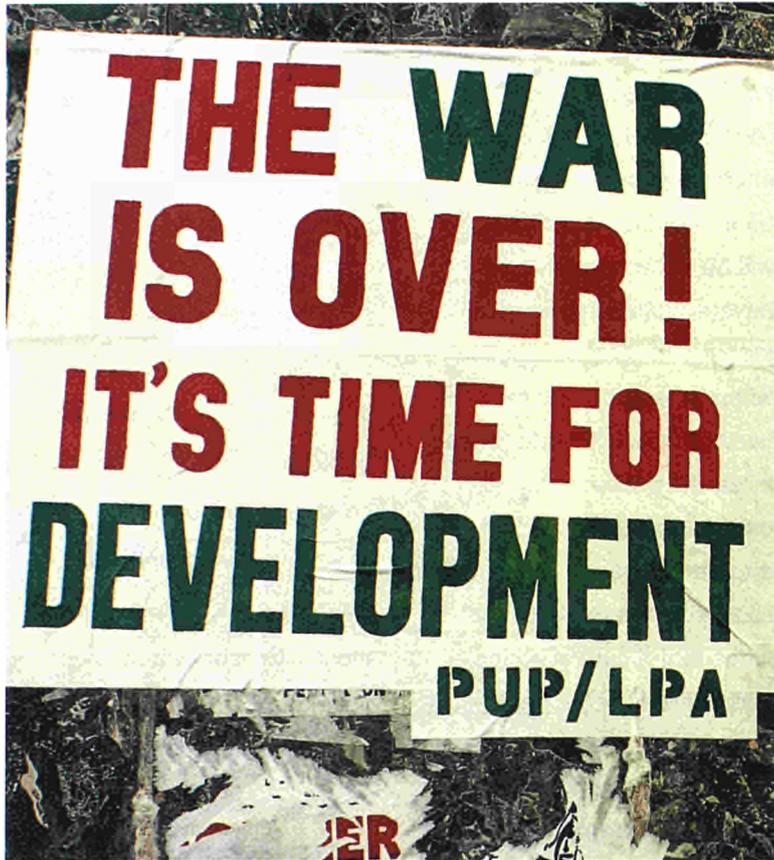
in the EU's cooperation procedures." Unless the mental barriers can be broken down, progress will be slow. In any case, it must be said that neither the central governments nor the Commission Delegations have much experience of dialogue, networking or public-private partnerships. It will be necessary to establish new consultation, planning and joint action practices, in line with the realities and capabilities of each ACP state, in particular by encouraging reflection on the implications of this approach in terms of the radical change in the roles and attitudes of the central agencies and partners of the north, such as the NGO's, and in terms of flexible and decentralised administrative procedures. It will also be important to strengthen the capacities of the governmental actors to enable them to play their new part as facilitators. The decentralised actors of the ACP states are not necessarily ready to embark upon this new partnership concept. Some of them still regard the state (or local government) as more of an enemy than a partner. Others are confronted by problems of legitimacy, organisation or capacity to position themselves as credible partners for governments and the EU, let alone as representatives of the grass-roots actors.

In this context, it is encouraging to note that the ACP actors are increasingly organised, especially at global level. As witnessed by the recent creation of an ACP Civil Society Forum, an ACP Business Forum and an ACP Local Government Platform, initiatives supported by the Commission's Directorate-General for Development. The success of this new multi-actor partnership will to some extent depend on a consistent response by the EU, at various levels: political consistency (for example, towards those ACP states that fail to abide by the participative spirit of the new agreement); financial consistency (ensuring that resources really are made available to decentralised actors); instrumental and procedural consistency (adapting operating methods and procedures to a genuinely decentralised form of administration); and consistency as regards capacity (ensuring that administrators, both in Brussels and, especially, in the Delegations, have the necessary capability to implement a participative partnership).

***Directorate-General for Development,
Civil society, NGOs and
Decentralised Cooperation**

The political dimension of the new ACP-EU partnership

by Sophie da Câmara Santa Clara Gomes*



The political aspect of the ACP-EU partnership has gradually become more important over the last 20 years. The new Agreement between the EU and the ACP States establishes a partnership strengthened politically by extensive and ongoing political dialogue and the involvement of new actors. The aim will be to provide a framework for discussion of questions of mutual or general interest, to be considered in implementing the objectives of the Convention.

The new areas of political dialogue are

- the problems of peace and security and the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts
- good governance
- the campaign against corruption
- immigration issues.

The dialogue will also address issues of greater respect for human rights and the strengthening of democratic principles and the rule of law - aspects already present in the revised Fourth Lomé

Convention, signed in 1995.

Tough negotiations before the agreement?

The EU brought to the negotiating table an ambitious agenda prompted by the modest record of achievement of 30 years of development aid and cooperation set out in the Commission's Green Paper. The EU's summary was a harsh one: despite many years of privileged cooperation and four Lomé Conventions, many of the ACP States were still suffering serious structural economic crises, crushing foreign debts, and a sharp proportional increase in internal poverty and external dependence. In addition, the changes brought by the end of the Cold War and by economic globalisation prompted a radical reassessment by the Union of traditional development cooperation arrangements. At the same time, geopolitical and economic factors have resulted in Europe becoming more and more obviously disillusioned with its ACP partners. Not only that, some Member States wanted to introduce new factors into the negotiations, such as making allowance for conflicts. The ACP group, alerted by the declaration of intent in the

Green Paper, reacted by going on the defensive, to safeguarding what they had gained and preserving the unique and privileged relationship offered them by Lomé. The mandates of the two parties at the outset of negotiations broadly coincided on the principles of a stronger political partnership, guided by sustainable development, the elimination of poverty, and integration of ACP countries into the global economy. This would be achieved by an integrated approach to development, based on a propitious political environment (peace, stability, democracy, human rights, rule of law and good governance).

The difficulties arose from the choice of implementing mechanisms and the quest for equilibrium and reciprocity between the parties. As far as essentials were concerned, the ACP States' mandate declared their commitment to the principles laid down by the existing Convention (human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law), while the Union wanted to make good governance a fourth essential. On this point, the main tensions that surfaced during the negotiations arose from the difficulty of arriving at a common definition of governance and corruption, the ACP States considering this a superfluous point since it was already taken into consideration by the first three.

The final stumbling block as far as governance and corruption are concerned was whether or not they depended on the coercive mechanism of consultation and suspension of the Convention in the event of a violation. The ACP States argued that the complexity of arriving at universal criteria for assessing the level of governance or corruption meant that the suspension clause, in their view, allowed broad scope for arbitrary opinions. The last obstacle to political dialogue was the handling of migration between the ACP States and the EU. The debate was all the more heated because it came up for discus-

sion during the final round of negotiations. The question of the repatriation of ACP nationals unlawfully resident in Europe was a flashpoint. Under the readmission clause, an ACP State through which a non-national had made an unlawful entry into the Union would have been required to allow him re-entry. This was unanimously rejected by the ACP States, and it was eventually decided that this issue should be shelved pending further bilateral negotiations.

The terms of the Agreement?

The preamble reasserts the importance of an integrated approach, taking due account of the political environment within which development aid is provided. The parties agree upon an unequivocal link between a peaceful, stable area, respectful of human rights and favourable to the broad establishment of a democratic system based on the rule of law and the practice of good governance, and the possibility of sustainable development. The preamble also stresses that each State is responsible for establishing this favourable area for development. In addition, the Convention now stipulates the contributions that non-state actors (especially local authorities and civil society as far as political dialogue is concerned) might be able to make via a process of consultation, if relevant. The chapter on the political aspect contains changes regarding the content of the political dialogue, the definition and sanctioning of essential and fundamental elements, the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, and the migration issue. There are a number of interesting innovations. One is a reinforced political dialogue intended to improve the implementation of the agreement and avoid the need for recourse to the non-performance clause, while ensuring the deep commitment of the parties by establishing common priorities. This dialogue will need to be flexible, the precise form it takes depending on

the issue with which it deals. It will cover the following main areas: the basic objectives of the Convention (creating an environment favourable to development), cooperation strategies and sectorial policies, subjects of mutual or general interest (arms dealing, discrimination, etc.), and all issues related to conflicts. It will involve representatives of regional and subregional organisations and civil society by associating them with the dialogue.

The major change is the introduction of good governance as a fundamental aspect, although this idea was already present in Lomé IV with its reference to respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law.

The essential and basic elements, regarded as central themes of the political dialogue, will be actively encouraged by the EU. The idea is to institute a system of positive or incentive conditions to supplement the coercive mechanism of suspension. ACP States that perform well and are anxious to embark on the road of democratic institutional reforms will receive extensive (including financial) support. Similarly, the Union undertakes to take account of procedures as well as results, allowing for the spe-

cific situation of each State.

The interesting aim here is to strike a balance between the granting of aid based on performance criteria and a differentiated approach taking account of needs. This collection of incentives clearly emphasises the central role that the signatories believe must be played in the promotion of development by basic rights and an effective democratic political system.

There are no sweeping changes on the issues of democracy and human rights. The Convention reaffirms the indivisibility, universality and interdependence of human rights, and the parties undertake to promote and defend basic freedoms. It is explicitly stated that democracy is the most desirable form of government. Nevertheless, the text acknowledges that, subject to respect for this principle, each State has the right to develop its own democratic culture.

The text dealing with good governance and the struggle against corruption is almost entirely new. Agreement on a joint definition of good governance is a notable step in itself. This definition, a broad one, includes in particular the concepts of responsible, transparent and equitable administration of public resources (human, natural, economic and finan-

cial), a transparent decision-making system, the primacy of law, and the strengthening of capacities to avoid corruption. The emphasis on corruption, serious cases of which are subject to a sanction mechanism, is attributable to both sides, the ACP States having argued in favour of a balanced system which also condemns bribery (for example, through European companies intervening in an ACP market). The purpose of this paragraph is to send a clear signal to European taxpayers and investors as well as to legitimate beneficiaries of aid.

The issue of conflict prevention, management and resolution is interesting in that its presence in this agreement is both indispensable and odd. It is indispensable because an environment of crisis is a major obstacle to the effective implementation of development policies. It is curious because this new incursion of the geopolitical field into what was initially a commercial and financial agreement is the first of its kind. The text creates space for a joint campaign in favour of stabilisation and pacification of conflict regions of the ACP zone. The essential idea of the Convention is to use regional, subregional and national capacities to attack the root causes of

conflict. There are also plans to contain existing conflicts in order to prevent their spreading. Proposed means include the establishment of a participatory and equitable political and social environment and the introduction of conciliation mechanisms and other machinery for the resolution of conflicts. The origin of tensions is fully taken into account, with recommendations for the sharing of resources and power, restrictions on military spending and arms dealing, etc. It is interesting to note that the agreement also makes provision for the necessary links to be established between emergency measures, rehabilitation and cooperation on the ground.

Immigration, like conflict, is a completely new aspect of the partnership. In the absence of a consensus, as we have seen, the text confines itself to establishing a link between poverty and migration and establishing a mutual duty of non-discrimination. The Convention also establishes a link between the concepts of training, education and migration, in that the Union undertakes to support the provision of greater capacities for ACP nationals in their countries of origin or within the Union. Finally, the readmission clause will affect both parties equally, in the case of an unlawful resident repatriated to his country of origin, whether it be an ACP or Union State (and not to a country through which he has passed).

Challenges

There are challenges to be met. As far as the political aspect is concerned, there is no denying that the new Convention modernises relations between the EU and the ACP States, but there are still challenges. Three may be mentioned: effective implementation, consistent application and reinforced partnership. The objectives aimed at by the political aspect are mainly a joint attack on the root causes of the failure of development. It remains to be seen whether the mechanisms contemplated will be adequate to achieve the

stated objectives. This, indeed, is the weakness of the text at this stage: operational machinery is not yet clearly apparent. To establish processes of democratisation and sustainable participation respecting specific local conditions is all very well, but how? As yet, for example, there is no specific mechanism for dialogue with civil society, whose role is still a marginal one. Nor should we underestimate the scale of the change of attitude necessary if agreements between governments are to be replaced by a partnership open to other actors.

The case of conflict prevention, management and resolution is an interesting one, but poses a practical problem. To judge by the text, the partnership should take rapid action to deal with the conflict in the Congo at the most appropriate level by preventing it from spreading and by attacking the arms dealers. Another challenge will be consistency. Along the same lines, how is the delicate balance to be preserved between the application of performance criteria and the maintenance of a differentiated approach based on an assessment of the needs of the beneficiary countries? Nor can we lose sight of the impact which the internal reform of the Commission will have on the policies laid down. Finally, establishing a stronger partnership based on dialogue will call for a real commitment on the part of the Union, alongside its ACP partners and extending to international fora, on crucial questions that may range from the price of raw materials to the war in the Congo, by way of the WTO trade system and questions of debt reduction. This unique partnership certainly leaves room for improvement, but it does have a vast potential which the parties will have to learn to exploit. Everything will depend, in future, on the way in which the Convention is used.

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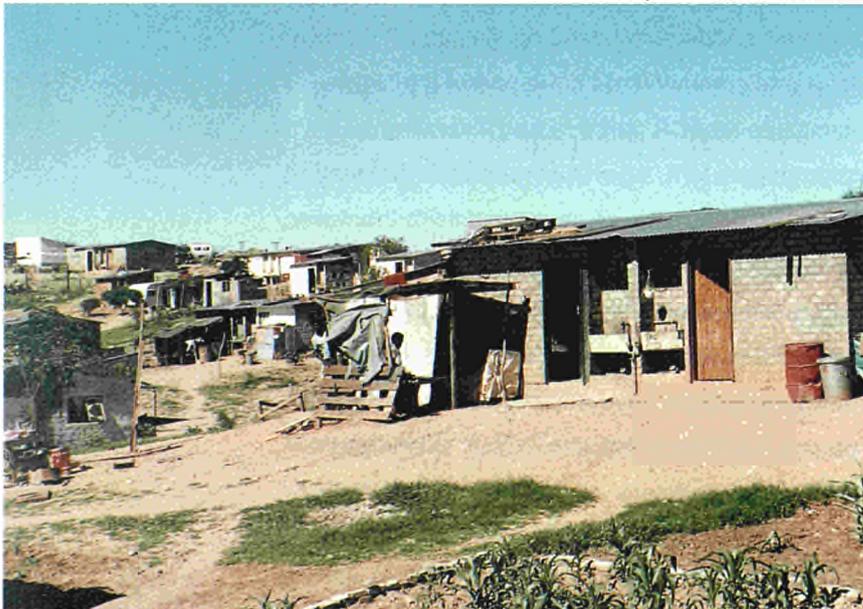
Effective poverty eradication

by Guggi Laryea*

Consistent with current international development thinking on the need for a poverty focus, the new ACP-EU Agreement declares the central objective of ACP-EU partnership to be the reduction and eventual eradication of poverty. Considering the levels of poverty in many ACP countries, this declaration is a step forward from the previous Lomé Conventions. However, there is a need to ensure that the new Agreement is not perceived as a means of simply paying lip service to current fashions in development cooperation. To date the strongest and most explicit statements made by governments on poverty have been the commitments made at the UN conferences on social development and women in 1995. At these conferences, governments - including EU and ACP members - committed themselves to eradicating poverty. It was also agreed that the process and strategies for achieving poverty eradication should be defined by developing countries.

The new ACP-EU Agreement, with its principles of partnership and ownership, is an ideal instrument, with the potential to support these initiatives. But in order for this potential to be

Slum in Namibia



realised, the principles and objectives of the new Agreement will have to be backed up by clear and specific mechanisms and strategies. In addition, certain ambiguities in the Agreement regarding the objectives and principles will have to be clarified.

Poverty eradication in practice

The wording of the objective of the partnership seems less bold and forward-looking compared to the commitments made at the UN Conferences. Its reference to both poverty reduction and eradication is confusing. In order to effectively tackle poverty it is essential that both parties concentrate on its eradication as agreed at the UN conferences.

To this end all aspects of ACP-EU cooperation, including trade arrangements, should be aimed at poverty eradication. The recent statement by the European Commissioner for Development, Poul Nielson, on the relationship between poverty eradication and other development cooperation aims, helps to emphasise this point. "Issues such as trade liberalisation and integration of developing countries into the global economy remain important features of the European Development Policy, but only in as far as they directly contribute to the overarching objective of raising the standard of living of the poor."

Beyond policies that are traditionally associated with development, coherence should also be ensured between all other Community policies and poverty eradication, including agricultural policies. To help guarantee such coherence, the establishment of a special EC office as proposed by the European Parliament, charged with monitoring coherence between all EC development and other policies, should be considered. Finally, mechanisms have to be established that enable assessments of the Agreement's contribution to poverty eradication. The results of these assess-

ments should be made public in the annual reviews of ACP indicative programmes and in reports prepared by the Joint Council of Ministers.

Partnership and ownership

The definition of strategies to combat poverty by developing countries themselves is a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable and equitable development. The ACP-EU Agreement's principles of partnership are supposed to encourage ownership of the development strategies by the countries and populations concerned. Though this principle is often cited as a hallmark of ACP-EU cooperation, the implementation of past Lomé Conventions has not truly reflected this principle. In theory ACP States are supposed to be responsible for defining their own strategies and indicative programmes. However, very often, ACP programmes have been based on strategies drawn up by the EU. In order to ensure that the process for achieving poverty eradication is defined by the ACP countries, support and capacity building for the ACP offices responsible for defining strategies and programmes should be provided.

Civil society participation

Civil society participation is a pre-condition for an effective campaign against poverty. In this respect the emphasis placed by the Agreement on civil society participation is encouraging. However, more specific instruments will have to be developed that enable and safeguard civil society participation.

First of all there needs to be a clear understanding of the nature and role of civil society. Civil society organisations are not elected bodies. Their strength is in representing specific interest groups within society. Their legitimacy lies in the specific mandates that they have.

To ensure civil society plays an effective role in development, mechanisms at national, regional and global level, that enable consultation with civil society on policy and programming, need to be developed. In many ACP countries mecha-

nisms for consultation between governments and civil society already exist. These need to be built on and improved.

To enable civil society to be a true actor of the partnership, a policy on information disclosure to the public by ACP and EU decision-makers on proposals made in policy and programming would need to be established and implemented.

Social development

Eradication of poverty cannot be achieved without addressing human and social development on which it is dependent. Concrete and explicit strategies are going to have to be defined that aim for the achievement of universal access to basic social services in the ACP. Progress made in this area should be documented in regular reports.

Strategies should give particular attention to controlling HIV/AIDS and malaria - the most serious threats to human resources in Africa. This should not only involve an increase in resources. These diseases should be seen as cross-cutting issues to be addressed within all sectors, projects and programmes. Emphasis should also be given to investment in relevant basic education of adequate quality in which participation of stakeholders in its design is guaranteed.

In addition the quantity and quality of both ACP and EU staff with expertise on social development and gender issues will have to be increased.

Finally, the Agreement's specific contribution to the social development commitments made at the UN Conferences and the subsequent international development targets also agreed by EU and ACP states would have to be outlined.

Gender equality

Women constitute the majority of people living in poverty in the ACP. Eradication of poverty in the ACP will require concrete plans and actions that specifically address the problems women face.

To establish such plans, gender equality concerns in all areas and phases of ACP cooperation need to be identified. This should involve the establishment and use of gender-disaggregated data.

To assess progress made in addressing the problems faced by women, all reviews and assessments of programmes and projects should include a section on the gender impact of these programmes and projects.

Financial cooperation

If the international development targets of poverty eradication are to be met, donors will have to increase their levels of aid in real terms. The EU decided not to increase the level of funding it provides in real terms for the new Agreement. It argued that by improving the rate of disbursement through reforms it would be able to meet the requirements of the ACP. This represents a challenge that the European Commission is yet to prove it can meet. To date the lack of capacity on the side of both parties has hampered the speedy disbursement of funds. Furthermore, the unfamiliarity of ACP and EU staff with new systems of operation under the new Agreement may further slow disbursement rates.

To avoid this scenario, the Commission needs to draw up a strategy for improving disbursement of funds to the ACP.

On the basis of this strategy the ACP and the EU should agree to a timetable with intermediate targets for disbursement.

To generate further resources, money pledged by EU Member States under the EDF should be transferred regularly to an interest-bearing account and locked for use of ACP countries. As a means of bringing the EDF under the democratic control of the European Parliament, this fund should be incorporated into the overall EC budget.

Lastly, the criteria on which resource allocation is based should be transparent and related to the objective of poverty eradication.

Cooperation in other fora

Poverty eradication in the ACP is dependent on many factors that lie outside the ambit of the ACP-EU Agreement. An enabling environment and support from the international community on the objectives of the new Agreement are essential to their success. To achieve this the ACP and the EU need to step up their cooperation in other fora.

The debt crisis is the greatest obstacle to achieving the international development targets for ACP and other developing countries. The EU should work with other donors to ensure that the Highly Indebted Poor Countries debt relief package is fully funded. In addition the EU should push other donors to

cancel all unpayable debts incurred by the ACP.

Regarding trade arrangements, the ACP and the EU need to work together within the WTO for the effective application of special and differentiated treatment of developing countries in all trade and investment agreements. An effort must also be made to reform GATT article XXIV to enable non-reciprocal trade agreements between structurally and economically unequal groups of countries.

Reforms within the EU

In the Commission's own words, increasing levels of disbursement to the ACP is dependent on, *inter alia*, internal reforms within the Commission and a redefinition of the Commission and Member States' roles.

The Commission needs to address complex administrative structures and provide for greater decentralisation of decision-making to delegations abroad. While current efforts to reunify the project cycle under one external office are appreciated, it should be ensured that the Commissioner and Directorate-General responsible for ACP-EU cooperation have the tools and political control to effectively co-manage all phases of ACP-EU projects.

* Policy Advisor, Eurostep

Eurostep is a network of 21 European NGOs.

What future for trade?

by Peter Gakunu*

One of the main driving forces for change in ACP-EU cooperation is that after more than two decades, ACP countries' performance in the EU market has not improved substantially, despite preferential access granted under the Lomé Convention.

Sustainable development requires effective economic diversification. Despite the financial resources provided under previous Conventions, and generous preferences, most ACP countries remain heavily dependent on the export of a few primary commodities which are faced with declining prices. Under these conditions, globalisation poses a serious threat for ACP countries, because of the weak nature of their economies, and the fact that they are lagging behind in making the economic changes to attract foreign direct investment and diversify their economies. To integrate ACP countries into the world economy it will be necessary to adapt the trade regime to reflect a changed international environment.

The Trade Regime of the Lomé Conventions was built on two main principles: non-reciprocity and non-discrimination. With the conclusion of the Uruguay Round Agreements, the two principles seemed to be in conflict with the principle of most favoured nation treatment, which did not allow discrimination between developing countries. This implies that under the WTO rules the EU would not be able to extend preferential treatment on a non-reciprocal basis solely to ACP countries.

Nevertheless, it was understood that because of the special relationship with the ACP countries, the EU was duty-bound to continue the non-reciprocal preferences granted to them, at least for a transitional period of ten years. While recognising the need for special treatment for the least developed countries, the solidarity and unity

of the ACP group had to be maintained, and regional integration efforts in the ACP States could not be undermined.

In all negotiations, compromise is a necessity. The objectives and principles of the new Partnership Agreement reflect this spirit.

Objectives and principles

The objectives of the new economic partnership are to foster the smooth and gradual integration of ACP States into the world economy, by enhancing their capacity to play a full part in international trade and assisting them to participate actively in the multilateral trading system. The Partnership Agreement aims at assisting the ACP States to rise to the challenges of globalisation, and adapt progressively to new conditions of international trade, by enhancing their production, supply and trading capacity, as well as their ability to attract investment by creating a new trading dynamic.

Market access

Improving preferential market access was at the core of the ACP States' negotiating position on trade matters. The original agreement, based on the principle of non-reciprocity, was perceived as an important means of fostering growth of ACP economies. The EU, though bound by the limitations of the current WTO rules, reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the development efforts of the ACP States by maintaining the existing trade provisions during the transition period.

Customs cooperation

The purpose of the rules of origin is to ensure that only ACP products imported into the EU benefit from the preferential regime under the Convention. In the course of implementing previous Conventions, the ACP countries had put forward a strong argument that the rules of origin



Bananas being exported from St Vincent to the EU

were too stringent and inflexible and unrelated to their level of economic development. They had argued that these rules did not take account of the level of ACP's economic development and therefore needed substantial change.

One area in which the ACP countries have a comparative advantage in terms of their resource endowment is in fisheries. Apparently, this is also an area in which certain EU Member States have a direct interest. The rules of origin operating in this sector tend to be very technical and are basically aimed at protecting the EU fishery sector. Improvement achieved under the partnership agreement in this sector includes modification of the definition of "their vessels."

For the purpose of applying the rules of origin, ACP countries are treated as one territory. This allows cumulation to take place amongst the ACP countries, and with the EU Member States, and Overseas Countries and Territories. Following the conclusion of the EU-South Africa free trade area, it was necessary to modify the provisions on cumulation to allow products within the South African Customs Union (SACU) to circulate freely, so that regional integration within the region and in the ACP would not be adversely affected. Consequently, the provisions on cumulation had to be adapted to the changed circumstances in order to continue; firstly, as

already provided for under the Lomé Convention; secondly, within SACU; and thirdly, within regional organisations which have achieved a certain level of regional integration.

Derogations from the rules of origin allow ACP countries certain flexibility in the application of the rules, especially in the case of fisheries products. The partnership agreement provides for an increase of the tonnage on automatic derogation for canned tuna, while abolishing the requirement for normal derogation. The difference between automatic and normal derogation is that in the former case ACP countries are not required to submit detailed information for the derogation to be granted. In the latter case, however, ACP countries are required to submit extremely detailed information and justification. Despite providing this information, requests for derogation in the fisheries sector were as a rule rejected by the Community.

Additionally, the EU agreed to modify its position on the implementation of value tolerance for canned tuna. The ACP raised this issue because of their practical experience during the implementation of the Convention, that their tuna canning industries could not utilise the provision. The EU has now agreed to provide a mechanism for the application of value tolerance for canned tuna, which is currently under consideration.

Finally, one of the major achievements of the negotiations in this area is that ACP exporters can provide an exporter's declaration in lieu of an EUR1 movement certificate for the customs authorities in the EU to confirm originating status and therefore grant preferential access to ACP products.

Short term fluctuations in export earnings

Support in cases of short-term fluctuations in export earnings recognises the adverse effects of unstable export earnings, particularly in the agricultural and mining sectors, on the development of the ACP States. To this end, additional resources would be provided taking account of the extreme dependence of the ACP States'

economies on exports from the agricultural and mining sectors.

To qualify for the additional resources the following criteria must be satisfied:

- 10% loss of export earnings from goods compared with the arithmetic average of the earnings in three out of the four years preceding the application year;

- 10% loss of earnings from the total for agricultural or mineral products, where these products constitute 40% of total export revenues from goods; 2 per cent in the case of LDCs.

- 10% worsening in the public deficit programme for the year in question or forecast for the following year.

Future Prospects

The first challenge for the ACP and the EU is to ensure that the new partnership agreement is in sync with the World Trade Organisation - globalisation and liberalisation. The ACP and the EU will need to form alliances within the WTO to ensure that there is ample flexibility in the interpretation and application of WTO rules and norms so that the development interests and peculiar problems of the ACP countries are fully taken into account. The current efforts by the WTO to breathe new life into the multilateral trading system after the Seattle debacle offer a unique opportunity to the EU, and present a challenge for the international community to rise to this

occasion and ensure that the commitments on special and differential treatment are given real content.

The second challenge is to develop the necessary capacity in the ACP countries to implement the partnership agreement and to negotiate new WTO-compatible trading arrangements. Low levels of economic development, natural disasters and a hostile international environment are among the main causes underlying the ACP's profound economic malaise. The lack of capacity in most ACP countries is now widely recognised as the missing link in their development efforts. It is imperative now that ACP countries are assisted to create the capacity to plan, implement, manage and monitor development programs and mobilise their populations in the development process. The benefits that could be derived from the partnership agreement and the opportunities offered by the multilateral trading system will not be realised unless the capacity constraints in the ACP countries are addressed.

Many ACP countries have usually lacked commitment to and ownership of capacity building. Most of them have yet to come round to viewing their capacity constraints as critical for their development. ACP countries must demonstrate commitment to building the requisite capacity by investing in their own human resources,

reforming their institutions and managing technical assistance so as to benefit from the partnership agreement and take advantage of the opportunities offered by globalisation and liberalisation. In parallel, the EU and other donor agencies should practically commit themselves to the principle of ownership of capacity building within their programs.

Thirdly, introduction of reciprocity into ACP-EU trade arrangements is likely to have costs and benefits. The distribution of short-term adjustment costs and long-term perceived benefits will however depend on a country's ability to respond positively, its level of competitiveness and its ability to expand investment into products and sectors with high growth potential. There will be a need, therefore, to accompany these efforts with genuine financial resources. In addition to the EDF resources, the EU Member States should fulfil their international commitments, including the allocation of at least 0.7 per cent of their GNP to Official Development Assistance (ODA).

Development of the ACP countries cannot depend on foreign aid alone. Broad based economic growth will remain elusive in most ACP countries unless the partnership agreement is able to generate adequate investments both from within and from abroad. ACP countries must therefore ensure

The concern to integrate ACP countries into the world economy brought about the need to adapt the trade regime to a changed international environment



WTO headquarters in Geneva. The first challenge for ACP and EU is to ensure that the new partnership agreement is in sync with the WTO, globalisation and liberalisation

that priority is accorded to measures and programmes aimed at attracting both local and foreign investment, and valorising the opportunities derived from knowledge-based new technologies.

Fourthly, there is a need to resolve the ACP debt problem. From the early 1980s, the debt burden of the ACP countries has grown more onerous and increasingly unmanageable. The low capability to service external debt is vividly reflected in the massive build-up of arrears and high service ratios, but also by the frequent rescheduling that is required. The cumulative burden of payments has been crippling. Unsustainable debt has created serious foreign exchange constraints in a number of ACP

countries. In Sub-Saharan Africa debt servicing absorbs nearly one third of foreign exchange earnings. The cumulation of arrears has contributed significantly to unsustainable debt stock which has tended to deter investment and undermine economic stability. The positive results anticipated from reform of the ACP economies are likely to be compromised by the unsustainable debt stock.

Debt servicing diverts domestic financial resources from development. Recent estimates show that some 9 billion dollars annually is now being used to finance debt repayments. For some ACP countries the resulting distortions have been staggering. In the case of Zambia, for example, debt repayments absorb one dollar

out of every two dollars provided in aid. In acknowledging efforts now underway to redress the debt burden one can only hope that the international community will respond in a timely fashion to avoid further catastrophe.

Lastly, there is a pressing need to address the problem of the lack of competitiveness and diversification in the ACP economies. ACP Heads of State and Government at their meeting in Libreville in November 1997 agreed that trade preferences, valuable as they may be, would neither sustain ACP's competitiveness

nor improve their export performance. Their commitment to undertake comprehensive trade development programmes so as to enhance ACP's export performance and sustainable development should now be translated into immediate and concrete action. The best way to achieve this is through increased regional cooperation and integration. Indeed the future of the ACP countries is precariously balanced on the success or failure of regional cooperation and integration initiatives. The Partnership Agreement provides a unique opportunity for the attainment of this objective.

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The private sector in the new agreement

by Fabrizio Donatella*

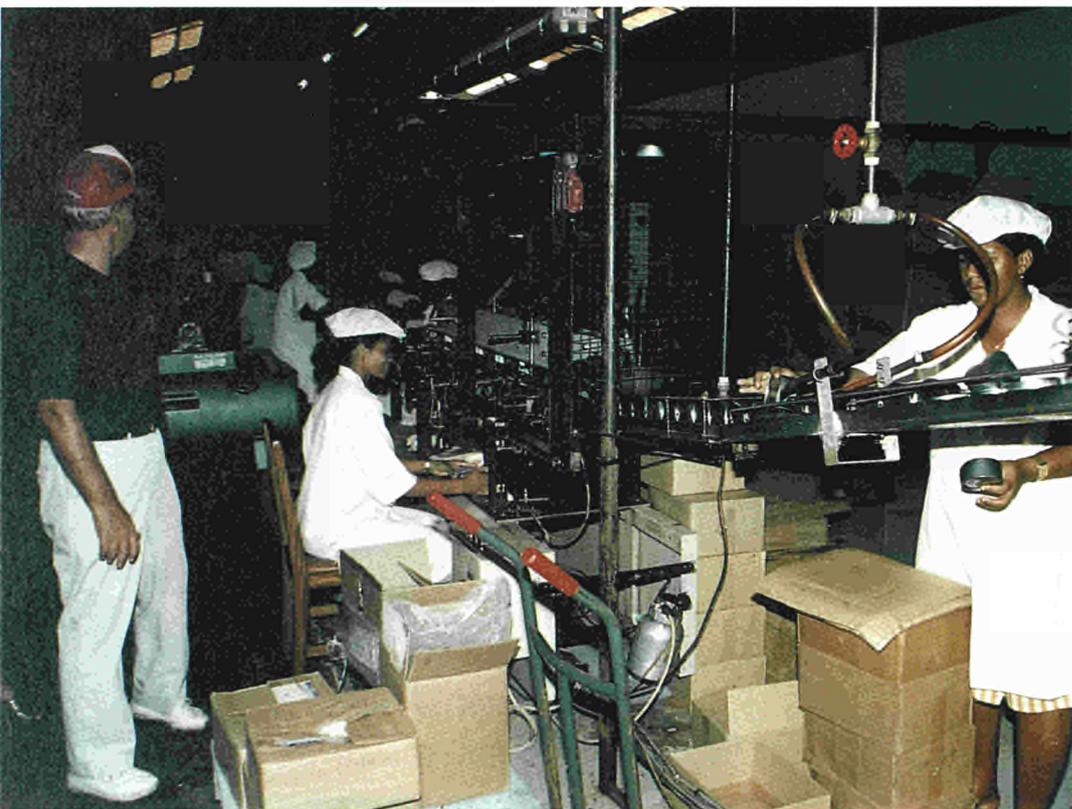
It very soon became clear to the negotiators that they shared a number of views that would influence the way in which private-sector problems were to be handled over the coming months. They agreed, in particular, on the significance and scope of economic change in ACP countries, which had speeded up since the previous Agreements, and on the need for new private enterprise and technical support funding that was being expressed by the private sector at a local level, and by foreign investors. The analyses and studies referred to by the negotiators actually showed that, whereas foreign direct investment (FDI) in developing countries currently accounts for five per cent of total world FDI, the ACP countries only account for 0.12 per cent of the world total. The negotiators also agreed on most of the factors giving rise to this unfavourable trend, which is due to a large number of internal and external constraints, the most important being the smallness of many markets, political and economic instability, a lack of comparative advantage and the generally low competitiveness of businesses available for partnership. In view of these analyses, and contact with representatives of the private sector in ACP and European countries in particular, the ACP countries and the Community decided to review the principles of and arrangements for implementing a strategy for supporting development of the private sector in connection with the new partnership Agreement.

The new Agreement

The text of the new Agreement emphasises the importance of supporting the private sector and developing true partnerships between local and European investors to balance the influence of public bodies, which are often too far removed from the market and business in some countries. By encouraging the development of the private sector and investment, the ACP countries can significantly increase the chances of more rapid and durable growth and have a positive influence on social indices. Furthermore, development of the private sector is no longer regarded as just another aspect of cooperation between the Community and the ACP countries, but as a topic relevant to most of the areas of cooperation where the private sector can play a significant part, sometimes deserving special attention and appropriate action. For the first time, the text of the Agreement does not contain only basic principles, but also mechanisms and criteria establishing links between these principles and their implementation.

Principles

- Based on a view that is now shared by everyone involved in development cooperation policy: the private sector cannot develop without an appropriate policy for obtaining macroeconomic stability, without the establishment of partnership between the public and private sectors and without a truly consistent strategy embracing all three possible levels of activity: macroeconomic; intermediate



A new challenge for the private sector - a production unit in the Seychelles

("mesoeconomic"), involving action with and on financial and non-financial intermediaries; and microeconomic of the business proper, via direct financial and technical assistance for small and medium-sized businesses belonging to the formal and informal sectors.

- The need for all the bodies concerned (enterprises, financial institutions, bodies representing the private sector, etc.) to be involved in designing and implementing the specific activities to be undertaken. This is also one of the innovations of this agreement, since it enshrines the need to establish and

sustain a real dialogue between the public sector in the ACP countries, the private sector in both the ACP countries and in Europe and Community institutions.

- The importance of the need to reinforce the level of domestic and foreign private investment to offset the reduction in flows of public development aid.

In this respect, although the need for and usefulness of action to promote investment and to protect investment and funding were recognised in previous Agreements, it cannot be denied that the text of the new Agreement in its current form is an attempt

to make measures to deal with these problems more consistent and logical. The new text actually provides for support in four different, intimately linked, forms: to reinforce the promotion of investment at national and regional levels; to help to define uniform guidelines to help the ACP countries and the Community to negotiate investment protection agreements, which need to have sections in common; to provide appropriate support for public and private intermediary bodies operating in the private investment guarantee sector; and to provide investors with the funding necessary for investment proper, in the form of bank facilities (loans, acquisition of holdings, guarantees, etc). But apart from these principles, the parties to the new agreement have also recognised the need to consider significantly reinforcing the resources to be devoted to implementation of this action plan. The long-term development budget will therefore be used to finance all the initiatives constructed to meet needs at the macroeconomic, intermediate and business levels. Examples include

support for the reform process, promoting investment, reinforcing businesses' competitiveness and structuring the dialogue between the public and private sectors and between European investors and ACP countries. Investment financing will be provided via a special new tool: the Investment Facility. Without going into details, it is useful to mention a number of aspects that will influence the implementation of these activities at an institutional level. The Commission will be responsible for implementing operations financed from the long-term budget, while the European Investment Bank will be responsible for managing the Investment Facility. It is obvious, however, that the institutions will apply these tools by mutual agreement, in a coordinated way. The Centre for the Development of Industry (CDI) will work even more closely with the Commission and the Bank. The text of the agreement also provides for fundamental restructuring of the Centre, its terms of reference (to be extended to include all areas of economic activity) and its activities on the ground. This body, which is to be called the Centre for the Development of Enterprise (CDE), will continue to provide support and non-financial assistance to businesses.

Investment financing

A tool as important as the Investment Facility justifies further explanation of its scope and principles.

The new agreement provides for the fundamental restructuring of the venture capital operations conducted previously. The Investment Facility can provide finance in the form of loans on various terms or of venture capital subject to principles more in keeping with the market and the needs of the private

sector. One significant way in which the Investment Facility differs from previous operations is that it is a renewable fund and offers a secure budget for the short-, medium- and long-term development of the private sector in ACP countries. The Facility will therefore operate on the basis of clearly defined return on investment criteria, in the private and public sectors. Although the conditions for granting funding under the Facility will essentially be based on the conditions prevailing in local

By encouraging the development of the private sector and investment, the ACP countries can significantly increase the chances of more rapid and sustainable growth

financial markets, to avoid excessive distortion of such markets the negotiators have included the ability to grant concessions to certain operations that should, by their very nature (in the case of some public-sector or private-sector projects with a significant social or environmental impact) or as a result of their location (in countries emerging from slump), benefit from the most favourable rates.

The new agreement has made it possible to improve the structure of the private sector and set up a proper development support strategy for it in the ACP countries. The challenge facing everyone concerned is a daunting one. It will require exceptional flexibility, and a new partnership between the public sector and private operators based on mutual sympathy and understanding.

Improving financial cooperation

by Cecilia Eld-Thorffin*

In the past, aid practitioners from the EU and the ACP in charge of implementation of European Development Fund (EDF) assistance faced a tough and complex task. Over the years, the system for implementation of aid had grown more and more complex. The money was provided through a multitude of instruments, each functioning according to its own logic and with its own planning requirements. The overview, coherence and impact were lost. Significant delays in the implementation process meant the money did not reach the end recipients according to schedule. It was generally recognised that radical reforms were needed.

The new Agreement will bring profound change in development assistance. Key words are coherence, impact and flexibility. The EU Member States have indicated their confidence in the new system by allocating considerable resources for financial cooperation. During the next five-year period, €13.5 billion will be channelled to the ACP States through the 9th European Development Fund (EDF).

One grant allocation per country

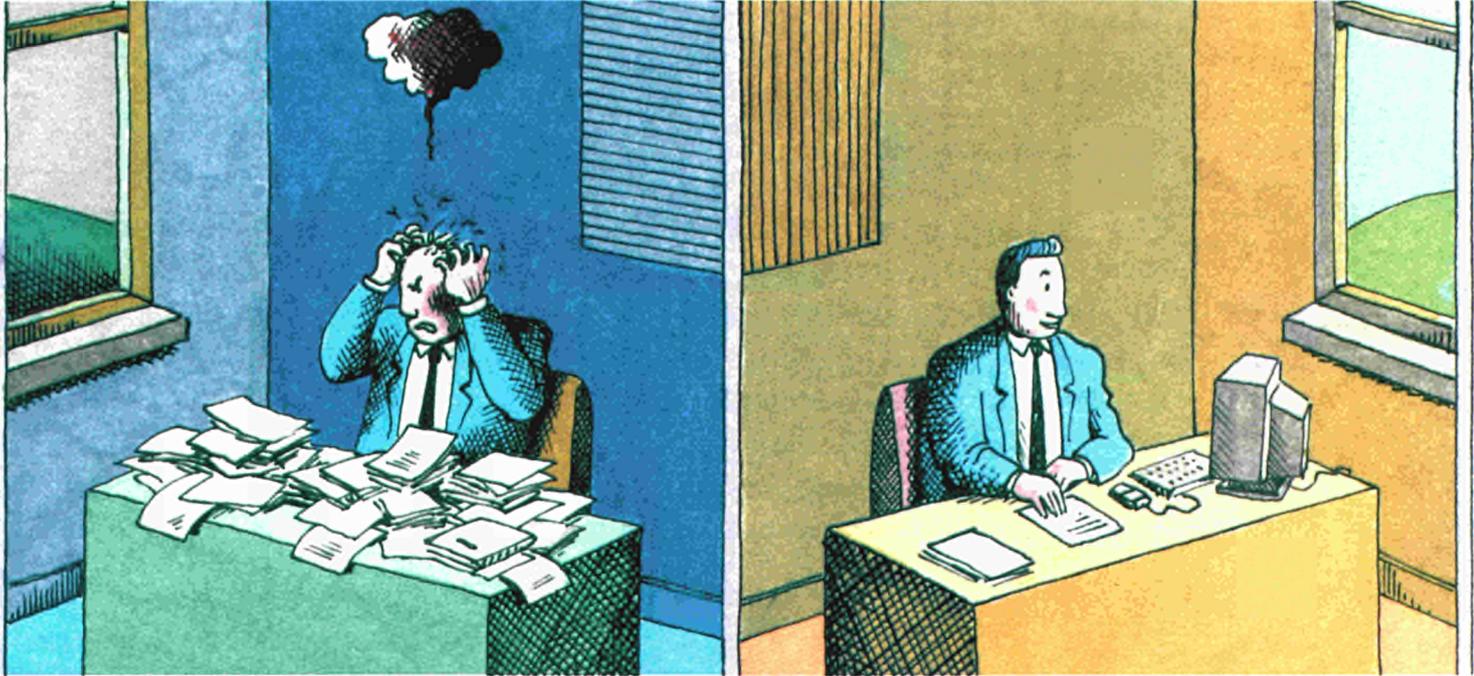
The instruments for providing aid in the form of grants have been regrouped and rationalised. Instead of a multitude of allocations from different instruments, each ACP State will get one single indication of a lump sum of resources for a five-year period. This money can be used to finance a wide range of operations, and no resources will be locked for a specific purpose. For example, it will be possible to use these grants for macro-economic support, sector programmes, traditional projects and programmes, debt relief, decentralised cooperation and humanitarian aid. Grant assistance may also be used to offset negative consequences from shortfalls in export earnings. Such allocations will replace assistance previously channelled through STABEX and SYSMIN.

Indicative allocations rewarding good performance

During the Lomé era, each country allocation was calculated only on the basis of need, such as population size and average income. There was little flexibility in the system. Resources were frozen for specific activities and specific countries where they were sometimes not put to good use. In future, grant resources will be allocated on the basis of an evaluation of performance as well as need. The criteria for the evaluation of need and performance have been negotiated between the ACP and the Community and will be used as the basis for a shared assessment. Allocations will not be fixed, as needs and performance are not static but develop and change over time. During the course of implementation of the programme, needs and performance will be regularly monitored and the allocation may be reduced or increased as appropriate.

Concentration on focal sectors

To improve the coherence of EDF assistance in each ACP State, all grants will be implemented through one, coherent rolling programming exercise. The starting point will be the establishment of a Country Support Strategy (CSS), which will include an analysis of the political, economic and social context of the country and outline the country's own development strategies. It will also pay close attention to the activities of other donors. On the basis of this analysis, a suitable orientation for the use of Community aid will be pinpointed. The support strategy will concentrate on a limited number of sectors. This is to ensure that the overall impact is not diminished as it would be if the resources were scattered over many different activities. In an operational Indicative Programme attached to the CSS, the operations to be financed in the focal sector(s) will be spelled out.



Result-oriented and flexible rolling programming

A flexible and regular review mechanism will make it possible to regularly update the CSS, the volume of resources and the indicative programme to take account of developments in need and performance. Progress will be monitored according to impact indicators. A key element is the decentralisation of the review process to field level, making the review an integral part of the dialogue between the Community and the recipient country. An inclusive approach is envisaged, involving non-state actors in the formulation of support strategies and in the implementation phase.

Access to risk capital

The development strategies in the new Agreement are to a large extent focused on economic growth and private sector development. To support these strategies, an entirely new Investment Facility, geared directly towards operators in the private sector, has been created. The main objective of the Facility is to help develop the private sector in ACP countries. It will be managed by the European Investment Bank and will be set up through the deployment of €2,200 million from the 9th EDF. It will func-

tion as a revolving fund and any returns will flow back to the Facility. In the longer term, no further replenishment of the Facility from EDF resources should be necessary. Loans from the Facility will as a rule be granted on market-related terms. Interest subsidies will, however, be approved for loans to investment projects that fulfil specific criteria, such as bringing environmental or social benefits.

Strengthening the regions of the ACP

Strengthening regional integration in ACP countries is identified as an important component of the Agreement. The future ACP-EU trade regime is also built around the ACP regions. €1.3 billion of the 9th EDF has been reserved for financing regional support programmes. The ACP countries themselves will define the make-up of the regions with which the EU will cooperate, and the regional programmes too will be managed through a system of rolling programming.

ACP and EU partners expect that these radically reformed mechanisms will make development assistance more efficient and coherent.

The instruments for providing aid in the form of grants have been regrouped and rationalised

* Task Force ACP-EU Negotiations

New beginning at Joint Assembly Abuja, Nigeria, 20-23 March 2000

by Dorothy Morrissey

The 30th session of the ACP-EU Joint Assembly, which took place in Nigeria's new capital, Abuja, was notable for several reasons. Nigeria was hosting the assembly that had for years issued resolutions condemning its military regime. Its location was a tribute to its

democratic government, newly returned to civilian rule after almost two decades of military dictatorship. Auspicious too was the timing, just after the expiration of the Lomé IV Convention, and the conclusion of a radically overhauled successor agreement.

"Nigeria is not just any country," said Poul Nielson, EU Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid. "It is a very important country, now witnessing an evolution everybody is watching very closely, the return to civilian rule, to democracy and the rule of law."

It was an occasion to reflect on the Joint Assembly, and its key role in promoting democracy. President Abasanjo paid tribute for its "valuable contribution" to Nigeria's return to democratic governance.

"This session of the Assembly is the largest gathering of democrats hosted by this country since the installation of this administration on 29 May, 1999."

Nielson too spoke of the significance of the occasion, seeing it as "particularly fitting that this session take place here today. Parliament is at the core of democracy, it is its embodiment. It is a powerful symbol."

Enhanced role

The Joint Assembly has played an important role as an arena for ACP and EU representatives, a forum for debate and the exchange of views. In the words of Chief Asiodu, Nigeria's chief economic advisor, it is "an important organ of the ACP-EU partnership, which has made considerable success of its role of promoting and defending the democratic process through dialogue, debate and consultation."

In the new agreement, the Joint Assembly is given a more political role, reflected in its new title - the Joint Parliamentary Assembly. At present, its members, on the EU side, are elected representatives - Members of the European Parliament. On the ACP side, representatives are not necessarily elected, and countries are frequently represented by their ambassador. The new Agreement specifies that ACP representatives will be elected members of their national parliaments, or representatives designated by the parliament of the ACP state.

Without conferring any decisional role, the changes will help to deepen the parliamentary dimension of the assembly, and foster a parliamentary culture.

"The new title gives renewed emphasis to the parliamentary nature of this institution, and to its essentially political role," said Co-President John Corrie. "It confers special responsibilities on it for the promotion of democracy." But he regretted that some responsibility hadn't been granted in the area of good governance.

Members of the European Parliament have the advantage of meeting regularly in Brussels and Strasbourg. ACP members are likely to meet only twice a year, when the Joint Assembly meets. This puts them at a disadvantage, for instance in preparing common positions, familiarity with the procedures etc. Criticisms were made that ACP

voices are much less frequently heard in debate, and in tabling questions, and the EU side dominates. Co-Presidents John Corrie and Serge Clair recognised this imbalance. The new Agreement refers to Joint Parliamentary Assemblies meeting on a regional basis.

New agreement welcomed

On the heels of the conclusion of the new ACP-EU Agreement, the meeting provided an occasion for ACP and EU deputies to air their views. Generally, the reaction was positive. There was consensus on the need for change, not only to take account of a new global environment, but also because the overall situation of many ACP countries remains critical. Despite the preferences accorded under previous conventions, many ACPs have lost market share.

"The situation is even more grim in sub-Saharan Africa," said Chief Asiodu. "In terms of the share of world trade, the marginalisation of Africa is depicted by a loss of market share from 6 per cent in the 1960s to a mere 2 per cent in 1995."

Glenys Kinnock, MEP and rapporteur of a working group on future ACP-EU relations, welcomed the Agreement, calling it "a defining moment in ACP-EU relations," showing that the EU had "moved some way towards understanding the kind of relationship that was necessary." She was happy to see the emphasis on eradicating poverty, and the facilities for integrating ACPs into the global environment. However, she warned that questions must continue to be asked about the real beneficiaries of globalisation. Will the removal of trade barriers really improve things? Her view is that free trade does help to reduce poverty, but it is only one element.

The central idea of the Agreement is "the successful management of change," said ACP President John Horne. "The ACP and the EU managed to accomplish what the WTO could not: a consensus on the way forward."

He said that the trade issue was "the most difficult and sensitive area," and the debate "boiled down to the length of the preparatory period."

President Obasanjo, in his opening address, said it was an appropriate moment to reflect on the ACP-EU partnership.

Some progress has been made during the Lomé I to IV Agreements, but "much is yet to be done. An evaluation shows a bias towards development assistance as against trade, investment and private sector development. A disproportionate share of development assistance is tied to EU countries. The result is that 70% of development assistance to ACP countries is recycled to Europe."

On trade, results have been disappointing. "The share of ACP countries in the European market has been on the decline. ACP States accounted for 6.7 per cent of exports into Europe in 1976 shortly after the coming into force of the Lomé Convention. In 1994, in spite of trade preferences, this declined to 2.8 per cent."

He spoke of the growing disenchantment of both donors and recipients at the apparent inability of aid, despite two decades of assistance, "to arrest the deterioration in the socio-economic and political conditions of ACP countries."

"Perhaps a significant constraint might be the strings attached to development assistance. But even more constraining is the relentless movement of the terms-of-trade against primary producers over the decades.

"It is my fervent hope that this Assembly will give due consideration to the causes of the disillusionment." He urged the creation of the "necessary institutional architecture which would significantly enhance the effectiveness of development assistance" in the new Agreement.

He welcomed the focus on the eradication of poverty, and intensification of economic and political reforms. Increasing attention must be given to "equitable market access for value-added processed and manufactured goods from ACP countries to the EU."

He was strongly in favour of the emphasis on good governance. "It is my sincere belief that the Lomé Convention will have little or no impact on ACP countries in the absence of good governance."

ACP countries must strengthen their institutions for combating corruption. "This is absolutely necessary because corruption distorts the outcomes of internationally-accepted competitive arrangements and practices.

"I am glad that good governance and the fight against corruption have received a prominent place in the post-Lomé Convention.

"But I am somewhat embarrassed to be told that this should have been a major stumbling block in the negotiations."

Peacekeeping and conflict resolution capacities of regional organisations should be strengthened.

"Let the first decade of the 21st century be one of genuine partnership for ACP renaissance and the full restoration of human dignity universally.

"For Nigeria I would accept and I think that all ACP countries should accept, that our efforts to improve accountability and our determination to fight fraud should become criteria for the allocation of development aid. Wouldn't that be the best way to remotivate public opinion in Europe which clearly shows signs of aid fatigue?"

The ACP view prevailed on this largely due to support from the European Parliament, he said. He stressed the need to examine the impact of wider liberalisation on ACP-EU trade. A joint Ministerial Trade Committee is foreseen for this purpose, and he urged both ACP and EU to "breathe life into this new institution."

A number of speakers voiced dismay over the clause on the return of illegal immigrants. British MEP Richard Howitt said it "risks sending the wrong political message, with the potential to fuel racism." He asked why the Council had included a much less specific readmission clause in its Partnership Agreement with Egypt, and accepted Turkey's rejection of such a clause. Were the ACP states being subjected to double standards? Luis Amado, President-in-Office of the EU Council, admitted his surprise at the Justice and Home Affairs decision to include such a clause, but the EU needed to have a coherent policy. There was a pre-condition that a negotiated settlement would be reached in bilateral discussions with each ACP state.

Battle of Seattle

The WTO crisis and its significance for developing countries was a topic. John Horne referred to it as the "battle of Seattle," fought over how to ensure a smooth transition for ACP countries to sustainable development.

The WTO is widely seen as a body which benefits transnational companies, said MEP Caroline Lucas. "The invisible hand of trade never favours the weak, it makes the strong stronger." She said it was unacceptable that 30 developing countries couldn't afford to send a delegate to Seattle. Commodity prices fluctuate widely when markets are liberalised. Most developing countries depend largely on commodities, and the poorest will suffer. It was, she said, "inconceivable that commodity prices were not on the agenda of the Seattle talks," supposed to launch a development round.



Commissioner Poul Nielson and Chief Philip Asiodu, chief

EU re-starts development projects in Nigeria.

While in Nigeria, Commissioner Nielson also turned his hand to the practical matter of development cooperation. He signed three development agreements worth €32.8 million with the Nigerian government.

EU development projects had been withdrawn because of human rights abuses during the military regime. Sanctions were lifted in June 1999, and these agreements are the first real, substantial new projects that have been signed. The agreements are part of a quick-start package to be put into action as soon as possible now that sanctions have been lifted.

The lion's share - €21 million - goes to fund micro-projects in the Niger Delta. This is the oil-producing area, where Nigeria's wealth comes from. But it is an area of tension and conflict, where the poor have a profound sense of grievance that the oil-wealth has by-passed them. They have also suffered the environmental damage caused by the drilling. The project is aimed at improving living standards, for instance by



economic advisor to the President

installing water supply systems, village transport and health systems.

This is not by any means the poorest region in Nigeria, but it was pinpointed because of its huge potential for conflict. Included in the project is a conflict prevention dimension. Microprojects include a strong element of local participation, as the community decides on its own needs.

The second project, worth €10 million, aims to improve Nigeria's economic management capacity. It will help to strengthen the Federal Office of Statistics, the Ministry of Finance, and Auditing, to increase economic transparency. "It is not just a technical programme to make government work better," explained Nielson. "Its purpose is to help make Nigeria's oil money translate into better lives for Nigerians."

The third agreement, worth €1.8 million, is earmarked for a programming study on how development assistance can best help Nigeria. This will provide guidelines for future EU-Nigeria cooperation.

Mozambique

The Assembly debated serious situations in several ACP states. The flooding and cyclones in Mozambique left more than 25% of the population homeless. The country's delegate David Aloni told the Assembly that the economy had been set back 15-20 years. Five hundred people died, and many more disappeared. Mines were washed up by the water and disease was rife. Co-President Serge Clair praised South Africa for its speed in aiding the victims. The Assembly was reminded that Madagascar too had suffered heavily, and an appeal was made to the international community to cancel the debt of the two countries. Mr Mallam-Hasham deplored the "CNN effect" where aid follows TV cameras. Commissioner Nielson also referred to this, saying it was easier to mobilise a TV crew than to get the logistics in place for aid on such a scale. The EU had responded immediately to the crisis by sending emergency aid, and its relief operation will continue for months to come in reconstructing the country.

Resolution on Austria

For the first time, the Joint Assembly debated a problem in an EU state, and adopted a resolution. Tabled by the Greens, the resolution "condemns all forms of political extremism" and in particular the xenophobic and anti-European statements of Jorg Haider. It rejects any fuelling of racism against ACP nationals who are legally resident in EU member states.

Austrian MEP Karin Schede said that Mr Haider's statements cannot be defended, but they "are not part of the Austrian government's position." Austria has a very good record of accepting refugees, she said.

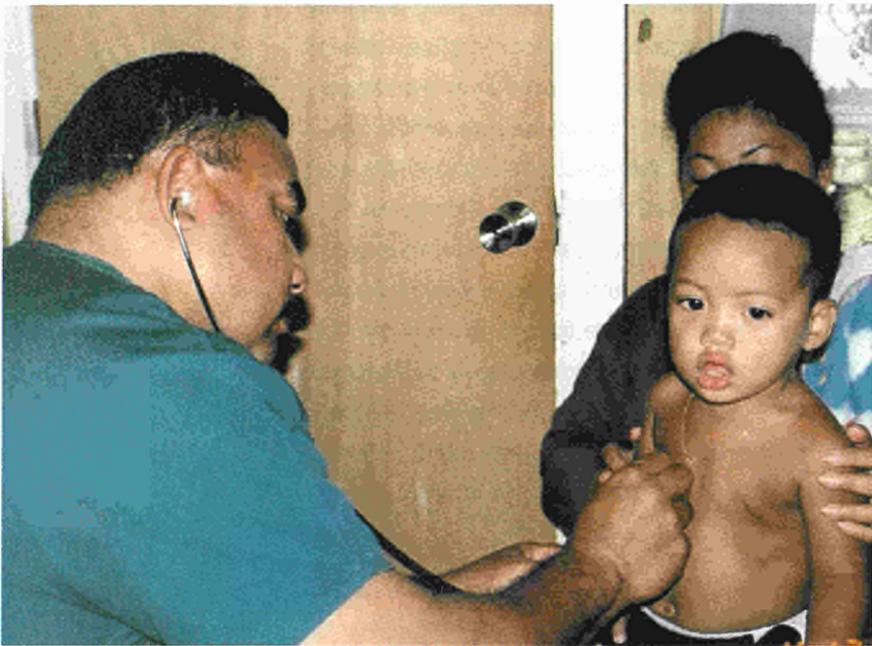
Among other countries debated, there was concern at the situation in Zimbabwe, which was "at the edge of an abyss." In Angola, the role of "bloodstained diamonds" in fuelling the civil war was debated. MEP Mrs Maes said that Belgians want to see certificates of origin, to make the industry more transparent.

Keeping an eye on disease

by Mina Vilayleck

Public health laboratories are organising themselves as a network

A network of laboratories recently went into operation to improve the detection of and response to epidemics in the Pacific region.



Transmissible diseases with epidemic potential covered by the surveillance programmes are, in particular, measles, dengue, influenza, typhoid, leptospirosis and cholera

A major hurdle in combating transmissible diseases in the Pacific has just been overcome. A network of public health laboratories was set up in April at a regional conference organised in Nouméa, in New Caledonia, under the aegis of the South Pacific Commission (SPC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), with contributions from the international network of Pasteur Institutes and associated institutes. These institutions form part of the Pacific Public Health Surveillance Network (PPHSN) which, four years after its creation, is now in a position to operate a regional biological diagnostic service.

The participants were laboratory and health service specialists from the islands of Fiji, Guam, New Caledonia and French Polynesia, and biologists from the laboratories in New Zealand, Australia and the United States. Also represented were member states of the PPHSN coordination group, namely Samoa, Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands.

"This laboratory network is an additional tool in improving the detection and surveillance of regional epidemics so that their spread can be arrested as rapidly as possible in the affected country and also in neighbouring countries," explained Yvan Souarès, an SPC epidemiologist. In a region covering more than 30 million square kilometres, where tourist or commercial air travel is a daily occurrence, there is a considerable risk of an epidemic spreading to several countries. After the rats of the 19th century, viruses and bacteria have become the stowaways that public health professionals most fear. Their Red List of infectious diseases covered by the surveillance system includes influenza, measles, cholera, typhoid, leptospirosis and, particularly, dengue-fever, which has been responsible for four regional epidemics over the last 20 years (several thousands of cases).



Sharing diagnostic resources

"It is important for us to be able to detect an epidemic as early as possible so that we can respond more effectively," explained Michael O'Leary, a WHO epidemiologist in Suva. In actual fact, public health measures differ, depending on whether an epidemic is one of influenza or of dengue, for example. In the former case, preventative action will include an influenza vaccination campaign; in the latter, the target will be the vectors of disease, the breeding places containing mosquito larvae and adult insects (distribution of insecticides).

Prevention is not an empty word. In 1997, an influenza epidemic hit Papua New Guinea, Australia and the Fiji Islands and threatened New Caledonia. Alerted by PACNET, the PPHSN's early warning system, New Caledonia's health services organised a mass vaccination programme, something they were unable to implement in a previous epidemic in 1996 because of insufficient information. The outcome: a single death in 1997 as compared with 14 in 1996, and non-hospital medical costs of 12 million as compared with 350 million in 1996.

Unfortunately, not all island states

Sophisticated analyses such as gene amplification are carried out by Level 3 laboratories, namely the Nouméa Pasteur Institute, laboratories in Melbourne and Queensland, and the US Naval Medical Research Unit N° 2 in Jakarta.

A three-level network

Amongst transmissible diseases with epidemic potential, measles, dengue-fever, influenza, typhoid, leptospirosis and cholera are pathologies to which the laboratory network surveillance services give priority. A three-level structure was set up by professionals meeting in Nouméa in April. As Yvan Souarès, an SPC epidemiologist, told us, "this is an original approach, because we are starting at the bottom, out in the field, i.e. at level 1, to set up the infrastructure required not only for gathering samples but also for carrying through the entire process up to confirmation of the identity of the viruses, bacteria or parasites involved in an epidemic."

Level 1 or front line laboratories can be local, national or provincial establishments: hospital laboratories or provincial clinics and dispensaries. These are responsible for gathering and managing biological samples when a local epidemic is suspected.

Such laboratories are assisted in their research into epidemics by Level 2 laboratories, which carry out analyses requiring techniques which are unavailable locally or which are more sophisticated. They offer their technical support and their biological diagnostic services to all countries in Oceania. Four island-based establishments have been listed in this category as a result of the preliminary evaluation work carried out by the

New Caledonia Pasteur Institute (NCPI), with WHO support.

According to Phillipe Pérolat, NCPI Director, "these are the laboratories in Fiji and Guam, the NCPI and the Malardé Institute in French Polynesia. We ourselves hope to act as the lynchpin of the whole laboratory network, and it is the desire of the international network of Pasteur Institutes and associated institutes to become closely involved with the regional environment and establishments."

Joe Koroivueta, Public Health Laboratory Service Director in Fiji, echoes this sentiment, believing that the laboratory network in Oceania is enhancing the standing of his establishment. Investment of almost US \$35,000 financed by the WHO has been used to provide more equipment for this laboratory and a staff-training programme is scheduled.

Finally, level 3 laboratories carry out the most sophisticated biological examinations, such as gene amplification, and are responsible for quality assurance in the field of biological analyses for the entire public health laboratory network in Oceania. They are in the Pacific and beyond, and include two WHO collaborative centres in Australia (in Melbourne and in Queensland), the US Naval Medical Research Unit N° 2 in Jakarta (Indonesia), the New Caledonia Pasteur Institute, and also a laboratory in New Zealand.



and territories have the necessary public health laboratory services to detect and combat epidemics. Cutting-edge analytical techniques (gene amplification, for example) are too costly to set up and therefore an unviable proposition for these small archipelagos. In point of fact, transmissible diseases, including some which are endemic in a number of countries in Oceania, still represent a heavy human and socioeconomic burden, their healthcare resources still being limited.

The specialists are also preparing for battle. The public health laboratory network enables the island states to take advantage of the services of the most geographically accessible member-establishment of the network.

Transporting biological products

In the field, a mutual-help system already exists. In October 1999, during a fever epidemic in Kosrae, in Micronesia, standard clinical

techniques and biological examinations did not make it possible to confirm the diagnosis - was the fever dengue or leptospirosis? Alerted by PACNET, the New Caledonia Pasteur Institute offered to send out the equipment for taking biological samples and then took charge of analyses. One week after the New Caledonia Pasteur Institute received the samples, the result was notified to Micronesia's health services: it was leptospirosis. Immediately, antibiotherapy was administered to patients, which would have been of no use had the fever been dengue.

More recently, the regional public health laboratory network has provided further proof of its efficiency: the laboratory on Guam, one of the four island-based reference laboratories in the network, confirmed in early May, i.e. less than two weeks after the appearance of the first cases, a cholera epidemic in Pohnpei (Federated States of Micronesia).

There is still no formal agreement between Oceania's countries and territories regarding the carriage of biological products and border health controls and inspections. This is therefore one of the main aspects that laboratory-network members are working on. They also need rapidly to define the legal context for using the scientific results of biological analyses and the long-term methods of financing this laboratory network. At the present time, the network functions thanks to support from the WHO, the SPC and self-financing from the member-laboratories.

International partnerships in the health field are increasing in step with the globalisation of commercial — and microbial — exchanges.

Nowadays, as soon as it appears, a cholera epidemic in Micronesia alerts all public health professionals, whether they reside in the South Pacific or in the northern hemisphere. Health information has, in effect, to travel more quickly than diseases if the outbreak of epidemics is to be prevented and the old adage is to apply. Prevention is indeed better than cure.

The invisible emergency

by Marc Vergara

At first sight, there is no visible emergency in the mountainous Tigray region of northern Ethiopia. Farmers and their oxen are working the land, children smile and the first scanty rains fell a few days ago. But this is deceptive.

Hundreds of thousands of people are affected by drought in Tigray. In this region of Ethiopia, there will be more than a million people in need of food aid, water, medicines and shelter by July. The rains should have arrived at least two months ago. The farmers are ploughing when they should be harvesting. The children are working in the fields and looking after the animals when some of them should be at school. The same children look reasonably healthy until they reveal their age, and they are many years older than they look. It is feared that the people of the Tigray region will suffer the same fate as the drought-affected areas in south-east Ethiopia.

Beyene Birru is UNICEF's project officer in Mekelle, the regional capital. Since 1998, he has been coordinating relief assistance to internally displaced populations in the Tigray region. "In several parts of Tigray, 10% of the population have already left their homes to find work, any work, anywhere," Beyene said. "Part of this migration is what is called seasonal and therefore to be expected. But this year, the number of people on the move has been multiplied by three."

What drives people away from their homes is hunger or fear of hunger in the months ahead. The short rains have failed, there will be no crops in this month or next. Near Adigrat, in eastern Tigray, farmers are preparing the land for the next harvest, which will be in November. Men and animals are weak and the soil is dry, which makes subsistence farming even more difficult than usual. As a last resort, a family will sell its cattle, but will later have to pay three times more to buy back the same animals. For many people of Tigray, it is worth abandoning the fields in search of work elsewhere.



Families have to decide who is strong enough to go in search of work and for how long. But when a father or an older son leaves home, a younger child must drop out of school to look after the animals. Older children might try their luck elsewhere, while the younger ones will often be left with their grandparents. Ten-year-old Kahsa Gebregergis and her brother Tsegay, seven, are staying with their grandparents, Hagos Gebregergis and Abraha Meselesh, aged 85 and 65, respectively. Their parents and three brothers and sisters have left the village to find work in other parts of Tigray. "I am too old to work the land," Hagos says, "and the children are too young."

They are also too weak to go to school; it would take three hours for Kahsa and Tsegay to walk and come back.

Neighbours are helping, but they must plough their own fields first. Dinku Hagos, 55, lives next door. Her 35-year-old son who supports her has left in search of work, but she is content to sleep, with her seven-year-old nephew Tsegay, under a leaking

roof. "I am pleased about the rain, I might have a crop to feed us," she says. She doesn't have much; half a dozen goats, a cow, a small piece of land, and she depends on her neighbours for an ox and a plough. If her crops succeed, Dinku will have to share her yield with these neighbours.

Further down the road Hagos Haile Mariam says that he can only afford to send two of his eight children to school. The lucky ones are Zaid and Atsbaha, aged 17 and 20. Sometimes, when they feel they don't have the strength to walk, they stay at home. The roof is leaking. The children are stunted: Lemlem is 14, but looks 10, while her younger sister, five-year-old Hagosa and her little brother, Mehrahtu, two, are similarly affected.

Now, at last, it is raining. Ironically, the late arrival of the rain is not entirely good news: it will now be harder to move around, malaria cases will increase and shelter is still far from adequate. UNICEF distributed thousands of blankets to drought affected people in Tigray, as well as cold chain equipment (used to preserve vaccines), essential drugs, and shelter material. UNICEF is preparing to distribute educational materials and set up temporary classrooms, not only in Tigray, but also in the regions of Amhara and Somali. But the needs are far greater than the aid currently being planned. This is always the case in Ethiopia and it is particularly so this year. The drought has a serious impact on the health of children who normally survive on poor nutrition, a fact of life in most regions of this country.

Tigray may not look like a desert, but its rivers are dry when they should be flowing and its fields are bare when the corn should dwarf a farmer. For Kahsa and Tsegay, Lemlem and Hagosa, or Zaid and Atsbaha, the last few months have been much harder than what they have been used to in previous years. Unless food and drugs arrive quickly, the next few months might be harder still.

Internally displaced people

Well before the current food emergency in Ethiopia, UNICEF set up programmes for more than 300,000 displaced persons in the northern region of Tigray. Most arrived in June 1998, one month after the outbreak of war between Eritrea and Ethiopia. It is estimated that over 60 per cent of the displaced population in Tigray have been accommodated among host communities. UNICEF's role has been to help the displaced and increasingly burdened local communities.

A walk around the "caves" near Adigrat, in Eastern Tigray, shows what has been achieved, but also how much remains to be done. For the past two years, thousands of people have been living, literally, in caves under the cliffs. The lucky ones sleep in tents, but they are hopelessly overcrowded. Sega Hailu, 15, lives in a cave with her mother Hagosa Gebru, 50, and three brothers and sisters aged between 18 and 22. Her father and two more children disappeared in the early days of the conflict. They don't know how long they will stay in the caves, so they have built an extension to protect the entrance against rain. Hagosa would dearly like to move to a tent. "The rock is so cold," she says, "and when it rains, the water seeps through the rock." Sega would prefer to go home, further north, but in the meantime she attends the nearby UNICEF-assisted school. About 16,000 displaced children receive basic education through UNICEF assistance.

The Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) receive food rations every month. They wait patiently until their names are called out and leave with wheat, lentils, and cooking oil. Whatever the displaced persons receive, they share with the host communities - or they exchange according to their respective needs: lentils for sugar, oil for meat. In the end, there is still not enough to go around. The harsh truth is that the IDPs of Tigray are not worse off than the average Ethiopian. Ethiopia has one of the world's highest levels of stunting among children, 64%. Only a quarter of the country's children attend primary school. Children as young as five help their families by looking after farm animals.

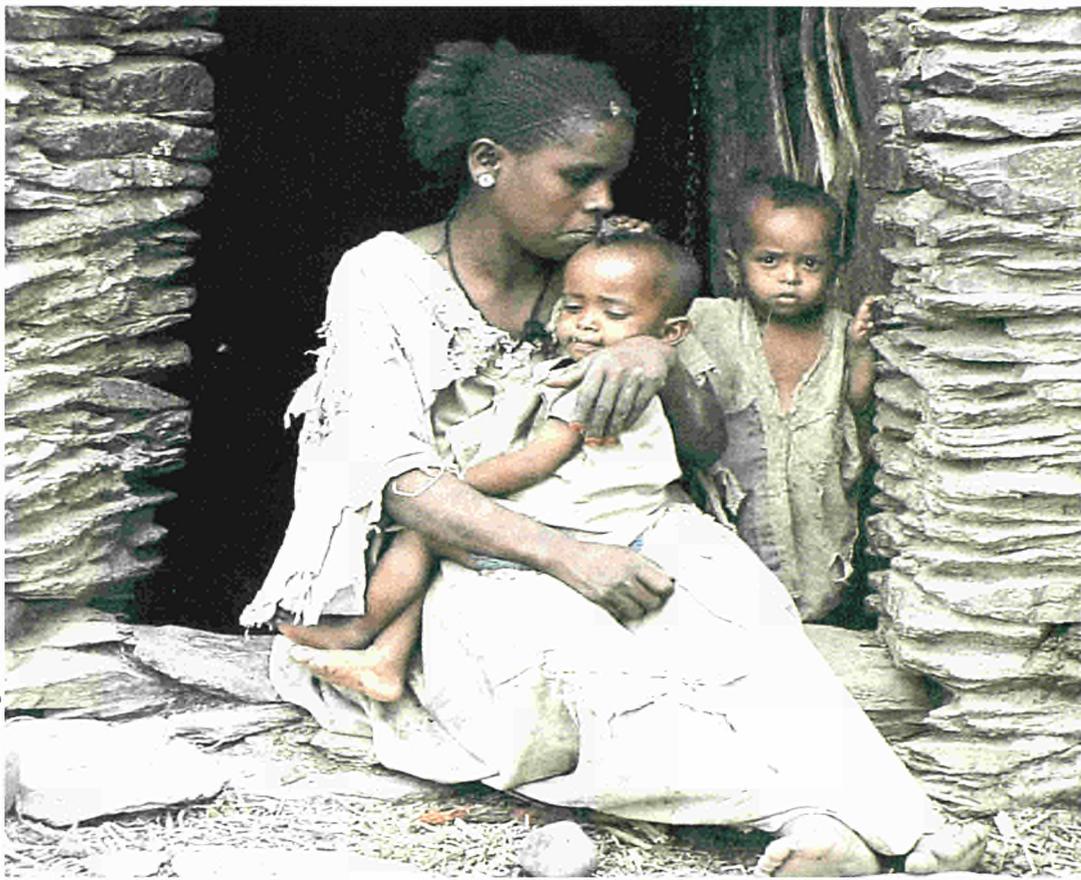
Last year in IDP settlements, 30,000 children aged between nine months and five years were vaccinated against measles, through UNICEF assistance. UNICEF also distributed vitamin A supplements to 80 per cent of children under five. Still, there is a shortage of essential drugs. Patients in IDP camps are

aware of it and they wait patiently for a health worker to arrive by motorbike from Adigrat, a couple of miles away.

The latest water shortage is equally important; families have to walk long distances and then patiently fill their jerrycans from a river (UNICEF-supplied jerrycans can hold about 2.6 gallons of drinking water and are easy to carry in emergency situations), now reduced to a stream as a result of failed rains over the past few months. As part of its regular IDP program, UNICEF helped 50,000 displaced persons - and their host communities - get access to drinking water. UNICEF provided hand pump sets, funded the drilling of new bore holes and the rehabilitation of other water

sources. Tsadik Esetemariam, who works for UNICEF in Mekelle, knows the region very well. Wherever he stops the car, people come and greet him. He is from Adigrat and he knows the people, the officials, the rivers, and the location of all UNICEF pumps. "This year is very bad, very bad. There are three rivers between Adigrat and Mekelle," he says, "and they are all very low for this season." Yordanos Kebede, 13, and Firehiwet Teare, 14, walked from a nearby village to collect water from a spring. It takes about 20 minutes to fill up the 20 litre jerrycan.

It is when they walk around the countryside that children, in particular, are the most at risk from anti-personnel mines and unexploded ordnance. There are an



UNICEF GRO/Marc Vergara

estimated 100,000 mines in northern Tigray. Last year, UNICEF and a local non-governmental organisation, Rehabilitation and Development Organization (RADO) implemented a landmine awareness programme focusing on local community participation. First, UNICEF and RADO targeted government authorities and community association members from the entire region. Then, stage by stage, landmine awareness lessons were extended to the community level. Beyene Birru, UNICEF's project officer in Mekelle, said, "Five children were killed only a few weeks ago. They just picked up strange looking objects, which happened to be unexploded ordnance. This type of workshop has very practical implications for the

people of the area, and they really pay attention to what we say."

No one knows when IDPs will be able to go back home. Even if Eritrea and Ethiopia sign a peace agreement tomorrow, it will take years to clear all the mines in the region. The only certainty is that UNICEF's interventions are providing water, health services, emergency education, and landmine awareness. Things could be a lot better because so many people are obviously surviving on very meagre resources and without adequate shelter. Yet UNICEF's achievements in Tigray should be a valuable source of experience and also serve as a morale booster for UNICEF's field staff in the months ahead.

Giday Tsota, 30, a blind single mother with her twins, two and a half-year old Meaza and Tsega, live in a remote drought-affected area of Central Tigray. The family receives limited food rations, the children are often ill and hungry, especially this year

Land or race or politics?

by Gary Younge

There are more elephants (75,000) than white citizens of Zimbabwe (70,000), although to follow the coverage of events over the past few months you would never guess it. The deaths of three white farmers at the hands of squatters and the invasion of white-owned farms by "war veterans," not to mention President Robert Mugabe's assertion that white Zimbabweans are "enemies of the state" have left the impression that the country is embroiled in a race war.

Now that President Mugabe has set a date for elections (24 June) it is clearer than ever that recent events in Zimbabwe are not underpinned by race but politics. At the heart of the conflict lie the country's two main parties, Zanu-PF and the Movement for Democratic Change.

Zanu-PF, of which President Mugabe is a member, was one of the main organisations that liberated the country from white minority rule in 1980 and has

been in power ever since. It is traditionally Marxist in orientation although its commitment to ideology has declined since the end of the Cold War. The Movement for Democratic Change is only a year old and was formed by the unions and the churches. Despite its union roots - its leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, was once the head of Zimbabwe's trade union movement, the ZCTU - it veers to the right politically. Its manifesto includes a pledge to impose a 100-day International Monetary Fund style stabilisation programme and privatise all state-owned companies within the first two years of government.

A new party in the running

While democratic elections for both parliament and the presidency have been held at regular intervals, since 1980 the country has virtually remained a one-party state under ZANU-PF. According to a recent opinion poll Zanu remains the most popular single party although a large number of voters - almost half - remain undecided. There are several reasons for this. ZANU-PF enjoys an enduring popularity because of the improvements made in education, health and infrastructure during the decade after the liberation. The party has the state-owned media on its side, receives state funds and President Mugabe has the constitutional right to appoint 30 of the 150 parliamentary seats. Moreover during the early 80s

Zanu waged a military campaign against its erstwhile liberation allies, Zapu, in Matabeleland, where Zapu had built a strong political base.

Since then Zanu has faced little coherent political opposition until the arrival of the MDC. The seriousness of their potential was clear after they led a successful campaign against Mugabe's plans to change the country's constitution which would have strengthened many of his powers. A referendum on the issue in February delivered the first rejection Zanu had ever encountered at the ballot box, with a convincing 55-45 majority.

This political challenge emerged against a backdrop of general economic decline. Inflation, interest rates and unemployment are all high and foreign reserves have dwindled to almost nothing. During the referendum queues for the polls ran parallel to long queues for petrol of which there was a severe shortage. If this were not bad enough, Zimbabwe has sent troops to the war in the Congo to support President Kabila, which is costing a cash-strapped nation around \$1 million a week. President Mugabe blames this situation on restrictions placed on the government by the IMF; many Zimbabweans blame the crisis on Mugabe. IMF, they say, stands for "It's Mugabe's Fault."

Chenjerai Hitler Hunzvi, leader of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA), sings revolutionary songs with supporters in downtown Harare, Zimbabwe, Saturday April 5



AP

But is it Mugabe's fault?

The real story is far more complex. Since 1980 Zimbabwe maintained a growth rate which was higher than average compared with sub-Saharan Africa but lower than the rate of population growth, which meant a decline in living standards. The government responded by printing money which sparked inflation, higher taxes and an inflated fiscal deficit. By 1990 they were forced to negotiate a structural adjustment programme with the IMF and World Bank.

The World Bank hailed the agreement as an example of its new, poverty-focused approach. The government agreed to cut the budget deficit from 10 to five per cent on condition that it did not slash public spending on health and education.

In practice however they were two of the areas that were hit hardest, with spending on health falling by one third and on education by 29% - its lowest level since independence. This is particularly damaging because the economy is being steadily weakened by HIV and AIDS; Zimbabwe has one of the highest rates of infection in the world. Mugabe's inability to control the budget deficit has led to a recent freeze on IMF and World Bank payments.

It was shortly after the voters delivered their verdict in the referendum that violence escalated and Mugabe shifted the debate to land redistribution and white farmers. Like many countries in southern Africa where for decades race has been politicised and politics racialised, there

was inevitably a racial element to this issue. White Zimbabweans make up less than 1% of the population but own 70% of the best land and employ 65% of the nation's workers. They dominate the tobacco and cattle sectors which are key to foreign earnings. Much of this land was simply taken from the indigenous black population which was ruled under a form of apartheid first by British rule and then under Rhodesia, which declared itself independent in 1965, and has remained in white hands ever since.

In short, white people remain over-represented among the economic elite even though black people have taken over the levers of political power. But with the rise of the MDC, white Zimbabweans have also gained a far more strident political voice than they have had since liberation. Although MDC membership remains predominantly black, white Zimbabweans have given a great deal of financial and political support to the MDC.

Land - a big issue

Given the centrality of land to the economy and its symbolic importance in a liberated country it is not suprisingly a big issue. This is not confined to Zimbabwe. The first law passed by South Africa's African National Congress in 1994 was to permit those who had been evicted from their land during apartheid to reclaim their property. One recent opinion poll in a black township in South Africa showed that 54% supported the squatters in Zimbabwe - almost double the support in Zimbabwe itself.



Morgan Tsvangirai, president of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) waves to supporters, in the town of Murambinda about 5 km east of the capital Harare during an election rally.

Nor is President Mugabe alone in the length of time he has taken to sort out the problem. Despite it being a priority in South Africa only six per cent of land claims have been settled and less than one per cent of the land has been redistributed.

But land reform, in itself, is not a contentious issue in Zimbabwe. Although there may be differences about the scope and scale of any future land reform almost everyone, white and black alike, agrees that there is a need to redistribute land more equitably. It has become both controversial and emotive since veterans of the liberation struggle along with other Zanu supporters started to occupy white land, often using violence, with the apparent backing of both Zanu-PF and President Mugabe.

The government says the farmers have provoked the attacks. It accuses the MDC of representing the interests of a privileged few and Britain of reassuming its colonial status when it set down preconditions for an end to the occupations and free and fair elections before it would help fund land reform.

Opposition leaders say these occupations have been politically motivated. They point to the fact

Attempts to mediate from Southern African nations, the Commonwealth and Britain at different times and in different ways appear to have at best fallen on deaf ears and at worst inflamed the situation

that the 19 people who have been killed either during the occupations or elsewhere have been members of the MDC, that on several occasions squatters have simply ransacked white farms and then moved on, and that black farm labourers are now under attack.

Following the first wave of attacks white farmers left their land in fear of their lives, but they have since returned under an informal deal with the war veterans that they would be left in peace if they allowed the squatters to stay in certain areas and did not allow the MDC to operate on their premises.

Shortly after that, the government resurrected legislation to restrict the movement of party activists and ban public gatherings that threaten law and order. Zanu-PF, says MDC leader Tsvangirai, is creating a climate of intimidation and repression to prevent a free and fair election. Tsvangirai warns that, if violence against his members continues, the MDC might pull out of the election altogether.

Economic damage

The violence and instability have seriously damaged the economy. The tobacco industry, the nation's largest employer and its most important export, earning a third of foreign currency, provides one example. Zimbabwe is the world's second biggest supplier of flue-cured tobacco, after Brazil. Yet when trading opened in April the volume of tobacco coming into the capital was a third down on last year and the price was down by a fifth. Many of those who should have been selling their wares had not been able to return to their farms to prepare for the auction since they were chased away by squatters. Others have had their crops burned. With 70% interest rates on the loans they have taken out against their crops, farmers say they need a devaluation of the exchange rate, which has been kept artificially high for 15 months, if they are going to stay competitive. "We are geared for business but it's almost a charade of normality," says one. Tourism, another key magnet for hard currency, has also been hit. Hotel occupancy rates at Victoria Falls, the country's main tourist attraction, was down by a third over Easter, the height of the crisis, compared with last year. It has so far had less of an effect on foreign aid. In

1998 Zimbabwe received £216 million in aid, most of it earmarked for technical cooperation and aid provision. More than half of it came from EU countries including Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Germany. While foreign governments have attempted to tie an end to the crisis to more aid, it has so far had little effect on the aid that has been provided so far. When a Zimbabwean delegation came to Britain to discuss the situation, British foreign minister, Robin Cook, promised to help mobilise the international community to provide financial help from the EU, World Bank and America if President Mugabe was "willing to behave reasonably." He also pledged to more than double development money this year and treble next year if the land occupations stopped.

Intervention by the international community has so far borne little fruit. President Mugabe has attracted widespread international condemnation over the farm occupations. But attempts to mediate from Southern African nations, the Commonwealth and Britain at different times and in different ways - South Africa has tried gentle persuasion while Britain has been far more strident - appear to have at best fallen on deaf ears and at worst inflamed the situation.

It is difficult to establish just how effective, or indeed counterproductive, the campaign of intimidation against MDC supporters has been. The army has pledged to stay loyal to whoever wins the election and the judiciary, which has pursued the squatters' leader through the courts, has remained independent throughout. If Zanu wins the election, which remains the most likely outcome, there are fears that a further clampdown on civil society and economic chaos may ensue, although there are many within the party who remain critical of Mugabe and the occupations. MDC activists are confident that they will emerge with a sizeable minority in parliament to use as a platform to criticise Mugabe's economic policies from the relative safety of parliament.

The situation remains volatile. But the setting of a date for elections and the permission given to the Commonwealth to send monitors to ensure their validity represents a positive and significant step towards a more stable and democratic phase.

Louise Frechette, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations

by Aya Kasasa

It is never easy to do a job that no one has ever done before.

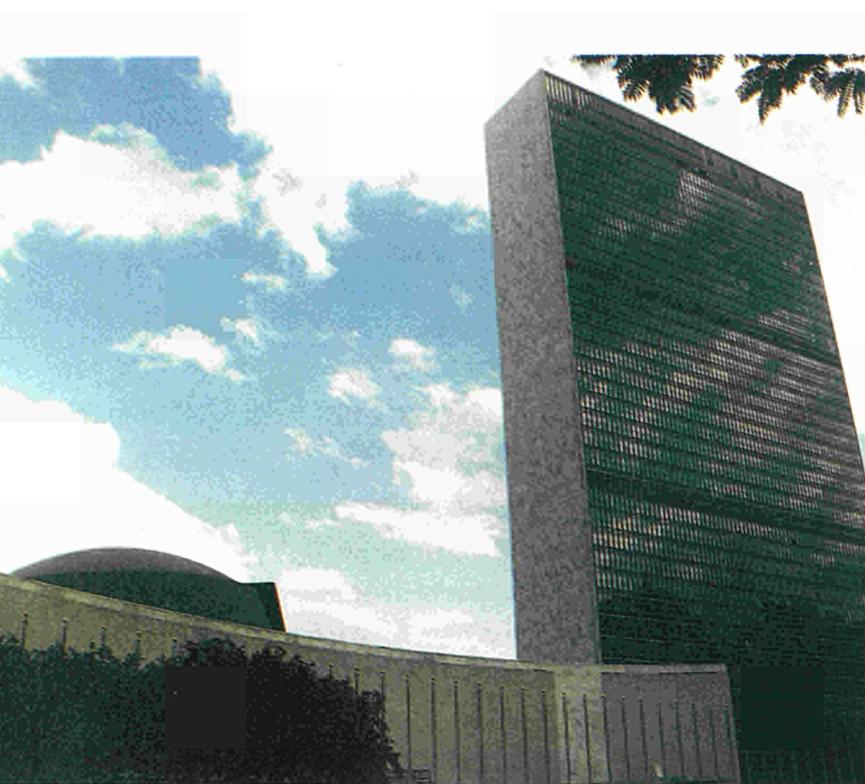
But Canada's Louise Frechette, the United Nation's first Deputy Secretary-General, takes it all in her stride. In her quiet office, high in the building that accommodates the UN Secretariat, she welcomes visitors with a warmth that seems improbable from a career diplomat. She has represented her country in most parts of the world, especially in Argentina, and was Canada's Permanent Representative at the UN 10 years or so ago. Returning home after this spell in New York, she became Deputy Minister for Defence before being selected and invited by Kofi Annan to be



UN/DPI Milton Grant

the first holder of this post, created by the General Assembly in 1997. Louise Frechette accepted her new position early in March 1998. Among the major projects for which she is responsible are the reform of the United Nations, which takes up much of her time, the preparations for the Conference on Women (Beijing + 5) and the Sierra Leone situation.

Despite her heavy schedule, she agreed to be interviewed by The Courier on the occasion of the Millennium Forum. The timing was tight, but Louise Frechette emphasised her optimism about the future of the UN system. She began by stressing the importance of the conclusions of the Millennium Forum....



UN HQ, New York

The Millennium Forum was convened by Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the NGOs, to invite them to meet on the eve of the summit conference and express their views. The Forum was organised by civil society itself, and the NGOs in particular. They had every freedom to run things as they wished, and by the time the event ends we hope to have a clear idea of their concerns.

The theme that has dominated the meetings of the Forum has been globalisation. In the action plan which he will be submitting to the Heads of State in September, and which will be debated over several days by the representatives of civil society, Kofi Annan is launching an appeal calling for the benefits of globalisation to be shared equally between all the peoples of the world. What would be the "UN method" of achieving that?

The problem of globalisation is a huge one, one that must involve everyone: not just governments but businesses, local communities, civil society. "The UN approach" is comprehensive, highlighting the importance of new partnerships. We cannot give globalisation a human face, we cannot avoid the opening of the gap between rich and poor within and between countries, unless all the actors are completely involved and working in harmony. That is what we are trying to achieve, particularly through meetings like the Millennium Forum.

In the new millennium, poverty will continue to be the main scourge of the Third world, the main obstacle to its development. All the aid donors are working to combat poverty. Does the UN intend to take control of efforts to harmonise these activities?

The SG's report for the Millennium Summit does indeed establish the campaign against poverty as the top priority of the international community, and proposes a number of specific ways of going about it. But, of course, the fight against poverty is not just a problem for aid donors; people in every country, every committee, have to commit themselves to the fight against poverty, and especially to establish universal primary education and access to health care as national priorities. Because it is through the national efforts that the international community must make its contribution. It must not dictate to individual countries what their priorities should be, but support their national strategies. The necessary approach, then, will involve mobilising resources in every country and, of course, obtaining much better, much more substantial support from the richest countries. There is government

development aid, which is a more direct form, there is debt relief, the opening-up of markets, and increased investment - all of these are types of resources that can be mobilised in order to achieve the goal.

A corollary of poverty is conflict, which is particularly destructive in Africa. Several speakers on the Forum platform at the opening session criticised the slow reaction of the United Nations. Can you see any way round that?

First, you have to realise just how difficult it is to resolve conflicts, especially internal conflicts. There are no magic bullets, no proven recipes - the international community is still very inexperienced at that kind of action. Clearly, one part of the necessary response is the deployment of troops, and if they can be deployed rapidly that makes a big difference to conflict management. But, of course, the United Nations depends on its Member States and their provision of the necessary troops. In addition, those troops have to be properly equipped: ideally, they should be trained before they are expected to take action. It is very difficult to produce a coordinated force overnight when you have units coming from all over the world. It is true that we could improve our system of managing conflicts by investing a bit more in preparation and prevention, and we could also focus on creating rapid deployment systems of the kind we lack at present. When he came to office in 1997, Kofi Annan made it his mission to reform and restructure the UN system. You are in charge of that project, your contribution is an essential one, and this Forum should allow a considerable step

forward. What is the overall position achieved so far, and what remains to be done?

All of us - the Secretary-General and everyone working at the Secretariat - regard reform as a continuous event. Any institution, in order to survive, always has to seek to improve itself, to adapt to changing conditions. All of a sudden, we have a situation where the new information technologies have become vastly more important over the last two years to become a key element in the economic future of every country on earth. We need to be able to adapt, quite apart from more technical proposals for reform. To me, reform is more than just fiddling with structures or budgets; it means the ability to see beyond tomorrow, to have clear objectives, and to be able to improve the work we do and the action we take to suit the World's needs. Having said that, I do think that the Secretary-General has done a great deal to change the Secretariat's working methods since he came to office. There have been structural adjustments and, especially, new coordination mechanisms have been brought in both at the Headquarters of the various UN bodies and among the UN teams on the ground. Every week, we hold discussions with all the Bureau Heads and Heads of Department at the Secretariat. Now, nearly three years on, it is clear that the UN's system has become enormously more capable of effective combined action, because information circulates more smoothly and our joint strategies are better planned. On the ground, all the countries that work with us, especially the developing countries, have noticed a change. We draw up specific strategies in consultation with the countries where we work. We intend to continue along that road: it is true that resources are limited and the system is rather complex. If we had to start all over again we



Delegates from all over the world came to listen to Kofi Annan

would obviously go for something less complex, but what we are demonstrating today is that if we have the right instruments we can make things work better, especially under a strong leadership. Kofi Annan has made this consistent, integrated action of the UN system one of the major themes of his term of office, and it is beginning to bear fruit.

The negotiations on the renewal of the special partnership between the European Union and the ACP States have resulted in a new Agreement that will be signed shortly. Can the UN draw any inspiration

from this in planning its own activities and drafting some of its development policies and visions?

I would say that the European Union has hugely improved its relations with its partner states. There are aspects of its cooperation programme which can genuinely set an example to other parts of the world. We of the United Nations are a universal organisation, and we cannot conclude partnership deals with particular groups of countries - in any case, not being a state, we cannot offer trade benefits, for example. Here, we are spending relatively modest sums, by comparison, but what we do contribute is a

forum for debate and a source of common rules and strategies. That is very important, when you think of the results of the major conferences during the 1990s which really set very clear objectives. We can also help countries by providing technical assistance and humanitarian aid, but I believe there is a gap in technical assistance that is extremely important to the UN; being universal, we aspire to impartiality, and many countries feel at ease working with us.

Our time is nearly up, but let me end with a rather more personal question: what, today, might persuade Louise Frechette to leave her office and demonstrate in the streets?

Probably the campaign against AIDS. We have known of its existence for a long time, but last year it suddenly took on the scope of a disaster. At present, outside Africa, the disease is spreading, becoming a tragic presence in other regions of the world. I am totally convinced that the struggle to control this pandemic, working with the most seriously affected countries, must be one of the greatest priorities for our organisation.

The Millennium Forum in New York

An age of solidarity

The work done by the hundreds of representatives of civil society who met in New York for the Millennium Forum will have amounted to much more than "just another week of meetings at the UN."

On 26 May 2000, the Forum adopted its final Declaration, the work of the

NGOs, associations and members of civil society who had contributed their views and opinions on the critical issues of today. The Declaration is their response to the appeal by the Secretary General of the UN to "make globalisation a positive force for everyone."

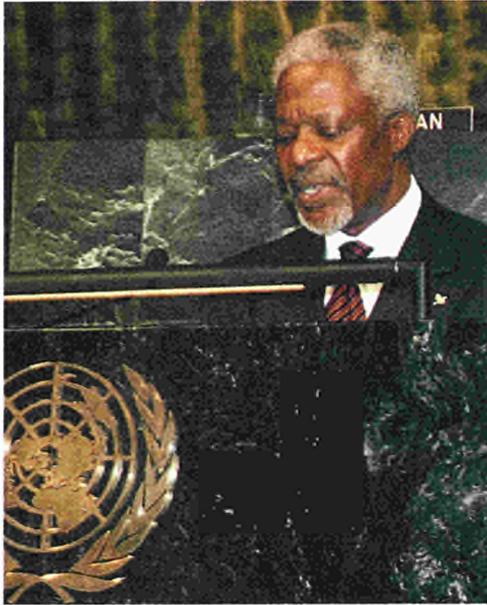
Before passengers alight from the yellow cabs that criss-cross the grid of New York's streets, a recorded message invites them to take advantage of the Capital of the Year 2000. And the name seems well chosen when one sees the hundreds of representatives of civil society advancing towards UN HQ. Some of them have already been in town for several days, and have got to know each other through the vagaries of hotel allocation or in endless corridors.

In the holy of holies, this is an emotional day: the opening of the first session of an event for which everyone has been preparing for months. In just a few minutes now the Secretary-General himself will address the members of civil society. The atmosphere is electric but cordial. No false modesty here: everyone is alert for the photo-opportunity, snatching for a moment or two the opportunity to appear at the microphone on the platform they have so often seen on television, where so many important speeches have been delivered. People are queuing as they would at supermarket check-outs, though more patiently. There is no standing on ceremony - people sit where they like. There is a tangible aura of satisfaction at the thought that, for five days, they will be working non-stop to produce a historic document; that they will be able to express the opinions of all those they have

come here to represent; that all the years of effort are finally going to bear fruit.

An invitation from Kofi Annan

More than 23,000 sets of credentials have been allocated, to the representatives of 1400 NGOs and individuals from 145 countries. They have come to attend the most important meeting yet of members of civil society, a meeting whose self-appointed task is the creation of inclusive globalisation. Taking its cue from the opening words of the United Nations Charter, "We the peoples...", the Forum organised at the invitation of the Secretary General has been working for a week to enable the peoples of the world to express their beliefs directly rather than through their governments. The idea of this Forum was proposed by the Secretary-General in 1997. When submitting his proposals for a reform of the UN, Kofi Annan suggested that the year 2000 should be marked by a "Millennium Assembly," which should set itself the task of preparing the UN to meet the main challenges and needs of the international community in the 21st century. And, he proposed, this Assembly should go hand-in-hand with an Assembly of the Peoples. The NGOs immediately buckled down to the task of organising the Millennium Forum. The challenges were vast: explosive population increase, globalisation, conflicts, the fight against poverty, AIDS,



Revolution in the NGOs

Kofi Annan stressed the power that lies in civil society - a power which has been able to exploit the information revolution to act and react, and so demonstrate its strength in Seattle and Washington.

"The issue here is not to give the impression of a retrograde civil society,

nervously contemplating the advance of globalisation, but of one which calls for globalisation with a human face, of which the power of the NGOs is an excellent example," was the substance of his message.

This idea came to dominate the discussions. Kofi Annan must be credited with having brought civil society into the arena.

"In the past," declared Techeste Aherom, Co-Chairman of the Forum, "the NGO meetings were held simultaneously with major meetings of the UN, and it was difficult for their members to submit cohesive and coordinated proposals to Heads of State, who had already left before our discussions ended." Producing the documents in advance, then, was an obvious solution that enabled delegates to alert governments to their views

before the Millennium Summit took place.

The United Nations in the twenty-first century

After a week's work, a declaration was adopted. The first recommendations were addressed to governments to give them a real idea of the commitments solemnly entered into at the various meetings. Then came recommendations addressed to the United Nations, suggesting structural changes that would enable the organisation to fulfil its tasks more efficiently. Finally, civil society itself was called upon to do everything in its power to help to bring about a better world, even without the aid of the governments or the United Nations.

The Declaration sets out the visions of civil society on the six main issues considered at the Forum: peace, security and disarmament; the eradication of poverty; human rights; sustainable development and the environment; facing the challenges of globalisation; and strengthening and democratising the United Nations and other international organisations, while taking due account of the various action programmes produced by civil society over the past 10 years.

The Forum called upon the United Nations to establish immediately a Global Poverty Eradication Fund which would ensure that poor people had

preservation of the environment and control of climate change. The UN's duty, as the Secretary General stressed, was to "think about the only global organisation to which we can turn: the United Nations Organisation." And so, to consider ways of strengthening the role of the UN, its General Assembly resolved to designate its 55th session, which would begin on 5 September 2000, as the "Millennium Assembly" and to hold a Millennium Summit. That summit would be the largest gathering of the Heads of State and Government ever convened. For Kofi Annan, it was essential that the Millennium Summit should give those attending an opportunity to "reaffirm their moral commitment" to the principles laid down in the United Nations Charter and to give a fresh political impetus to international cooperation.

access to credit. The UN was also asked to adopt cultural development as the theme for one of the remaining years of the International Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1996-2007). The document also invited governments to address issues relating to indigenous peoples, poor families, the incidence of HIV/AIDS, economic reforms and debt cancellation.

Considerations of safety

The Declaration called for the establishment of a corps of at least 50 professionally trained mediators for more effective conflict prevention. This corps resulted from what delegates described as a "distressing" finding: the UN and its Member States have not been able to achieve their principal responsibility of preserving peace and human life.

Recommendations to governments included the initiation of a worldwide freeze on armed forces and a 25% cut in production and export of weapons, including small arms.

Acknowledging the indivisibility and interdependence of human rights, the Declaration called upon the UN to review its own human rights institutions and practices to achieve balance in the allocation of resources, and to adopt binding international instruments on the rights of indigenous peoples, minorities, older persons and the disabled. Regarding sustain-

able development and the environment, the Forum requested the United Nations to make a global assessment of unsustainable development and its impact on the environment, and social development. Civil society should adopt and disseminate the Earth Charter as a tool for promotion of values and actions that would create sustainable development.

Waiting for the Summit...

This declaration was formally presented to Louise Frechette, Deputy Secretary General of the UN. At the closing ceremony, it was recalled that the basic principles and action programmes contained in the final document would be left open during the month of June to allow the incorporation of the findings of Peking +5 and Copenhagen +5, as well as those of other international fora. This would allow those NGOs unable to attend the Forum sufficient time to submit their contributions. The final proposal would then be presented to the President of the General Assembly. The Declaration would be formally presented at the Millennium Summit in September 2000. It could be said that the task of civil society really begins today: what is needed now is for its representatives to disseminate the Declaration to as many people as possible, and defend its principles to their national governments.

An end to conflict

In the corridors of the UN, after each meeting, there was a brisk trade in business cards. It was impossible to take a single step without being asked to sign a petition or listen to a passionately militant defence of one NGO's contribution to the finished text. The fact is that five days is not enough. For most of those commuting between the plenary sessions and the workshops, this was a unique opportunity that would not recur for many years. A unique opportunity, too, to listen

to orators who can inspire an audience to fresh efforts because they speak from the heart. One example was Swadesh Rana, a specialist in small arms and conventional weapons. It was standing room only in conference room number four, which was so packed that many of the audience were forced to stand at the back of the room to hear the debate. The subject was peace, security and disarmament. All eyes were on the lady wearing a sari in various shades of orange.

You began by paying a sincere tribute to women, young people and all the members of civil society who are not organised. Do you believe they hold the key?

It seems to me that we have to acknowledge the power of civil society. It has too often been described as a victim. It is true that the victims are civilians, but I think that in the traditional societies of Africa and Asia the unit of social cohesion is not a political party but the family, the clan, the tribe. The examples I chose came to my attention through my work on small arms at the United Nations. In my project with the Swiss and German governments, I have to pay attention to the unorganised sectors of civil society: they are not only victims, they can and must become instruments of change.

What can the international community do to help them?

Most weapons are in the hands of people who become involved in hostilities as a result of the escalation of street brawling - brawling that takes on a communal, ethnic or religious aspect and moves into a wider theatre. If we were to give them better opportunities for prosperity, better education, more hope, they would become less inclined to resort to violence. I can tell you frankly today that the international community has spent nearly 5.6 billion dollars on Somalia. If that money, instead of being spent 'on' Somalia, had been spent 'in' Somalia, it would have totally transformed the entire country.

You are appealing for deliberate use to be made of civil society...

Yes: positive efforts have to be made to recruit the services of women, older people, clan leaders, children and young people. I see them as powerful instruments. They sometimes use weapons because they are poor, as a way of getting attention. That is why I would like to see this Forum organising local forums for ordinary representatives of civil society. Giving young children who know nothing about politics but have been recruited anyway, the opportunity to express their views and testify to what their situation really is. I am not talking about the NGOs alone - we also have to listen to those who have no interest in combining to form organisations or associations yet still suffer the effects of the use of small arms. All over the world. I would also like to see poverty officially recognised as a form of violence. Finally, the private sector should mobilise and attract young people in the developing countries. The same young people who, for lack of economic opportunities, let themselves become drawn into a world of violence. These are a few specific points that I suggested to the Forum to enable us to move forward in the right direction.



She agreed, "out of respect and admiration for the organisers of the Forum," to give a paper on the need to address the problem of the harm done by small arms. At the end of the session, she was mobbed by people anxious to talk to her, thrust publications into her hands or ask her to support their cause. With unfailing courtesy she promised to take an interest in their cases, and repeated several times over that she could never understand why she always produced this effect. It is hard to believe that

she is unaware of her own charisma, or the energy she inspires in those who believe that it is always possible to "change things."

For **Swadesh Rana**, (above), the very nature of civil conflict means that its forms are ever-changing. Initially, civil conflict confronted governments with highly organised rebel forces, as in Angola, Mozambique and Nicaragua. Subsequently, these rebel groups lost their "legitimacy" and, especially, the support of the population, who were exposed to the terror tactics they used to generate publicity, most notably the taking of civilian hostages.

Swadesh Rana emphasised a number of important issues for the international community. She reminded her audience that small arms are easy to get; they are not expensive and there are enough available to keep the world supplied for the next 20 years. Governments know that, because governments sell them. In addition, there is a supply of weapons available from smugglers, organised crime, former members of the armed forces, etc. Furthermore, their capacity to do harm is almost inversely proportional to their size and sophistication; civil conflict is brought about by people who very often find themselves involved in the first place because they have to defend themselves. As in the sad cases of Rwanda and Burundi, they use machetes, burning tyres, stones and other home-made weaponry. In the past, the international community has given priority to taking away manufactured weapons from former troops. Yet it has been estimated that for every thousand weapons recovered under peace agreements, there are one hundred thousand more in the hands of unorganised sectors of civil society. For the specialists, the question now is who is using these weapons, their origin being a matter of secondary concern. Because the tragedy is that most of these arms are in the hands of civilians, who are using them.



Ex-soldiers building roads in Mozambique

UK Development Aid

by Sue Wheat

Cautious optimism seems to be the mood in British development circles about the UK's Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). After the 1997 national elections which brought a change of government after 17 years of Tory rule to New Labour, the tide has definitely turned. British overseas aid has taken a much higher and often controversial profile and government is far more open to consulting with and listening to advocates in the development sector.

Described as "one of the most progressive donors" by *The Reality of Aid 2000* and "one of the most professional and innovative aid agencies in either the bilateral or multilateral sectors" in the Development Cooperation Review of the UK by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee in 1997, Britain is basking in its Feel Good Factor.

ODA increased in 1998 by 7.8 per cent and the UK now ranks fifth out of 21 DAC donors for the volume of aid given. 74.4% of its aid is also to low income countries, a higher proportion than 15 other donors. The UK has also been at the forefront of calling for foreign debt cancellation, particu-

larly for Heavily Indebted Poorer Countries. A strong emphasis has also been made on "ethics," particularly by supporting an Ethical Trading Initiative which encourages improved labour and environmental standards amongst British companies trading overseas and on supporting Fairtrade products from the South.

"The change of government brought a whole new approach," explains Richard Manning, Director General of Resources at the Department for International Development (DFID), the newly-named government department responsible for overseas development issues, formerly the Overseas Development Administration (ODA).

"We now have a separate department, with a cabinet minister. In particular, the whole government agreed to a White Paper in November 1997 which has an overarching focus on world poverty and commits us to various international targets, particularly the OECD target of halving absolute poverty by the year 2015, decreasing child mortality and increasing numbers in school."

Manning describes the process of compiling country strategy papers and institutional strategy papers with the EU, World Bank and UN agencies through far-reaching consultation with civil society, as unique. These papers, plus a series of papers currently passing through the consultation process on international targets, will inform the country's medium-term framework and funding strategy.

Central to the new philosophy is an emphasis on working with governments, international agencies and directly with international civil society in a "rights-based approach," rather than through aid agencies providing services. This view is championed very forcefully by Clare Short, the Secretary of State for International Development.

"Too much of development in

the past has been about isolated development projects," said Ms Short at a conference on NGOs in a Global Future this January. "The new agenda is increasingly about sector-wide approaches, helping governments to provide key services, such as health and education."

Development consultants, academics and NGOs broadly applaud the focus on poverty elimination, but are wary of what sometimes seems like a personal vendetta by Ms Short against NGOs. Many British development agencies are fearful that her view is oversimplistic, that such a policy threatens their funding from DFID, and that they will be unable to fulfil commitments to their Southern partners on aid projects.

"This is the first time a donor has taken this tack, rather than a left-wing academic, and it took people by surprise," says Alistair Fraser, Advocacy Officer at the umbrella organisation for British Overseas NGOs for Development (BOND). "Clare Short has been very harsh on service provision - which is what so much of development agency programmes are about."

Civil society is the new development catch-phrase - meaning trade unions, cooperatives, women's organisations,

the poor, consumer groups and so on.

"In a way, she's on to something - tinkering about with small projects can't transform global poverty, and that's what she's committed to do," says Fraser. But expecting Southern civil society to suddenly stand up and be counted may be naïve. "Poor people often do not have the ability to pressurise their national governments - either because it is politically dangerous or practically impossible because they are poor, lack resources or lack education. NGOs have

"We have seen a very good shift in strategy, but the eradication of poverty is a nonsense"

also found that doing advocacy work is also only possible after everyday links have been made with communities through service provision - digging wells and improving medical facilities and so on."

Some development analysts are also sceptical of DFID's insistence on the term "eradication" of poverty, instead of alleviation.

"We have seen a very good shift in strategy, but the eradication of poverty is a nonsense," says David Seddon, Professor of Development

Studies at the University of East Anglia. "Population is increasing, inequalities are increasing, and the number of poor is increasing, poverty can never be eliminated - that is totally Utopian."

Professor Seddon agrees that a focus on poverty alleviation is right, but questions the government's belief in the benefits of globalisation. "What is wrong with UK development policy is that it doesn't focus on the reasons behind inequalities or the problems of social justice. DFID argues that market forces and globalisation are good and must be harnessed, but this is a real problem. We know very well that strategic protectionism is often very helpful - the US, UK and EU have all benefited from that - yet trade agreements are not allowing Southern governments to do the same. I would like to know where specifically, the UK is prepared to argue strongly for increased global intervention in the World Trade Organisation or the Bretton Woods organisations."

This is a view echoed by the authors of *The Reality of Aid 2000* who give significant emphasis to the contradiction that the UK government is in effect promoting two different development paradigms.

One prioritises partnership, poverty focus, and the interna-

tional development targets which can be described as the Rights approach; the other prioritises international rules (such as trade, patenting and investment) that discriminate against poor people and is the Global Liberalisation approach.

Such faith in the liberalisation process is not unique to the British government, but British NGOs in particular have lobbied on this, particularly in the lead-up to the last World Trade Organisation meeting in Seattle.

Two controversial aspects of UK aid policy have featured in public debates since New Labour came to office. The first, namely tying development cooperation disbursement to the purchase of British companies' products has been criticised as a back door way of supporting British industry under the guise of helping developing countries. Clare Short has been active in reducing this, and received support for this from the cross-party Parliamentary Committee, despite the protests of British industry.

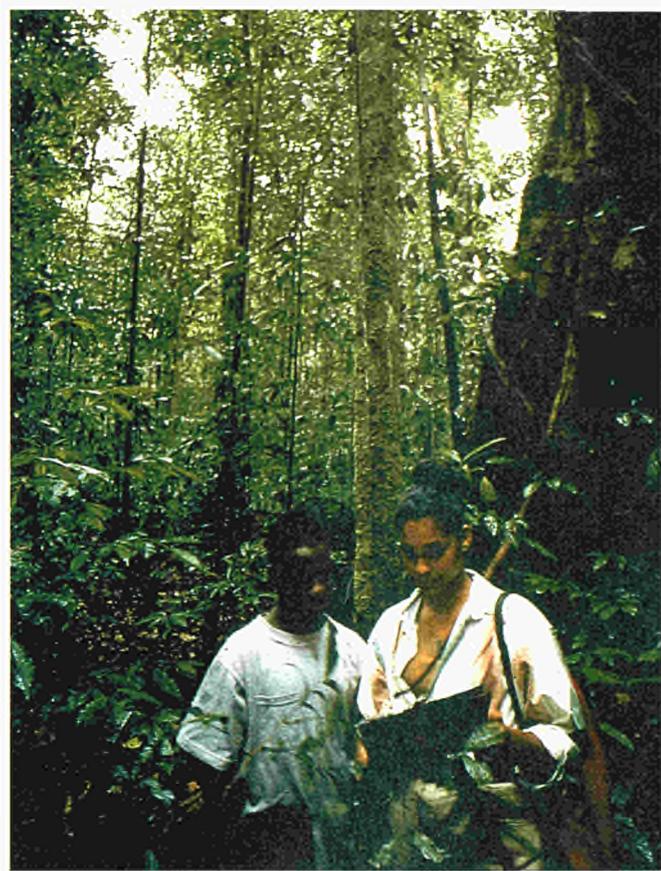
Few other donors have addressed these issues so publicly and the UK's tied aid at 20.4% is now slightly less than the DAC average of 23.2% but substantially less than others such as the US at 71.6% and Spain at 73.9%.

A more famous controversy relates to the strong New Labour stance on ethical foreign policy and highlights conflicts between DFID, the Foreign Office and the Department of Trade. With DFID promoting strengthening of civil society in Asia while the Foreign Office allows arms sales to Indonesia, the contradictions are obvious. Contradictions all arms-selling countries have difficulty addressing.

The UK Government's push for debt relief can be attributed as much to the strong support of the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, who has treasury surpluses to comfort him, as to Clare Short's efforts. She has been at pains to point out that debt relief alone will not solve all the South's problems, and has kept a watchful eye on her own budget, insisting debt relief doesn't cut into it.

DFID's positive OECD review needs to be tempered by a hard look at the figures.

The UK still only stands 14th out of 21 in the DAC generosity league with regard to ODA as a proportion of GNP, and aid spending in 1998 was 0.27% of GNP (only 0.01 per cent up on 1997 which was the lowest level since 1990), which is still a long way off the UN target of 0.7%. There has been no commitment to a timescale for



Forestry in Guyana

increasing the UK's contributions or to setting any interim targets. Britain's claim that 74.4% of its aid goes to poor countries also needs a good look, as it has made an administrative split between payments paid to poor countries (out of the ODA budget) and payments made to middle and high income countries with historical connections to the UK (which go through the Foreign Office budget). This is something other donors tend not to do, making the comparative statistics less favourable on paper.

That there has been a significant shift in government understanding and political will since the change in government is not disputed. Whether the dramatic change in terminology and focus turns out to be a pioneering strategy or merely an inventive change in rhetoric is something that will only be revealed in coming years.

NGOs and their role in promoting civil society participation in development

by James Mackie*

The position and influence of NGOs in ACP-EU cooperation has evolved over time.

The WTO meeting in Seattle six months ago brought the power of civil society to all on global TV screens, and now the new ACP-EU Agreement has its new provisions for civil society involvement.

Putting words into action

All well and good; civil society participation may be flavour of the month in development cooperation circles, but the difficult part, as many advocates of new policies have discovered in the past, is changing fine words and rhetoric into mainstream policies, and achieving practical results on the ground.

The new ACP-EU Agreement contains plenty of references to civil society, but how to ensure that all this is really put into practice? NGO campaigning during the Green Paper debate on the future of Lomé focused on this issue, but, while the final Agreement clearly states the obligation of parties to involve civil society in all stages of development, ACP and EU states can choose to ignore it.

Another example is the discussion paper on NGO-Commission Relations: *Building a Stronger Partnership*, published by the Commission earlier this year. That the paper should be published at all is a major landmark, but it avoids recommending a formal obligation on the Commission to dialogue with NGOs on policy issues.

Or again: in March the Commission gave NGOs only 10 days to comment on a draft of the new EC Development Policy paper. NGO lobbying persuaded the Council and Commission to extend the period of debate on the final version by a further six months, but this did not come naturally - NGOs had to argue for it every step of the way.

This extension of the consultation period should however allow for more considered debate involving not just a few highly-organised groups with good access but also stakeholders further afield, such as Southern NGOs and

civil society groups (see it on the DG Development Web Site).

We cannot afford to leave dialogue with civil society on development cooperation to chance. NGO experience shows that participatory development is usually also better-quality development. NGOs are born out of civil society: groups of citizens getting together on a voluntary basis to take direct action to make a difference. This is the essence of NGO action and it is strongest when it remains true to these roots. At the same time many NGOs realise that project work on the ground can only be fully effective in an enabling environment and they have moved on to incorporate in their strategies public awareness, advocacy and information work both in Europe and in ACP and other Southern countries.

European NGOs have a responsibility to encourage public debate on poverty and development issues in Europe, and conduct advocacy work with the European institutions and EU Member State governments. To be effective they must remain in close contact with Southern NGOs and their networks.

Euforic

All stakeholders in the ACP-EU Agreement will need information to participate fully in its implementation. European NGOs with their contacts and access to the European institutions also have a particular role to play here and this is why the major European NGO networks have joined other interested groups to set up and run, with some financial support from DG Development, a specialised Internet web site dedicated exclusively to European development cooperation and humanitarian aid policy: Euforic (Europe's Forum on International Cooperation). This is proving an increasingly valuable tool for development groups all over the world to access in one well-referenced place on the Internet a lot of key documents in the field.

www.euforic.org

*Secretary General

NGDO-EU Liaison Committee

EC Support for development NGOs

by Tim Clarke*



A new Millenium, new challenges

The Commission and the NGO Liaison Committee of Development NGOs celebrated their 25th birthday in April last year. It was a remarkable achievement: 25 years that had changed the nature of cooperation financed by the Commission in developing countries, and had witnessed a dramatic expansion in activities initiated and managed by the NGOs themselves.

Precise figures are hard to determine, but a conservative estimate of 15% - as much as € 1 billion per year - of the entire Community budget for external cooperation is channelled through NGOs. The views of NGO advocacy groups are being heard - and respected - at all levels of the Commission.

The birthday celebrations were not, however, an unqualified success. Increasing criticism was levelled at the Commission by NGOs and several European institutions - notably the European Parliament and the European Court of Auditors. The dramatic expansion in NGO projects and programmes managed by the Commission was taking its toll (more than 50 times the volume of funding compared with 20 years ago, with no equivalent expansion in human resources). Delays in processing project applications and payments were snarling up the system.

Confidence and trust built up over two decades was being damaged.

The Commission's troubles (which led to the resignation of the Santer Commission, and the appointment of the Prodi Commission in September 1999) were also reflected in deteriorating Commission/NGO relations. It was time to rethink and rebuild. The internet age and the new Millenium brought new challenges. The Commission had to modernise and reform. NGOs had to seize the new opportunities provided by their increasingly vocal presence. The new Millenium Round debacle in Seattle, followed by the Citizens' Agenda 2000 Conference at Tampere in Finland in December 1999, showed that people's interests had made it to centre stage.

New NGO confidence and power was beginning to have an even more significant impact on decision-makers within the European Union and elsewhere. At the end of 1999 and in early 2000, commentaries on the new role and power of the NGOs took up many inches in correspondence columns of respected journals and newspapers.

To its credit, the Commission has responded swiftly and imaginatively. An Inter-service NGO Task Force initiated by Commissioner Liikanen in April 1999 and chaired by DG Development's

Director General Philip Lowe led, on 18 January 2000, to the approval by the Commission of a Discussion Paper on building a new relationship between the Commission and the NGOs. A two-month consultation process with all NGOs has just been completed and the ideas and initiatives resulting from this are to be translated into a new Commission document to be addressed to the European Parliament and the Council, later in the year.

This new document will itself be partly inspired by other Commission initiatives in February and March this year: the publication of the Commission's Work Plan for 2000, its Strategy for the period from 2000 to 2005, and the Commission's overall reform package announced on 1 March 2000. All emphasise the central role of the citizen in pursuing the European ideal.

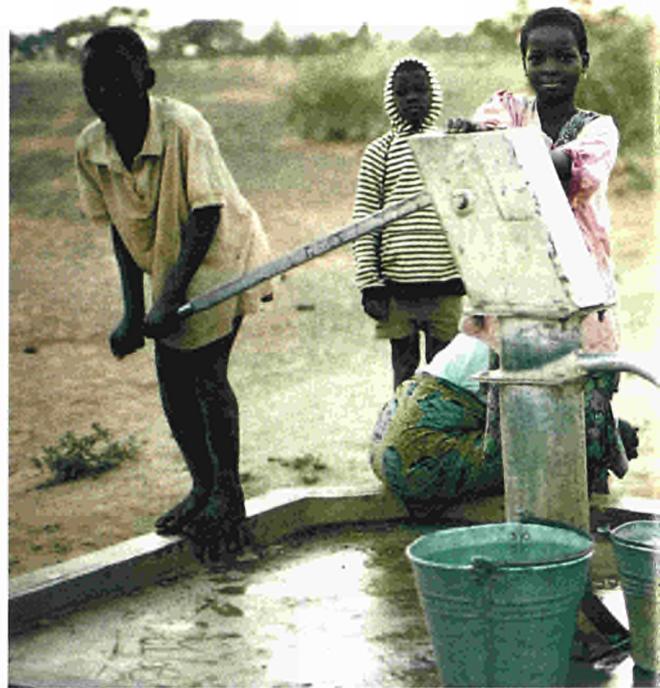
Never before have NGO interests been so high on the Commission's agenda. It is an opportunity - and a responsibility - for all concerned to come up with creative and effective ideas.

What are NGOs?

Neo-Government Organisations? Non-governable organisations? DINGOs, RINGOs, NGONGOs, INGOs - the literature is full of acronyms.

In fact, no universally-acceptable definition exists. The Commission's document mentioned above does not attempt to enter this minefield but confines itself to NGO characteristics, leaving the reader to judge whether a particular organisation should or should not fall into this category. Even the Council Regulation on NGO Co-Financing does not attempt a definition, nor do the two sets of NGO Co-Financing General Conditions (approved in 1988 and 2000).

One thing is certain: NGOs are increasing very fast indeed. This is particularly true in new democracies and countries undergoing transition. An OECD Inventory of European Development NGOs financed by the Commission in April 1996 identified some 6,000. The figure now is probably 50% higher.



One thing is certain: NGOs are increasing in new democracies and countries

What has the Commission/NGO relationship delivered so far? The first real manifestation of the Commission's interest in establishing a relationship with development NGOs came with the establishment of a new Budget Line in 1975 allowing the Commission to co-finance activities in developing countries proposed by European NGOs and awareness generation in Europe. This Budget Line was given a budget of €2.5 million.

It was introduced at a time when there was a general feeling that traditional government-to-government cooperation was missing a vital target: local communities. It was recognised that European NGOs and their partners in the developing world were better placed than government officials (in Brussels or in the partner country) to identify and address real grassroot needs. Everything works in their favour: low-cost, high-impact, rapid mobilisation of resources, driven by local initiatives rather than donors.

It is thus not surprising that the Budgetary Authority (the European Parliament and the Council) started to expand the resources allocated to this Budget Line. At the same time the NGO Liaison Committee (CLONG) was established, and a secretariat was set up in Brussels. National NGO Platforms started to be established in each of the Member States. Elected



Thomas Dorn

very fast indeed. This is particularly true in countries undergoing transition.

representatives from these National Platforms took seats on the Board of the Liaison Committee and directed their work.

The Commission became the single most important donor support for the CLONG. It has provided 85% of the CLONG's annual budget (for the year 2000 it is just over €2 million), the balance of 15% coming from its constituent members. The Budgetary Authority consistently ensured that specific reference be made to the CLONG in Budget Line commentaries so that its continued finance could be assured.

The increasing financial resources devoted to NGO co-financing were matched by increases in the access given to senior Commission officials and Commissioners. NGOs could no longer be regarded as marginal groups within society.

Resources provided to the NGO Co-Financing Budget Line have expanded since 1975. Last year, 764 projects in 78 countries were financed from this Budget Line, for a total of €200 million.

As a general rule, 90% of these activities are in developing countries and 10% within the European Union. This 10% focuses on awareness-raising and education, and underpins the Union's overall development cooperation policy.

For the first 10 years, there were no formal criteria for NGO co-funding. In 1988, some General Conditions for NGO Co-Financing were

agreed, both for activities in developing countries and for awareness generation within Europe. These have been in force for the last 12 years.

In July 1998, comments from a number of European Institutions questioned the Commission's right to manage such significant financial resources without a formal legal basis. The Council adopted a Regulation that now provides this. It is to be reviewed in 2001. The regulation sets out in detail the range of NGO projects and programmes that can be co-financed, and provides for the establishment of a Council NGO Co-Financing Advisory Committee chaired by the Commission. The Commission is obliged to report to this Committee on all the projects that have been financed. For projects exceeding €2 million the Committee's opinion is needed. The first Committee met on 8 July 1999. The latest Committee (the fourth) met on 24 February and approved the Commission's proposals for managing the Budget Line during the year 2000.

Prompted in part by this new Regulation, the 1988 General Conditions on Co-Financing have been carefully brought into line with new political priorities and with the new legal basis.

The Commission approved the new General Conditions on 7 January 2000. The first projects and programmes under these new conditions will probably be financed in the second half of 2000.

Whilst the NGO Co-financing Budget Line provides a major source of Community funds for NGOs, there are many others that NGOs can access. Full details of these can be found in a publication available in English and French, produced by the CLONG. In some fields, for instance the provision of food aid and emergency aid, NGOs are a long way ahead. They have a talent for being in the right place at the right time - working often in the most harrowing and hazardous circumstances - and this makes them natural partners for the Commission.

Stifled by success

NGOs have been victims of their own success. The explosion of all these initiatives designed to address NGO needs, reflected in myriad financing, budgetary and contractual procedures and consultation mechanisms, has completely suffo-

cated the system. NGOs no longer know whom to address to solve problems. The mismatch between limited Commission human resources and increasing tasks is only too evident. Nor has the Commission been the only organisation to suffer. The EU Member states have been trying to grapple with the same problem.

At the political level, concerns are being expressed that NGOs have become too powerful and too dominant. Some consider that they lack political legitimacy; that they are undemocratic bodies answerable to no-one. They believe the rush to jump on the bandwagon has led to the creation of many NGOs that do not appear to have the necessary expertise and skills. Impact studies in the field show that the picture may not be quite as rosy as it should be. Some NGOs - now household names -

have a remarkable track record in the field, but others have been found wanting.

The growth of NGOs in developing countries has reflected their growth in Europe. They have become an industry. NGOs specialising in human rights, democracy and environmental issues have proved to be thorns in the flesh of many fledgling governments. The power they wield, promoting well-researched and hard-hitting campaigns, often fuelled by information gleaned from the internet, can have a dramatic impact. New NGO networks are springing up all the time. Links are being established between groups in the North and the South and in the East and the West.

Going global

The negotiations surrounding the post-Lomé Partnership Agreement demonstrated all too clearly the fears and concerns of many governments in the face of burgeoning civil society interests. Here again, the issue is one of legitimacy, but the legitimacy of governments to reflect civil society's interests rather than the legitimacy of civil society itself.

The beginning of the 21st century is proving to be a turning point in the international debate on

these issues. The post-Seattle mood is seeping into many international institutions: the World Trade Organisation, the World Bank, the IMF, the European Commission, the UN system... all are having to re-examine their approach to NGO and civil society issues.

The future?

At the Commission, the first six months of 2000 has been a challenging time. Evaluations of the NGO Co-Financing Budget Line and Decentralised Budget Lines will be well under way. New management procedures have been introduced to simplify and rationalise NGO grant management mechanisms. Present consultation procedures with NGOs will be re-evaluated as part of the Commission Reform programme. NGO data-bases will be established. Plans for a

In developing countries... NGOs specialising in human rights, democracy and environmental issues have proved to be thorns in the flesh of many a fledgling government

new Communication on Commission/civil society relations are being produced. New Commission Communications on development coopera-

tion, and the link between relief and rehabilitation, will emerge. And NGOs will be consulted fully on all these documents.

These changes will require the NGO community to adapt and reform. Issues of transparency, accountability, and professionalism are emerging. The Information Society, skilfully exploited by the NGO world, is giving unparalleled access to knowledge. This in turn is spawning specialised NGOs - experts in a multitude of different fields.

Is this next decade to be the Age of the NGO? If so, how will power be wielded? New power means new responsibilities. For us in the Commission, the challenge is to build upon the experience gleaned over the last 26 years. To deepen and broaden our dialogue on many fronts. We will all be judged on what we deliver: our ability to provide real improvements to people's lives, particularly the most vulnerable. It is an exciting and honourable adventure.

* Head of the Civil Society, NGO, Good Governance and Decentralised Cooperation Unit, DG Development

What are NGOs doing here?

by Sue Wheat

Anybody who's worked in development has probably been stricken by doubts at some time or other about the role and effectiveness of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). They are there to Do Good, but all too often get accused of undertaking inappropriate interventions, disrupting local or even national politics, being cultural imperialists, and creating inequality and dependency amongst Southern communities...



What are they for?

Non-governmental organisations are essentially any organisation or association that isn't directly connected to government and isn't profit-making. They range from the tiny (a collection of people working in a specific community using just their own labour and intellectual skills) to the massive (an international NGO working throughout the world with a multi-million dollar budget). Collectively, they are certainly an economic force that can't be ignored. More than 19 million people work for NGOs world-wide and they trade at least US\$1.1 trillion a year.

Over the last two decades, aid has increasingly been channelled through international NGOs by bilateral and multilateral agencies fearful of government bureaucracies and inefficiencies, and in

many cases eager to reduce their bilateral aid contributions post-Cold War. Northern NGOs are often the first recipients of donor aid which is then passed on to Southern NGO partners. Some 400 to 500 international NGOs are currently active in global humanitarian and development activities, collectively spending some \$9-10 billion annually, supposedly reaching some 250 million people living in abject poverty.

"To governments, NGOs appear to offer the prospect of a different, and in many ways more acceptable face of development assistance," explains David Seddon, Professor of Development Studies at the UK's University of East Anglia.

"They profess more cultural sensitivity and stronger links with Southern NGOs and commu-

However they get their money, Northern NGOs get more of it than Southern NGOs which means control remains firmly in the North. Funds are distributed to Southern partners, but often tied into the conditions laid down in the Northern NGO's funders' strategic plans

nities than the national government. They also have a good reputation for cost-effectiveness and efficiency - although this is not always true. Whatever their weaknesses or disadvantages, they are not the government and that is enough for some."

Corporatisation of development

Such rapid growth has meant that many NGOs are now multinational, million dollar organisations. But the proliferation of NGOs and the forces of globalisation has meant that over the 80s and 90s, NGOs have adopted a more competitive, corporate management style. Many have vast media and communications centres constantly on-call, policy teams which jet-set around the globe in a continuous schedule of international conferences, political lobbyists and slick celebrity-backed marketing campaigns.

"In many ways the large NGOs are no different to multinational corporations," says Kenyan Wanjiku Kamau, a policy advisor to international NGOs.

"I am often at meetings where the talk is about budgets, market share, visions, and 'the brand.' We could be talking about a retail franchise system, not a development agency providing wells and healthcare."

Managing funds in a more businesslike manner may not in itself be a bad thing, especially as NGOs or 'voluntary organisations' gained a reputation for being worthy but inefficient during the 60s and 70s. But does

the increased efficiency translate into an improved 'product' - that is - a reduction in overall poverty? Unfortunately, after 40 years or more of some international NGOs working in Southern countries, although we are seeing a growing middle class in many countries, the number of those living in absolute poverty is growing. The degree to which this is the fault of NGOs is of course, unquantifiable. But certainly, the product of development is 'faulty' and NGOs have a critical role in its 'production.'

Dancing to the funders' tunes

The use of the management tools adopted from Northern business practice has tended to have a top-down approach which is often difficult for Southern NGOs to relate to. An environment of enforcing and regulating has been established, but accountability rarely goes both ways.

"For most Northern NGOs, accountability long ago shifted away from their constituencies towards the donor agencies," writes Firoze Manji, ex-Director of Amnesty International's Africa Programme in a critical report of the development industry, *Development and Patronage*, by Oxfam. The focus of NGO activity changes not so much according to community needs in the South, he says, but to donor trends in the North and funding proposals drawn up around the latest development buzzwords.

And for those that fundraise

largely from the public, the ultimate aim is always to present their work in a way that continues to raise funds in the long-term. "What it comes down to for the big Northern agencies is maintaining their financial base," says Rod Leith, a British fundraising consultant for Northern NGOs.

"To put it crudely, that means making sure it's their organisation's T-shirts that people see on the six o'clock news."

However they get their money, Northern NGOs get more of it than Southern NGOs which means control remains firmly in the North. Funds are distributed to Southern partners, but often tied into the conditionalities laid down in the Northern NGO's funders' strategic plans.

"These plans may be written thousands of miles away, be designed according to non-translatable project concepts and be subject to distant and unchallengeable funding decisions by the funders of the funders," points out Professor Seddon.

"If that is not enough, the very right of Southern communities to define their own problems might be challenged by a stranger who once had a weekend PRA course in London or Washington. It is not coincidental that such a process, despite some rearrangements, preserved the power and defined continuing roles for those who were powerful in the industry to start with."

This inequality between Northern and Southern NGOs

is something that has been acknowledged by both sides in recent years. Northern-led NGO operations, although often focused on capacity building on paper, may actually undermine Southern NGOs and communities in practice.

"I'm worried that Northern NGOs occupy space that could be occupied more effectively by Southern community-based organisations," says Wanjiku Kamau. "International NGOs generally come with certain values and help to those with the same values instead of helping communities find their own voice."

Southern governments' ability to operate national development strategies may also be weakened by the NGOs' overriding presence. United Nations agencies have complained that in Africa increasing flows to NGOs were undermining "systems of cooperation and coordination in large-scale emergencies."

And in Kenya, says Wanjiku Kamau, where a lot of the health services are channelled through NGOs, the state health system is being undermined.

"The health system is in crisis, particularly as a result of Aids. Kenya is getting some help through the bilateral system, but NGO aid is often independent of this. The result is that there is no longer a comprehensive national health surveillance system. The NGOs aren't supporting the government health system, aren't working within the national health strategy, and aren't

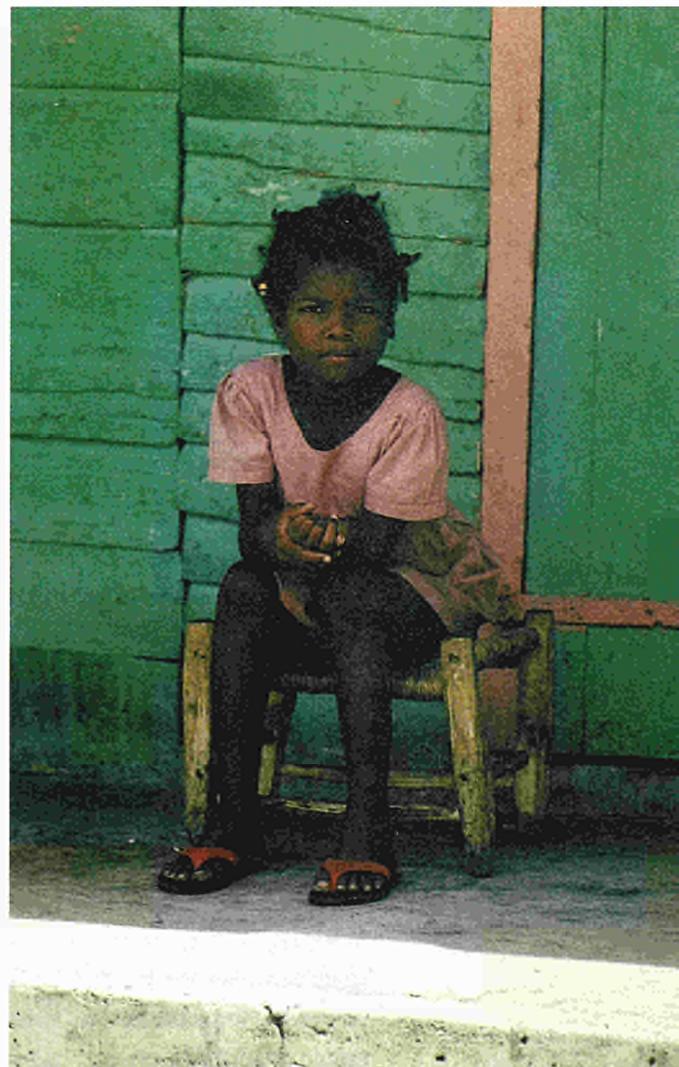
necessarily working where they are most needed." NGOs have often filled the gap left by the retreat of the state and either acted as a smokescreen to hide the fact that public services as such, are disappearing or prevented the state from coordinating a national development programme.

Most recently, Northern governments have been questioning the role of Northern NGOs and seeking to empower Southern governments and civil society groups more directly. This is a particularly strong line of Clare Short, the British Minister for International Development. Suggestions that funding should more frequently by-pass Northern NGOs and go directly to the South have been met with fear by British NGOs.

A survey by the British government in 1995 revealed that 80% of British NGOs surveyed opposed aid being channelled directly to Southern NGOs because they felt Southern NGOs lacked the experience to manage, monitor and evaluate projects, would be more vulnerable to donor influence, would respond to the availability of money rather than need, would fill a void created by a retrenching state, and would be susceptible to manipulation by donor agencies or political groups.

Firoze Manji interprets this as "a considerable deficit of respect and trust for their counterparts in the South." What is striking about the list of reasons given, says Manji,

is that on the criteria they state, most Northern NGOs wouldn't qualify to receive funds either. "It is tempting to draw the conclusion that the *raison d'être* for development may no longer be to build sustainable development and institutions in the South, but rather to keep the home team going," he says. Their fearful reaction is patronising, hypocritical and largely unfounded. What is more likely, he insists, is that NGOs realise their own future is at risk. "It is the *cri de coeur* of the dinosaur facing potential extinction."



The NGO movement in Africa

by Fatma M Aloo

At the end of the Cold War, Africa experienced liberalisation in waves from the Northern States. With it the notion of a one-party state began to crumble. As nation states engaged in the turbulent process of multi-partyism, civil society began to have some - albeit limited - room for manoeuvre. The NGO movement and the press began to thrive.

Globalisation

The world economy of the late 80s and 90s demanded the opening up of borders as capital sought markets. Globalisation was a term embraced unconditionally by the developing world. This path of development demanded maximum profit at the expense of social development. African states began to fail to protect the wellbeing of most of their population.

Social classes began to be more clearly defined, and the haves and have nots became separated. In the meantime, the romance of the flag of independence has worn off and reality has dawned.

Civil society had to get its act together to survive.

UN Conferences

Around this time also there were a number of UN Conferences on issues like the Rio Environment Conference, health issues in Cairo, Socio-Economic issues in Vienna and Women's Issues in Beijing. These conferences had a double impact. Social issues were prominent and pertinent to peoples' lives and raised public consciousness of human rights.

Secondly, because government had to produce reports and pledge support it put them in a bind of accountability to their own people. NGO awareness was enhanced through these declarations.

Rights as Issues

Africa, as the founder of the Human Rights Charter through the African Charter, took its place. Numerous organisations, associations, and councils mushroomed and registered as NGOs. The term NGO was new. What was familiar were the community-based organisations (CBOs) around which the tempo of society clicked.

Initially, registered NGOs followed the bureaucratic culture they were used to. Many people within them came from government or kept NGO work as a sideline to their regular jobs. NGOs were voluntary and so they have had quite a struggle to keep themselves going.

The role of NGOs in society is beginning to be understood and a new breed of NGO has begun to emerge. This is particularly so in the environmental, women and youth movements. They had a more dynamic tempo and ways of organising and have an impact at advocacy and policy level. They also have begun to become more professional.

Donor impact

As the NGO sector is taken more seriously, it has also begun to demand accountability and transparency from its members. Donors who had lost faith in the performances of government structures began to put resources into the NGO movement. In the 90s the buzz words in the donor community were gender and empowerment, from which the women's movement benefited greatly. With emphasis by UN bodies on gender and its own awakening, the women's movement in Africa was able to make tremendous strides. Effective networking and advocacy at national, regional and international level played its part. At policy level also, laws were changed in favour of women, as pressure mounted from this movement within nation states. At regional level, organisations like the OAU, COMESA, SADCC were also lobbied. Effective regional networks were founded and flourished: AAWORD (Senegal), FLAMME (Zambia), AMW (Zimbabwe), ASWA (Egypt), DAWN (Nigeria/Senegal) and many more.

The environmentalists have not fared badly either. After Rio effective programmes have been developed by the NGO community on issues of land and people. This issue is high on the agenda of the NGO movement, be it in Nigeria (the Ogoni issue) or Kilimanjaro (the Maasai, Bairbag issue) and many others on the continent. Massive educational campaigns have been undertaken as conservation-

ists also came to terms with the fact that without community involvement one cannot talk of preservation. The Jozani forest in Zanzibar is an example of its effectiveness.

Children's rights is another issue that the NGO community has adopted as society becomes painfully aware of the plight of children in Africa through displacements, wars and poverty.

Weaknesses and needs

However lively the NGO sector in Africa, there are some who have set up to make money: "briefcase NGOs" which are basically fraudulent.

Capacity-building potential within the NGO movement means that support systems and accountability are now necessary. Many NGOs lack vision, and the dearth of mission statements and management skills is an issue in Africa. This is partly because most NGOs are run on a voluntary basis.

Several capacity-building bodies have begun to emerge to address organisational development: The East African and Southern Unit Network (EASUN) based in Arusha, Tanzania; PODDER based in South Africa; MWENGO based in Zimbabwe and some others on the continent. In Zanzibar there is an NGO Resource Centre (NGORC), a project funded by the Aga Khan Foundation which has been operating for the last four years and has actively played a role in providing an enabling environment through which NGO and CBO community can organise effectively. The Centre encourages and supports basic research and capacity-building training.

Macro-micro connection through cyberculture

Information technology (IT) is changing the nature of the NGO movement. Access to information is faster so it can be a tool of empowerment. A case in point is the tourism industry. With a tourist boom in some parts of Africa (Tunisia, South Africa, Tanzania) the issue of land has come to the fore. Many hotels have sprung up and national parks set up for the tourist industry. Foreign-owned deals continue to be brokered without the knowledge of local residents; community-owned land is appropriated in the name of development. Through IT some of this dealing is exposed in time for the local community to take action. This is done in conjunction



with watchdog organisations, for instance Tourism Concern based in Britain collaborates with environmentalist/media NGOs like MISA (Namibia) and JET (Tanzania) who in turn disseminate information through the press and work with local groups to advertise the issue.

Conclusion

As the NGO movement in Africa begins to move forward, there is a concerted effort to contain it through policy documents and systematic checks in the legal system. This has a double impact. It gives the movement a legitimacy, but on the other hand it curtails its effect as a dynamic force. The challenge facing the NGO movement in Africa today is for it to emerge as a viable force and an agent for change. The other struggle is for it to build its own infrastructure and managerial capacity and to be able to function on a more professional level.

The women's NGO movement in Africa is a step ahead in this struggle, for it has succeeded in causing change at policy level, notably in Zambia, Ghana, Tanzania, Morocco, and Uganda.

As the power of cyberculture begins to affect the continent, interactive dialogue becomes a reality between forces of change and the establishment. The speed at which information flows, and with a concerted effort on the part of committed NGOs working at grassroots level, NGOs will continue to gain bargaining power, and to use it to influence change.

NGOs and humanitarian aid

by Gianni Rufini*

The 1990s have been the decade of humanitarian aid. Never - in the history of this century - have the populations of great parts of the globe been affected by wars and natural catastrophes with the same frequency and violence. Ten years ago, humanitarian and emergency aid still represented a relatively marginal sector in international cooperation with developing countries. Most NGOs were reluctant to get involved in this activity, whose techniques, methodology and principles were considered poor relations to the better-acknowledged disciplines such as development aid, human rights and environmental protection.

At the end of this difficult decade hundreds of NGOs with roots in more traditional domains are increasingly devoting their resources to assisting people affected by conflicts and natural disasters. A conspicuous effort is being made to link these actions with a broader developmental approach, through the principles of the continuum of Relief-Rehabilitation-Development.

This radical change is rooted in two major factors: the enormous growth in number, intensity and cruelty of wars after 1989 and the increased re-occurrence of natural catastrophes (by 900% in 40 years). Underdevelopment is now an unsustainable tragedy.

Too often these events have wiped out serious efforts and important investments. This is as much the case for Angola, Mozambique and Central America as for West Africa, Bangladesh and Indonesia. In some cases, development programmes have been steadily replaced by permanent humanitarian actions as in Somalia, Afghanistan, Sudan, Sierra Leone and Iraq.

On the donor side, the already low development aid is being gradually diverted towards

humanitarian aid, which is more politically rewarding and appeals to public opinion.

Europe and humanitarian aid

The European Union developed a sound humanitarian policy as late as 1992, when ECHO was established. Nonetheless, in a few years Europe has become a major player, today the biggest donor and best performer in humanitarian aid.

The strategic choice of providing direct assistance through the non-governmental system has strengthened citizens' support while ensuring flexibility and cost-effectiveness. The adoption of special administrative tools like fast financing procedures and the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) has allowed prompt response to crises. In a few years, the ECHO-NGO partnership has become the human face of European aid: disinterested, impartial, based on needs and rights.

NGOs

On their side, NGOs have adopted a reluctant approach to humanitarianism: few specialised agencies used to work in this field in the early 80s. During the 90s, more and more organisations expanded their activities and developed new skills. At the end of the decade ECHO had 170 NGO partners, while 400 more requested to sign the FPA.

One easy explanation of such a trend is the increased funds available for humanitarian response, but the determining factor is that there is nothing we can do for development as long as wars and natural catastrophes systematically delete all progress in our work. We are no longer able to draw political attention to poverty eradication as long as peace and stability remain the

first concern for the international community. Funding for development has decreased by 25% in seven years, while many developing countries are dragged decades backward by conflicts and devastating events. This situation has become unbearable and NGOs face new responsibilities.

The collapse of Somalia and West Africa, the Iraqi war and the genocide in the Great Lakes were just the first shock: the Balkan crisis brought the war to our doorstep and generated a strong solidarity among citizens to whom a response had to be given. This meant adopting a new framework for action: no more long and careful planning or participatory appraisal, with little space for capacity building; new methods and techniques were learnt and even ethical issues had to be reviewed.

Today, almost two-thirds of European humanitarian aid is delivered by NGOs, who also raise one-third of overall funding through citizens' donations.

The end of a decade

Despite all efforts, the balance between increased engagement and relief capacity remains dramatically negative and the limits of humanitarianism as a response to world crises becomes evident. In the last couple of years, two main

events have been particularly relevant for this process: Hurricane Mitch and the Kosovo war.

The Kosovo crisis has uncovered the major weaknesses of our discipline, the lack of coherence within the international community, the absence of a European Union

foreign policy and the inadequacy of the existing structures for emergency response. Not only has the crisis not been prevented (although probably it could have been), but all manner of contradictions and polemics have emerged in its management, determining a relatively late and confused



AG. Belga

Remind you of someone you know? A young member of the Kosovo Liberation Army patrols the streets of Prizren. Kosovo, 1999

response. The reconstruction process might also be going along the same lines.

Hurricane Mitch struck a region that for decades has represented a major working field for development NGOs and international organisations. The disaster has reopened the debate about the definition of development in the region: the role of the traditional economy, security, democratisation, human rights, the debt, defence of minorities and vulnerable groups, participation and capacity building have all been integrated by

Shortsighted policies miss the chance for a major shift towards prevention, the only sound approach

NGOs in the design of strategies to face the crisis and plan the reconstruction. This ongoing exercise will certainly lead to more coordinated action in all sectors of international aid in the region. Still, shortsighted policies miss the chance for a major shift towards prevention, the only sound approach.

Shifting to prevention

A structural approach to natural disaster prevention implies reducing vulnerability. This is essentially a development challenge. It is appropriate therefore that preparedness in recent years has shifted away from the humanitarian actors and is being given greater consideration in the development community. Nonetheless, the expertise acquired through a decade of humanitarian operations is also fundamental to address sound preparedness/prevention strategies. The know-how is there, the main problem is the lack of policies. Prevention is a quiet, long-term activity that does not attract media attention, consensus or donations.

The conflict-prevention side is no clearer. Kosovo has been paradigmatic also in this sense: for 10 years the UN and NGOs have warned the international community about the level of tension and the worsening social and political situation, warning of the risk of imminent conflict. We know the result.

The international community remains essentially **reactive** and not **proactive**, incapable of promoting long term programmes to build structural stability.

EC - NGO relationship

Whatever change occurs in policies, humanitarian aid is likely to increase as the problems of global unbalance, poverty and rights keep the world unstable. For the humanitarian community the issues are quantity and quality: the size of international response is still miserable compared to the size of crises, and their effectiveness is far from adequate. While we work on techniques, methodology, training and coordination, a serious effort must be made to improve strategies and financing.

Donor/Agency partnerships

At European level, one of the main issues is how to upgrade the partnership between donors and agencies, going beyond the financial relationships towards more qualitative ones. After a difficult start, ECHO and NGOs are cautiously testing a higher level of partnership by increasing common strategic planning, efficiency and cost effectiveness, and discussing major problems. Should this method work, it would benefit operations and victims.

This does not happen easily and there is still a cultural resistance against a full acknowledgment of the role of NGOs. We can say that we are all working in the right direction but still have a long way to go.

*VOICE Coordinator

What future for fair trade?

by Paolo Logli

Fair trade offers small-scale farmers and craftsmen in developing countries the chance to find outlets for their produce and make a decent living from it, even though they are excluded from trading circles. In general, they have the support of

bodies based in the industrialised countries which launch specific projects and take over the importing, distribution and control of the goods in question and help to create consumer awareness.

In most cases, the goods concerned are food products subject to sharp variations in world prices, like coffee or tea, or craft products (clothing, pottery, etc). As a result, even in cases where prices are more stable, producers in the South are often at the mercy of middlemen who pay them only a minute fraction of the market price and force them to take out loans at extortionate rates of interest.

With the support of specialised NGOs, small producers are combining to form cooperatives to improve their living and working conditions, and to make use of environmentally compatible production techniques. A fair trade enterprise is defined as one that observes socially and environmentally acceptable production conditions and redistributes the profits of its activities to its workers.

Under a long-term agreement with the import bodies, fair trade producers undertake to supply merchantable goods at a "fair" price - in other words, above the market price, whatever that may be, with possible advance financing of their production or harvest. Definitions here vary from one body to another, although efforts are being made to standardise these criteria.

At present, the fair trade bodies are working with 45 of the world's developing countries and more than 800 local organisations - half a million small producers in all. It is estimated that several tens of millions more would be interested in fair trade, and are looking for ways of profiting from

the recent adjustment and liberalisation programmes.

In Mexico, for example, there are 250,000 small-scale coffee planters. Their product quality is good, yet they earn an average annual income of no more than 600 dollars as most of the profits from coffee marketing are absorbed by middlemen. Several thousand planters have combined to form a fair trade cooperative to organise their exports to Europe. As a result, their incomes have almost doubled, their working and living conditions have improved, and they have been able to build warehouses and launch social welfare projects (such as drinking water supply and school buildings).

The importance of labels

In Europe, many of the importing centres which apply the principles of fair trade and have concluded agreements with producers have combined to form the European Fair Trade Association (EFTA), which is trying to standardise criteria and definitions and is bringing pressure to bear on national and community authorities in the interests of fair trade. The specialised bodies arrange for goods to be moved through two distribution outlets: specialist stores, such as OXFAM's World Shops forming part of NEWS (Network of European World Shops), and the traditional distribution outlets such as supermarkets.

Specialist stores - of which there are a few thousand in Europe, often run by volunteers - are

not just selling points but also instruments for alerting public opinion to development issues. When run by competent, motivated volunteers or by professionals, they can give customers accurate details of the provenance and production conditions of the goods offered for sale.

Although these shops handle a variety of goods, sales through the ordinary retail circuit are confined to a few foodstuffs, such as coffee, tea, honey, bananas and chocolate. Even so, this accounts for about 60% of the fair trade turnover. These outlets have the disadvantage of not providing direct personal contact with customers, but they do ensure compliance with a very strict specification, thanks to the involvement of specialist bodies such as Max Havelaar (in France, Belgium and the Netherlands), Transfair (in Germany, Austria and Italy) and Fair Trade Mark (in the United Kingdom and Ireland). These bodies, now combined under the FLO label (Fair Trade Labelling Organisation) supervise, in particular, the conditions under which goods are bought from small producers and are eligible to be labelled as such, for payment of a royalty.

Currently, the FLO has registered 181 cooperatives for coffee (mainly in Central America and the Caribbean), 47 for tea (in Asia and Africa), 23 for honey. Its work is also proving essential in smoothing out various strategic differences among the supervisory bodies. In order to prevent fraud, some are suggesting that the label should be granted only to products which comply with a long and specific list of criteria (such as very high percentages of "fair" raw material, in terms of both quantity and quality), while others, to make it easier to sell at more competitive prices, accept that the "fair trade" label can be awarded under less rigid conditions. The FLO is trying to reduce these disparities, though their harmful effects on custom would still be subject to the *de facto* separation between national markets.

European objectives

Fair trade affects various aspects of European Union policies: trade, environment and consumption, both inside the EU and outside; but it is in terms of development aid policy that the need to adopt an effective and consistent approach is most obvious.

Two reports presented to the European Parliament (Langer 1994, and Fassa 1998) proposed to the Commission that fair trade should be incorporated into its aid policies (including those subsequent to Lomé), that a study of the creation of an *ad hoc* budget line should be undertaken, that coordination between the various Commission services dealing with fair trade should be improved, and that objective criteria should be defined to provide a basis for the Commission to create a unique European label.

These proposals, however, have not been welcomed everywhere, even among some fair trade bodies, perhaps because of the political and technical difficulties. The drafting of a communication in 1999, after lengthy discussions among several DGs, complied with a specific undertaking by the Agriculture DG to answer a question from the Agriculture Council on the issue of Caribbean bananas versus "dollar" bananas. This text proposes that the principles of fair trade be clarified and the powers of the monitoring bodies strengthened, and also suggests that the possibility of going further should be left to a later communication, after in-depth discussions with the actors concerned.

For their part, the fair trade defence organisations, especially EFTA, NEWS, FLO and IFAT (the International Federation for Alternative Trade, whose membership includes European and non-European organisations and producers), are continuing to exert pressure on the Commission's services. The dialogue with European civil society, recently recalled by President Prodi, will therefore have to develop along these lines, enabling the Commission to

make more specific proposals in a forthcoming communication.

Furthermore, as the new Partnership Agreement refers to fair trade but without specifying the means for implementing it, a dialogue with ACP civil society will be necessary before any projects are prepared.

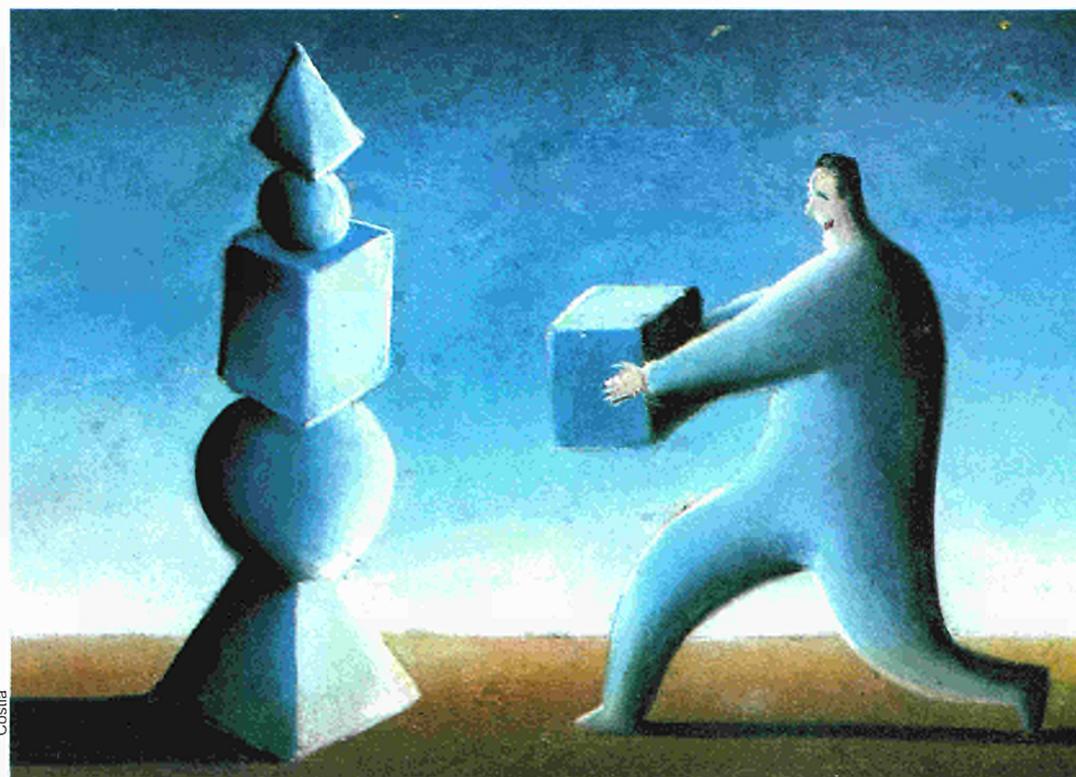
Outstanding questions

The dialogue with European civil society should deal with issues that have already been raised by the communication and others which are already the subject of heated debate among the fair trade actors.

A unique label

Despite the FLO's efforts at coordination, European consumers are sometimes confused by the proliferation of labels, which leads to some distrust, and is inevitably becoming worse with the emergence of "ethical" production (generally referring to large or medium-sized enterprises which guarantee their workforce acceptable working conditions in conformity with a code of conduct, for example in accordance with the ILO standards) and the proliferation of more or less official labels ("biological" and "natural" products, etc.). The actors involved (often the same ones) need to think carefully about the links between fair trade and these other situations.

The words "fair trade" are not covered by any legal definition



Cosetta

or protection. Anyone can borrow, or indeed abuse them. It is reasonable, anyway, to wonder whether several labels within the European Union are genuinely compatible with the single market. The debate continues, especially within the FLO, with some suggesting recognition for existing labels and others recommending the adoption of a single label, with control bodies to monitor it.

Greater efficiency

Recently, some NGOs and other bodies have been stressing the need to move beyond the voluntary stage of fair trade or, more accurately, to increase its volume. Small producers, in any event, could significantly increase the quantities they offer for sale, at a time when European consumers seem ready to step up consumption

of fair trade products, at least under certain conditions.

Although it has not stopped growing, after 30 years, this kind of trade is still marginal: even the flagship products, such as coffee, are rarely more than one per cent of European consumption.

A more professional approach to ultimate distribution seems essential, since the consumer, while making more and more use of fair trade products, has become more exacting where prices and, especially, quality are concerned. Very high prices displayed in specialist shops can be explained by very high fixed costs payable on quite low quantities. Furthermore, an effort to improve professionalism was called for at a recent NEWS conference.

Finding production opportunities

Although specialist shops handle a wide variety of goods, sales through the ordinary retail circuit are confined to a few foodstuffs, such as coffee or tea. These outlets have the disadvantage of not providing direct contact with customers, but they do ensure compliance with a very strict specification

But the producers, too, must make their own efforts. They should be able to increase productivity by using more sophisticated farming techniques and devoting more care to equipment maintenance, administration and product quality, for example by reinvesting some of the resources they earn. They could also prepare for selling on international markets by finding outlets in local markets, consider additional financing by contacting microcredit organisations, etc.

At European level, the NGOs could do more to boost consumer awareness through information campaigns carried out in collaboration with other civil society actors (European World Shops Day, EFTA Fair Trade Day at the European Parliament, campaigns to promote bananas or chocolate, consumption of "fair trade" coffee in the canteens of national and European public institutions, etc.). In their relations with the small producers, the European NGOs could encourage them to do more to take account of productivity imperatives.

The development of co-financing

The promotion and financing of fair trade are current operational objectives of the Civil Society, NGOs and Decentralised Cooperation Unit under the budget line Co-financing with European NGOs, in two parallel forms: within the framework of education and development, in Europe, and through future projects in developing countries.

There are dozens of projects dealing with the co-financed portion in Europe. They have helped to disseminate knowledge of fair trade products, and also to strengthen the intermediate bodies. Trade promotion activities do not currently qualify for financing.

A number of quite large-scale projects put forward by experienced NGOs are currently in progress in the developing countries. Some of them (in Latin America and Asia) support the producers' efforts to increase their productivity, but the majority are concerned with laying the groundwork for the first organisation of margin-

alised small-scale producers. In future, fair trade may perhaps become the subject of a call for tender from the responsible Unit, in which case the number and value of the projects would increase sharply, with the implementation of genuine programmes as envisaged in the new conditions for application of the budget line.

At present, it is the European NGOs that decide whether or not it is worth proposing a co-financing scheme for a fair trade project. The responsible Unit can only "guide" their choices, and unfortunately they are still concentrating on objectives other than fair trade.

The political acceptability of fair trade

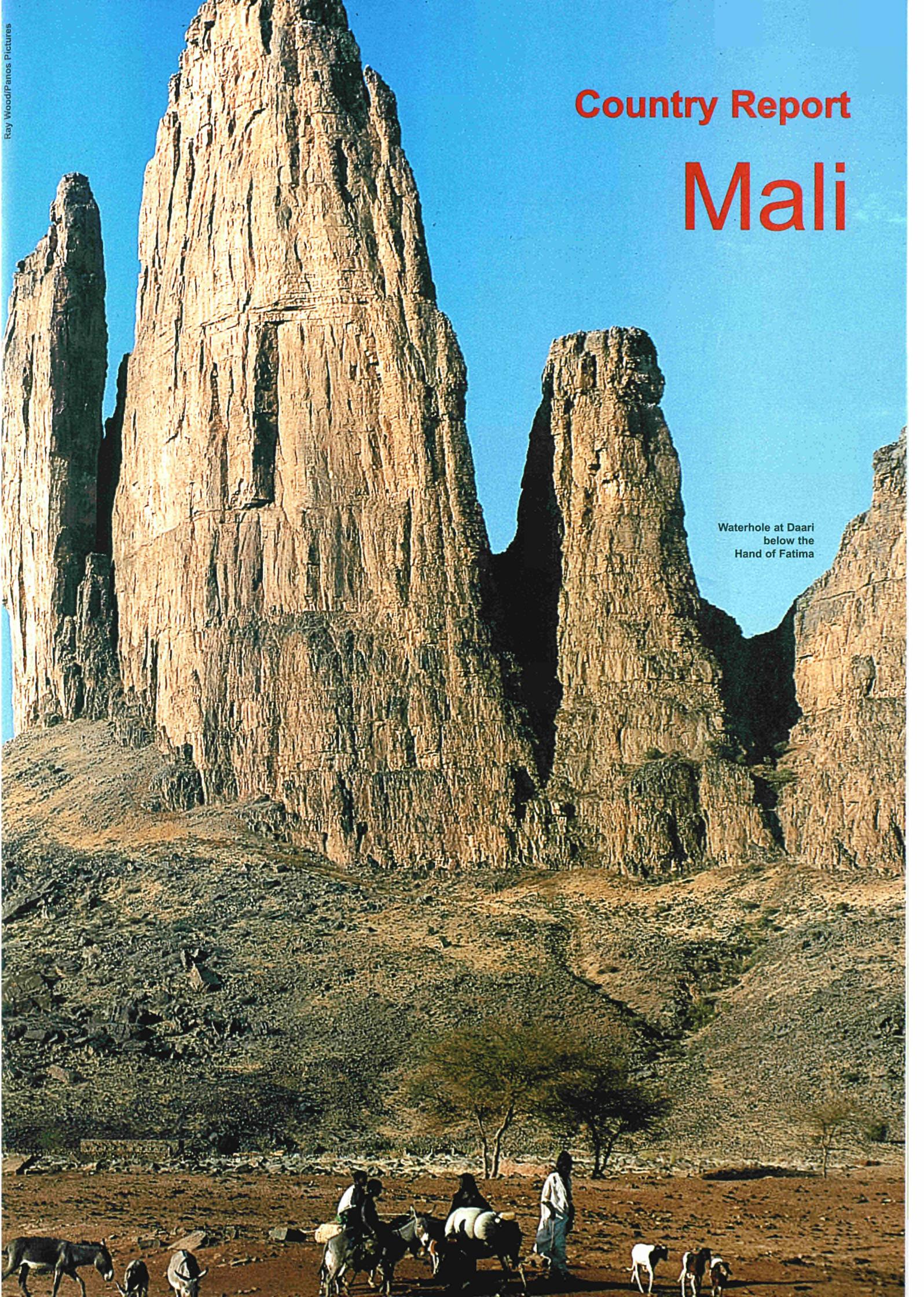
For fair trade to achieve a genuine advance in quality and become an effective lever of local development, some people believe it needs to benefit from the financial and technical resources and development policy instruments of the Commission and Member States. In this context, it is realised that conflicting logic may govern fair trade, and that a choice must be made.

The integration of fair trade into aid policies is proving difficult in the current context of complete liberalisation of international trade. The "alternative" concept is liable to attract criticism from those who fear it will bring calls for preferential systems, special customs tariffs, etc. The more commercial concept would be more acceptable. It would pursue two objectives: in the short term, combating the poverty that afflicts small producers (an objective, incidentally, which should be sufficient to justify the granting of subsidies and respect for "fair prices"); and in the long term, their gradual integration into international trade, when small producers will be strengthened by the reinvestment of the profits derived from selling their goods at a "fair price." The projects would then have to be designed so as to make the profits of the fair-trade enterprises available to producers (without enforcing redistribution for social purposes) and guarantee the temporary nature of assistance to them until they are able to stand up to international competition.

Country Report

Mali

Waterhole at Daari
below the
Hand of Fatima



An impossible dream?

by Joan Baxter



The setting is the well-cooled interior of the Palais des Congrès, on the banks of the Niger River in the Malian capital, Bamako. The gleaming marble floor in this hall is a tangle of wires, connected to computers, connected to the Internet. The event is *Bamako 2000*, the much-touted international fair intended to promote the use of the Internet not just in Mali but in the rest of Africa. The Malian organisers were so enthused about their Internet gala and its international appeal that they issued an invitation to Microsoft magnate, Bill Gates. He hasn't shown up. But neither his absence, nor the fact that in all of Mali there are still only about 2,000 computer users, has dampened enthusiasm or deterred anyone, especially not Malian President Alpha Oumar Konaré.

In a rouse-the-nation speech to close the week-long computer extravaganza in the capital of one of the poorest countries on earth, President Konaré has just revealed his dream to hook up to the Internet all 701 newly-created municipalities in this vast nation, half of which is covered by the sands of the Sahara Desert. He also reiterates his commitment to have a school in every village in Mali by the end of 2000. He says that three feasibility studies have been done and that he's done the calculations himself. The total cost for both would, he says, be a mere 16 billion CFA francs (about US\$30 million). The President argues that this is not "an impossible dream." He contends that a little goodwill on the part of the donor and creditor community would make all of this, and much more, possible. This

Tuaregs, above, have laid down their arms - after a rebellion from 1990-96 that impeded development in the vast north of Mali. They now rely heavily on tourism and sell their magnificent cloths and jewellery

All photographs by Joan Baxter



year, he points out that Mali will spend three times that much (about \$100 million US) on debt repayment.

Speeches like this have earned President Alpha Oumar Konaré an international reputation as a leader with "vision." And Konaré is nothing if not a master of rhetoric labouring the principles of democracy and political stability, and the fight against the proliferation of small arms in West Africa. Many in the donor or diplomatic community refer to Mali as a model for Africa. On a short stopover in

Bamako late last year, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told the world's media that Mali had been "blessed" to have a President like Konaré, whom she dubbed a "remarkable leader."

This year, he is serving a one-year term as head of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), and has leapt into both roles with energy and enthusiasm. He spends much of his time hosting high-level summits or traveling in the region to champion the cause of West African integration.

First elected President in 1992, then re-elected in 1997 in controversial and expensive elections (estimated to have cost about \$30 million), which the opposition collective, or COPPO, boycotted, Konaré has two years left in his allowed term in office. But he's also had eight years to put his words into actions, and these days his flowery rhetoric is wearing a little thin on the Malian public. Many people in Mali, from political opponents to the people on the street watching the education levels drop while corruption escalates - two ills that Konaré himself has acknowledged and denounced in speeches - say they have the impression that their President is speaking "more to impress an inter-

national audience than he is to Malians." For that speech in the Palais des Congrès, for example, he earned himself the headline in one private newspaper: "After his dreams, Alpha falls into the wishing well."

The reasons for scepticism about Konaré's stated goals are not evident inside the Palais des Congrès, a grand structure that is anything but representative of what's on the outside. There, Malian reality intervenes and the reverie is interrupted. The capital city, with a population of anywhere between one and two million, is chaotic, crowded and poor. Apart from the stunning white Presidential palace on a cliff overlooking Bamako and a few elite neighbourhoods where the super-rich are putting up massive villas, the city is generally squalid and very run-down.

Hard facts and reliable statistics to quantify the hardship are hard to come by, according to World Bank sources, which say they are planning a series of surveys to get at the real picture. Even without those statistics, however, it is evident that Mali is plagued by a painful lack of basic infrastructure - passable roads, zoning, public sanitation and hygiene, decent housing, designated market areas. Such basic amenities such as water and electricity are lacking in much of the capital. Thoroughfares are choked



Livestock is key to Mali's rural population's way of life, but it also puts enormous pressure on precious and scarce water resources during droughts months long - and on precious vegetation

with vendors desperate to sell something to earn their daily bread, or a portion thereof. Small mountains of plastic waste collect wherever there is a patch of open ground. These are burned each evening, adding to the choking blanket of toxic smog formed each day by ailing, dilapidated vehicles that make their way here from other continents with strict emission standards. Staggering unemployment is evident in the numbers of young men sitting under trees, traipsing the streets to hawk cigarettes or imported trinkets, or begging, or worse - turning to petty crime.

Life in rural areas is different, but even tougher. And a trip to almost any of the municipalities created as part of the vast programme of decentralisation reveals that most of the newly elected mayors still have no offices or funds - let alone electricity, telephone lines or

the computers they would need to make the President's dreams of the Internet come true.

As any student or teacher or university professor will argue, there are many very pressing problems that urgently need attention. There is widespread student unrest, with frequent strikes and demonstrations that are regularly brought under control by riot police using tear-gas. And in the vast desert north of the country, insecurity persists. The peace accord signed four years ago with Tuareg rebels has been largely adhered to and development organisations have focused many of their efforts on development in that region. Mali's fabled town of Timbuktu is once again becoming a Mecca for travellers seeking mystery and adventure. But the brutal slaying of three Dutch tourists near the Algerian border in March has raised fears about the deteriorating situation and lawlessness. One NGO, *Action Contre le Faim*, has suspended work while others have restricted their movements in the region.

With all this to deal with, diplomats and Malians themselves shake their heads over government's choice to spend scarce and precious resources on what they view as "frills." Mali is gearing up to host the African Cup of Nations soccer

tournament in 2002, for a cost of about \$200 million, despite widespread opposition from donors who say, in private, that schools and water should take precedence over stadiums and hotels. Then there are the extravagant monuments going up at major intersections in Bamako, when so many roads in the city are barely passable and a public sanitation system is still just a pipe dream.

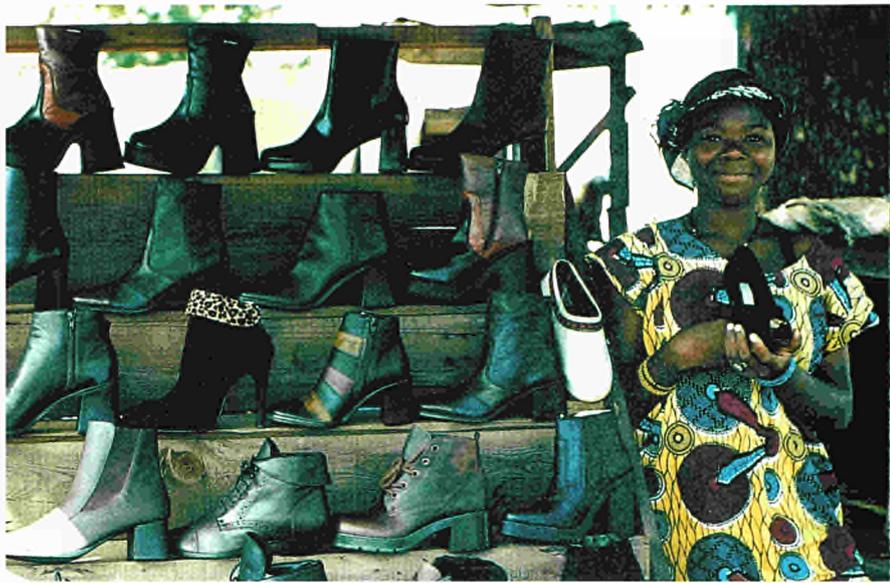
Mali remains one of the world's least developed countries, coming in 166th out of 174 on the 1999 UNDP human development report. Ten out of every 100 children born will not live past their first birthday. Two in three Malian children never set foot inside a school. The World Bank reports that more than 70% of Malians fall below the poverty threshold, which is set at an average per capita income below \$240 a year. Falling cotton prices, corruption and a stagnating administration have taken their toll; economic growth peaked in 1997 at 6.5%, before starting to drop again.

Debt relief worth almost \$400 million pledged by the World Bank last year has been on hold for months because of Bank dissatisfaction with the privatisation of state telecommunications and utility companies, and with mismanagement in the country's parastatal cotton company, CMDT, the

economic powerhouse in this country where an estimated 60% of the population depends on cotton for income. Together, cotton and gold exports account for about 20% of GNP. Late last year, the press leaked results from an EU audit of three ministries: health, education and public works, which had benefited from EU financing meant to alleviate the effects of economic reform. Those results showed serious mismanagement and mishandling of those funds. An EU spokesman in Bamako confirmed that the audit was sent to the President, but months later, there has still been no Presidential acknowledgement of the document.

Disenchanted Malians in all walks of life say they are "disappointed with democracy" and claim that the democracy they fought for with their "blood" (hundreds of students were shot and killed before former President, General Moussa Traoré was toppled in 1991) "has been hijacked" by interests outside their country. Like many on the continent, they find themselves in an increasingly competitive global economy that is neither attuned to nor very interested in the kind of wealth that abounds here - cultural riches. The legacy of the great empires that flourished in this country is a highly complex society in which the nobles, as determined through heritage, are still obliged to look out for the people of "caste" - the *griots*, blacksmiths, weavers, as well as those whose ancestors were once slaves. It is this culture of sharing and traditional responsibility for extended family and the community, which former Minister of Culture Aminata Traoré says has allowed Malians to survive in the face of the crushing material poverty that faces the vast majority of the population. That is not to say that there is not a growing sense of despair and disillusionment.

"We're poor and we're watching those at the top get richer. They don't care about us, they care about the donors. If that's your [Western] democracy," says one businessman, "then you can keep it."



The dozen men in his small office chant their agreement, not able to conceal their anger and frustration.

In the face of mounting pressure both at home and abroad for change, in February President Konaré finally named a new cabinet and appointed a new Prime Minister, a man with a solid economic track record with the Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund, Mande Sidibé. His appointment has been widely acclaimed by the donor community. But even optimists from the World Bank in Bamako admit that Prime Minister Sidibé has a monumental task in front of him. He has to try to clean up the public sector and the country's weighty administration and in doing so meet the strict criteria laid out by the Bank for debt relief. He must also wade through mountains of murky dossiers on mismanagement and corruption in state enterprises, telecommunications and energy, which are due for privatisation. He must adhere to tough fiscal restraint policies that are likely to send the country's students and public sector workers out onto the streets in anger. In short, he must try to balance the budget, please the donor community and an increasingly frustrated populace - all the while pleasing the man who appointed him, the far-sighted President.

Bamako.
Vendors resort to any goods they can get their hands on to sell for a little income - such as second-hand shoes from Europe and North America. Tragic for local leather workers and artisans

Fine phrases and good ideas

by Joan Baxter

It's Saturday, 6 May, the long-awaited day that Mali's newly-appointed Prime Minister, Mande Sidibé, will deliver his General Political Declaration to the National Assembly. The huge hall that constitutes the National Assembly is overflowing with members of parliament, Sidibé's new cabinet, journalists, curious citizens and even two European ambassadors to Mali. Unfortunately, the air conditioning in the auditorium is in a sorry way, and it is clear that Sidibé is feeling the heat in his magnificent green damask boubou and matching fez.

Aides rush to his rescue with a stand-up fan, but unfortunately the fan, like the air conditioning, turns out not to be in working order. There is much wiping of brows as the Prime Minister launches into his 90-minute declaration.

This is the first time Sidibé has faced the National Assembly since he was appointed by President Alpha Oumar Konaré in February. There has been much backroom grumbling by MPs of the ruling party, ADEMA, which holds the vast majority of seats in the Assembly. According to Mali's constitution, the ruling party and not the president is responsible for nominating candidates for the post of Prime Minister, who in return, chooses cabinet ministers to form the government that he heads.

There have been widespread reports of a serious rift within the ruling party since Mande Sidibé appointed the 21-member cabinet. Some of the ADEMA executive, loyal to former Prime Minister Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta who remains president

of the party, feel they have been excluded from the new government. They complain that the core of the cabinet comprises only presidential intimates who come from a political grouping within ADEMA that is known popularly in Mali as the "CMDT clan," since they all passed through the CMDT, the country's large parastatal cotton company, before they moved into the political arena.

With all the turmoil inside the ruling party, this speech is a test for the new Prime Minister. For the first time since 1997, this Assembly that so represents the interests of ADEMA and a few other closely-aligned parties, may not behave like a rubber stamp.

As he reads out the 33 pages of his eloquent political speech, Sidibé lives up to his reputation as a competent technocrat and a sophisticated economist with an international reputation earned at the IMF and the Central Bank in Mali. It is laced with attractive phrases and development rhetoric that are sure not to upset any mango carts, neither here in Mali nor outside among the donor community or international financial institutions. Nothing startling here - the speech is very much an endorsement of the progress Mali has made in recent years under President Konaré.

Sidibé states, for example, that between 1990 and 1999, the percentage of children in school rose from 29% to 50%. He also says that between 1995 and 1999, economic growth averaged above 5%, surpassing population growth while inflation has been kept to "tolerable levels."

As the private press would sum up in the days that followed the PM's declaration, it was a plan, essentially, for more of the same. Sidibé applauds the process of decentralisation, which he says has "created conditions for effective participation of the population in managing their own development while strengthening and deepening democracy, and is now at the stage to be put to work." Referring to President Konaré's current term as Chair of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), he declares,

Many plead passionately for improvements in the country's education system, roads, hospitals, agricultural sector, their pleas echoing the hardship their constituents face every day of their lives. It's a marathon 18-hour session

"On the international scene, Mali is making its voice better heard, and the country has taken the lead in the combat for West African integration."

However, the Prime Minister also admits that there is "a lot to do and the challenges are many." That's a euphemistic way of admitting that Mali remains a desperately impoverished nation, with extremely poor living standards and infrastructure, and no hope of any miracles to alleviate the suffering of the population. Many Malians say they have lost faith in their politicians to put

Many Malians say they have lost faith in their politicians to put the people's pressing needs first

the people's pressing needs first.

Sidibé goes on to promise that his government is conscious of the importance of the upcoming presidential elections in 2002, and of the need to avoid a repetition of "the difficulties" that afflicted the elections of 1997. He calls for a "serene political climate" to "protect Mali's fragile democracy," but makes no mention of new electoral lists, which the opposition collective has been demanding since before the last elections were held without their participation. By the end of the speech, the Prime Minister has covered all the key sectors, recognising the problems that plague education in Mali - by lack of facilities and a very rebellious student union that has students boycotting classes for two or three months each year. He has touched on the obvious need for better health care, the President's much-publicised fight against corruption, the government's pledge to continue servicing its debt, as well as the importance of the private sector. He has carefully avoided giving a precise timetable for the privatisation of the state telecommunications and energy corporations, even though the Bretton Woods institutions are still holding up US\$270 million of debt alleviation until that privatisation is done.

Sidibé rounds off his declaration with a plea to MPs for their "confidence and support."

The question is, will they give it?

Two days later, Monday morning, it is the MPs'

turn at the podium. In the traditional Malian way, the MPs are polite and congratulate the Prime Minister for his declaration. But many go on to plead for improvements in the country's education system, roads, hospitals, agricultural sector, echoing the hardship their constituents face every day of their lives. It's a marathon session, lasting 18 hours.

Then comes the vote. No one rejects the declaration; 129 vote in favour. There are seven abstentions from MPs of the PARENA party, which some interpret as the party trying to distance itself from the ruling party and jockey for popularity in anticipation of the elections in two years' time. The opposition collective hasn't deemed it worthwhile to make a public statement on the declaration in a National Assembly and from a Prime Minister it doesn't recognise.

None of this is surprising. The Prime Minister has been thrifty with details of how he plans to accomplish all that is written on paper. But he has managed to cover all the bases to present a cautiously optimistic picture for the people of this

Sidibé applauds the process of decentralisation, which he says has "created conditions for effective participation of the population in managing their own development while strengthening and deepening democracy"

landlocked and sand-swept country in the Sahel, steeped in tradition, historical pride - and poverty. It is now that Sidibé and his government have their work cut out for themselves, trying to transpose some of those fine phrases and good ideas into tangible results.

And that's what impoverished farmers in rural communities, with no water, schools, health facilities, roads or electricity - and precious little income - are waiting to see. It's a tall order to satisfy within two years, which is when President Konaré's mandate - and thus the Prime Minister's - comes to an end.

Mali - losing the race to preserve its culture?

by Jos van Beurden



This pottery is part of Mali's cultural heritage and has been recovered by the police

All photographs by Jos van Beurden

Mali has three places which have an important cultural heritage. The best known is the old city of Timbuktu with thousands of old Arab manuscripts circulating there. The Dogon area is known for its wooden sculptures, masks, doors and door-poles. In high caves the oldest textiles in Sub-Saharan Africa have been found. The city of Djenné is known for its mud mosque and houses and its many archaeological sites. For the people of Mali these treasures are part of their identity. But treasure-hunters and dealers don't care about that. They grab what they can. The effort to limit the

damage has been most effective in Djenné, but is it a lost cause?

Djenné

It begins on Sunday afternoon. Several heavily loaded trucks and numerous horse- or donkey-drawn carts cross the small bridge to the city, heading for the centre. On Monday morning many more arrive. The weekly market of Djenné is a magnet for the surrounding region. The city is still the same as it was in the 14th century, when trans-Saharan caravans passed through it.

Yet there is more to Djenné than its market. It is a city of merchants and *marabouts* (scholars of

the Koran). A large Mosque made of clay stands on a plateau. Built in 1907, it determines the image of the market and the city. Palm poles in its walls are permanent scaffolding for masons who renew the mud. In six places mud-stairs have been constructed, each with a sign *Entrée interdit à non-musulmans*. Beautiful brown doors with tin decoration give entry to the prayer hall. The mosque is one of the most outstanding examples of clay architecture in West Africa, and the city is on UNESCO's list of World Heritage sites.

In 1990 45% of sites had traces of pillage. In 1996 it had reached more than 65%

The guild of masons in Djenné is renowned throughout West Africa. Master mason Bouboucar Kouroumansé is involved in a large restoration project. Over 100 houses will be restored to their 1900 condition. In one of the small shadowy streets live Mr Touré and his family. Kouroumansé would like to put their house on the list for restoration, that needs careful study and preparation. Some walls will have to be rebuilt. The turrets which decorate the façade have been covered by cement. That is forbidden, and will have to be replaced with clay. In some places the panelled ceiling will have to be

renewed. Mr Touré says that he needs the permission of his brother in Bamako and another one in Paris before he can agree to the restoration. The three of them own the house.

Pillage

The Cultural Mission of Djenné keeps an eye on more than 800 archeological sites where treasure hunters cause a lot of damage. According to director and archaeologist Bouboucar Diaby, pillage is no new phenomenon.

"It has been like this since the 1850s. French colonial officials and travellers considered our culture archaic and our archaeological treasures their property. As none of them was a real archaeological craftsman a lot was lost.

"Since then there have been various upsurges in the pillage, the last one around 1980 when American archaeologists, the McIntoshes, broadcast their find of a 1,000 year old terracotta statuette.

"A big run began, the prices increased tremendously and the damage was enormous."

In 1990 45% of sites had traces of pillage. In 1996 it had reached more than 65%.

Timbuktu and the Dogon region have suffered similar losses. The *Centre de Recherche et Documentation Ahmed Baba* in Timbuktu has 15,000 Arab manuscripts, the oldest ones dating from the 11th century. Some contain



Main entrance door to the big mosque in Djenné

facts about life at that time in this city of Islamic learning and culture. Families in the town have many more manuscripts but according to a spokesperson at the Centre, "they often sell these to dealers or tourists, although this is forbidden by law."

And for the manuscripts which are kept by the Centre "there is no plan or personnel for their preservation and storage."

The same goes for the ethnographic and archeological objects from the Dogon region. Much has disappeared.

The EU, Mali and culture

The EU will fund several projects to help Mali to preserve its cultural heritage. One is the restoration and expansion of the National Museum in Bamako and the setting up of three regional museums, one of them in Djenné. Institution building will be promoted at the Ministry of Culture. Money will be set aside for small cultural initiatives.

Mobo Maïga is a dealer in Djenné who admits to having profited a lot from these disappearances. His shop is an ocean of terracotta and wooden sculptures.

"My best years were those between 1974 and 1982. I sold many authentic objects to the big antique dealers in Bamako who in turn sold them for a large profit to their customers, dealers and collectors in Paris, New York, London, Munich, Zürich or Brussels."

His profit has allowed him to open a shop in the more Northern town of Mopti, and several in Djenné.

In 1985 a law was approved for the protection of Mali's cultural property. No terracotta, manuscripts and sculptures were allowed to leave the country.

"From one day to the next my trade became illegal. When the Cultural Mission was established it became more difficult." Yet Mobo Maïga has found a new way to make money.

"To make a copy of an old statuette takes two years but it is not too difficult. Copies are treated with fire and cooling water and kept in the soil for two years. Dealers in Bamako know the difference but I can assure you that quite a number of terracotta statuettes in Europe and North America have come from my workshops."

"In general the work of treasure hunters and traders is increasingly considered to be wicked"

Ban

While Mali is one of the most serious victims of this transacting of its cultural heritage, it is also the country in Africa doing the most to minimise the damage. In the early 1990s Mali requested the US Government to agree to a ban on the import of all terracotta from Mali.

"US Customs officers have been very strict since," says National Museum Director

Samuel Sidibé in Bamako. But has this really had an impact? "One cannot express it in figures. But it has become much more troublesome to smuggle terracotta from here into the USA. Moreover, the ban has made an impression in Europe. When it became public knowledge in 1997 that the French President Jacques Chirac had received as a birthday present a statuette which had been stolen in Djenné, he felt forced to return it."

Sidibé would be delighted if European states imposed a similar ban.

Another milestone was the exhibition *Vallée de Niger* with objects from several cultures in Mali and other West African countries. It was held in Paris, Leyden and the capitals of six West African countries.

"The best pieces attracted a large number of people here. That made Malians more aware of the importance of their cultural heritage."

Other exhibitions have followed.

Some other measures have been taken. The National Museum has started to register its own collection according to international standards.

"So far we have photographed and described some 2,000 pieces, one fifth of our collection."

Plans have been made for three new regional museums.

"In general," concludes

Sidibé, "the work of treasure hunters and traders is increasingly considered to be wicked."

Mobile brigade

The Cultural Mission in Djenné has set up a mobile force to make surprise visits to the 800 archeological sites. "Recently we noticed a dust cloud in the distance," says its Director Diaby.

"We went there and arrested two men, aged 45 and 67, digging at a site. After interrogation and some detective work it turned out that they were part of a team of 10. They had set up their own hut and kitchen and had been working there for two months."

But how could they dig for such a long time without being stopped? According to police officer Abdullahi Sidibé "treasure hunters often threaten village people so they do not betray them. They even use violence." Another reason, he admits, "is the poor relationship between police and public in Mali."

When Diaby set up the Cultural Mission local police and judges refused to help.

"That has changed. Police and judges have become more cooperative."

The two men were sentenced to three months' imprisonment and a heavy fine.

"We have become strict. The other day a tourist was intercepted with an old jar. He had to hand it over."

Another activity of the Cultural Mission is to make the public more aware of what's going on. Last year the National Theatre staged a play about the subject, and this year research has been done in six villages about its impact.

"In one village no progress was made," explains Diaby, "while in the five others there has been a change. Most villagers wanted more information."

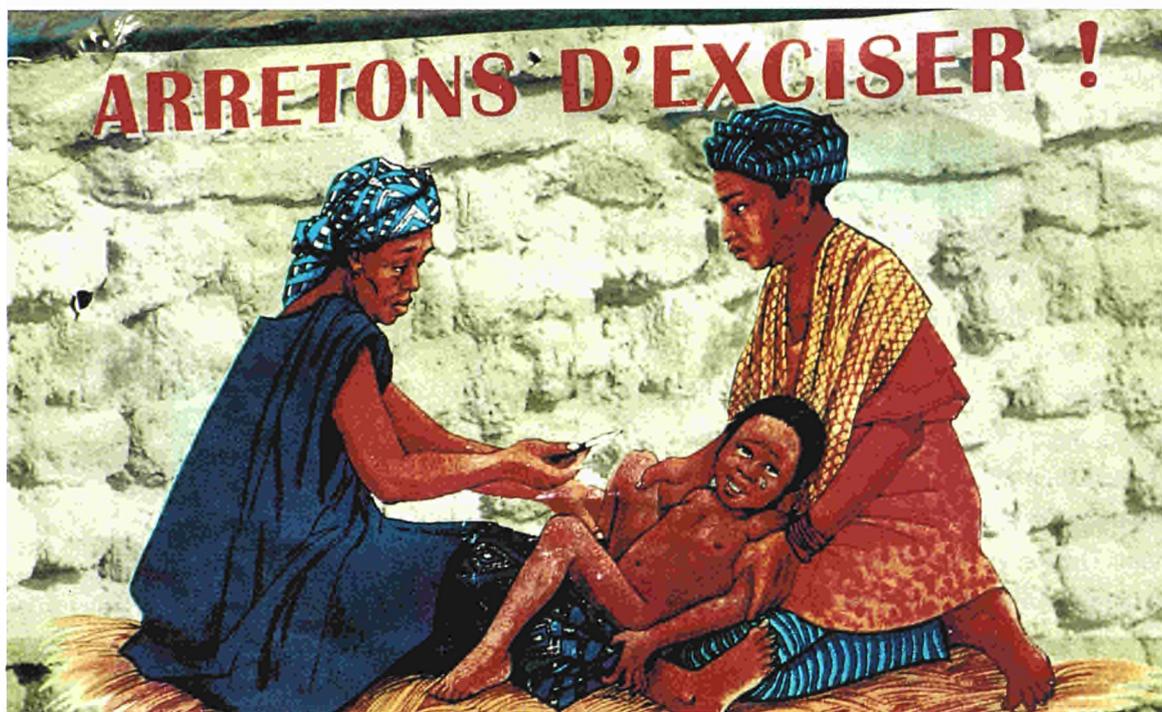
He knows, however, that to stop the pillage and illegal trade is impossible.



Street scene in Djenné

The unkindest cut of all

by Ruth Evans



Hanging on the wall in Fatoumata Sire's office is a propaganda poster against female circumcision. On the desk is a framed photo of her receiving the Legion D'Honneur.

Outside, a queue of women wait their turn to see this dynamic woman, who has spent the last 20 years of her life campaigning against female circumcision in Mali.

Her involvement started when her own baby daughter was circumcised without her permission or knowledge by one of her father's co-wives. Since then she has campaigned tirelessly against this ancient but previously taboo cultural practice.

Mali is now perhaps the only country in West Africa that has not introduced a law against female circumcision. It's estimated that perhaps 80 percent of young girls are still circumcised, and here the ceremony involves cutting off a girl's clitoris as a way of initiating her into womanhood and preparing her for marriage.

"I prefer to use the term female genital mutilation," says Fatoumata, "because circumcision

suggests that nothing important is cut, whereas female genital mutilation acknowledges that a girl is deprived of a very important part of her body."

Fatoumata Sire's campaign has given her a very high profile in Mali. She's a controversial figure who is either loved or loathed by her countrymen. Efforts to draft legislation for the government have resulted in a backlash from conservative forces in the country.

"I have death threats against me," she says, "there have been attempts to burn down my house, I have been in three car crashes and every day, Islamic radio here in Bamako broadcasts curses against me."

But she is undaunted by what people think of

her, and she gives the distinct impression that nothing will deflect this determined woman from her campaign.

Cultural aggression

Mahmoud Dikko is Director of the Islamic Radio station that Fatoumata says has been orchestrating much of the campaign against her. We went to visit him in his office overlooking Bamako's Central Mosque and the busy market, full of shoe repairers, booksellers, souvenirs and fetish stalls. At first he refused to shake my hand or to let me into his office because presumably as a woman I would have defiled him and his space.

We put Fatoumata's serious allegations to him and he denied that the station had been running any campaign against her.

"No, it's not true," he said, "it's all in her mind, it's not true!"

Asked what Islam teaches about circumcision he told us:

"Circumcision is a very ancient custom here in Mali. Islam found it when it came and Islam tolerated it...but it does have a moral value because it has to do with chastity. It helps to keep women chaste within marriage because it controls their sexual needs."

Mahmoud Dikko denounces what he regards as a Western-inspired campaign against circumcision. People like Fatoumata Sire, he says, are simply dancing to the West's tune and this amounts to nothing less than "cultural aggression."

"What right has the West to come here to lecture us, about a tradition it does not understand, when it tolerates things like homosexuality and sex before marriage? For us these things are shocking...they make us vomit!"

Clearly, it is going to be a tough job to change attitudes and traditions that are not only so deeply entrenched but also so sensitive and

taboo. But Fatoumata says that one effective way of doing this is to persuade the women who perform the circumcisions to stop. "Persuading one female performer to stop could save the lives of hundreds of young girls," she says.

Alternative income

The town of Segou is a couple of hours' drive from the capital, with wide dusty boulevards adjacent to the River Niger. Here Fatoumata's organisation has set up a weaving project, which aims to give women who used to perform circumcision for a living, an alternative source of income. It's also a potent signal of gender empowerment, as weaving is traditionally a male preserve in Mali's highly complex and stratified society.

Fanta sits at a large loom, weaving a blue and white-checked cloth, against a backdrop of anti-circumcision posters. She's a gentle, quietly spoken-woman with a warm smile. She says she used to earn about 1000 CFA (about one pound) for each circumcision she performed, and often used to do several in one day. Her mother and grandmother before her had performed circumcisions and it was a highly respected job in the community. She explained that the operation was traditionally performed after months of preparations and initiation into womanhood, as a way of "keeping little girls clean and stopping them running after men."

Once she learned of the dangerous consequences from infections and potential loss of life, she had stopped because she now realised circumcision constituted violence against women.

Another effective way of changing attitudes is through theatre. We went to the southern village of Mana with Theatre Don, a travelling troupe of dancers and actors who put on performances about development and health issues in villages that have never before seen theatre. Director Karim Togola says theatre is a popular and effective vehicle for getting messages like this across,

and that certainly seems to be the case if the response of the villagers of Mana is anything to go by. Hundreds of men, women and children gathered together under a starlit sky to watch the players dance and sing a play that tackled the sensitive issues of circumcision head on, illustrating the medical dangers and social taboos. It was a lively *tour de force*, full of humour and music that had the audience shouting and clapping along as they recognised familiar scenes.

Afterwards, the chief of Mana village, a dignified old man in a green woolly bobble hat, emulated his theatrical counterpart in the performance, by announcing that now they understood the dangers of circumcision, the village would put a stop to the practice.

The following morning, sitting in his compound surrounded by village elders as three young girls pounded millet under a nearby tree, the chief reiterated this pledge. But he also quoted a Bambara proverb to the effect that these things would not change overnight.

Change will certainly come slowly if methods like these are all campaigners have to rely on. A more effective means to an end, argues Fatoumata, would be to introduce a law banning circumcision outright. But government has been sitting on draft legislation for some time, and Fatoumata believes this is because it is nervous of fundamentalist Islamic reaction.

High up on the hill overlooking the red dust that permanently envelops Bamako sits the seat of government and Presidential palace. Here in his oak panelled office, Pascal Babu Coulobaly, the Chef de Cabinet of the President's Office, explains that in his opinion a law would not be effective because literacy rates in Mali are so low few people would be able to read it and it would therefore be unenforceable. Besides, he says, now wearing his other hat as an anthropologist, circumcision has today largely lost its



meaning as part of the rites of initiation and marriage. Marriages are no longer arranged and these rites have died away, so that all that is left is the operation, which is being performed at an earlier and earlier age, sometimes on young babies, and this means it has completely lost its meaning.

"Circumcision will disappear of its own accord," he says, "because it has lost its *raison d'être*."

But he also believes that in the overall order of things, circumcision is not on the list of priorities or concerns for most Malians.

"Circumcision is just a little cut of the clitoris, that takes five minutes," he says, "What we really suffer from here is poverty, not circumcision."

He adamantly believes, however, that it is for Africans themselves to address this issue, not for the West to campaign against something whose cultural context it does not understand. "The best way to deal with this is not to lecture to people but to allow them to reach their own conclusions with dignity and humour, through things like theatre and education, and that way circumcision will disappear," argues Pascal. "This is democracy in action!"

A weaving project has been set up for former practitioners of female circumcision to give them another income

Photographs by Ruth Evans

www.@frica

by Thibault Gregoire

Strolling around the Conference Centre, I found out that it's now possible to buy a computer on line. When all the details have been taken, the cheapest still costs more than CFAF 500,000. So, as you see, we're making great progress"

This anecdote was recounted by Habib Koité, a Mandingo singer, who is very popular amongst Mali's youth, between two songs at a concert he was giving in a Bamako restaurant. Half a million - for the overwhelming majority of Mali's citizens, this represents considerably more than one year's salary. The Internet, new technologies, e-mail ... are these just pipe dreams or could they be a genuine asset in Africa's development?

It was specifically to respond to this question that the Bamako 2000 Conference was organised (*Bamako 2000, Les Passerelles du Développement*). Held in the Malian capital from 20 to 25 February 2000, it was a runaway success. Some 300 to 400 participants had been expected, but over 1,500 attended, almost exclusively Africans.

Bamako 2000's mission was to separate myth from reality. To do this, in addition to the plenary sessions which were punctuated by traditional discourses from political leaders and professionals in telecommunications, the week was primarily divided up into a number of workshops: women, training and research, e-commerce, healthcare on the Internet and sustainable development - myriad meeting places where everyone could exchange experiences and ideas. For instance, what might be the role of the new information technologies in education? Is e-commerce going to be a launch pad for the private sector in Africa? What reforms are needed to provide fair access to information? These were just a few of the many topics discussed.

Amongst the various workshops, many were particularly interesting, such as the session on the media. For many observers, the new information technologies are undoubtedly a preferred



tool for accelerating the development of the media in the southern hemisphere. Not only do they limit censorship, but, above all, they should allow easier acquisition of documents (over the Internet and via e-mail). By the same token - and this is an essential point - they offer unbelievable potential for easier circulation of specifically African content. For example, the creation of new archive banks for the traditional - written and audiovisual - media, and long-term partnerships amongst the media in the southern hemisphere and also between North and South.

Feet firmly on the ground

Admittedly, a damper has to be placed on such enthusiasm. Throughout the Conference, it was sometimes difficult to keep one's feet on the ground, not only during the speeches, but also during the workshops. Take the media workshops, for example, from which it clearly emerged that countless difficulties remain to be overcome: the costs of infrastructure, new technologies in the throes of development and which are thus rapidly obsolete, the need to have multi-disciplinary specialists available, etc. Furthermore, within the context of the globalisation process of which the Internet is a part, making progress and guaranteeing specificity is

Young people thronged to the Conference

Photos by Thibault Grégoire

no small task, be this in terms of comprehension and conception of information or in terms of maintaining one's own language.

And then there are statistics, notoriously recalcitrant statistics: the current figures simply cannot be ignored. At a global level, 91% of Internet users are in the northern hemisphere. The country hosting the Conference - Mali - has five access providers for barely 500 users ... out of 11 million inhabitants. Furthermore, western NGOs and expats make up the vast majority, and these figures relate only to the capital. Admittedly, not all countries in Africa are in the same boat, yet, although the Maghreb and Southern Africa appear to be a bit better off, most countries have fewer than 3,000 to 4,000 users. Only South Africa really has its foot in the technological door with almost half a million subscribers.

Yet it is not enthusiasm that is lacking, particularly in the case of young Malians, and that was the most remarkable aspect of the week: the young people packed into the Conference Centre. The organisers had had the brilliant idea of leaving the doors wide open, at times giving the Conference the appearance of a huge fair-ground. Many came to the venue "just to have a look," their numbers swollen by students and academics from the University of Bamako which had been on strike for several weeks. They came to look and also to try out - a dozen or so PCs were made available to them, free of charge. They just had to register and join the queue.

Greetings cards and football

The initiative was down to ISOC-Mali (Internet society), which entrusted the smooth running of operations to an Internet surfers' club recently set up by students from the University. "We are giving people a lot of help because even young school kids are turning up to surf the net," explained Scholastique Tchoumbou, a sixth-year medical student who helps to run the club. The young peoples' interests vary, although there are a couple of areas they tend to concentrate on. Although, generally speaking, they are all interested in visiting sites related to their studies, the great majority of girls spend their connection time

sending greetings cards, and setting up a mailbox to receive e-mails from their new correspondents. The boys spend their on-line time playing computer games or visiting sports sites, which are inevitably football-related.

For a good number of them, this visit to Bamako 2000 is their first encounter with the Internet, about which they have heard so much. "As regards the future of young Africans, e-commerce, the Internet and all these new technologies have to become more readily accessible, and that is the main objective of our club," Scholastique continued. Another of their aims is to put pressure on the few cybercafés which have been established in Mali's capital to reduce the cost of Internet access. The battle has already been partly won, since the cost for club members has come down to CFAF 750 per hour from the CFAF 1,000 usually charged (and double for non-students). "These cybercafés are the only places where we can train our members, because the University's faculties have only a very small number of computers. Not only that, a student grant is only CFAF 26,000 per month." The pooling of hardware and subscription costs is undoubtedly a realistic alternative for all these young people. Perhaps the scheme should be extended to a large part of Africa.

Bamako 2000 was also the occasion for the awarding of prizes to particularly interesting sites. A competition had been launched, with several categories available. One example was the SIUP (People's Urban Information System), set up in late 1997 in Yoff (Senegal), which was the winner of the cultural links category.

Even the elderly are in on the act

"The idea was to set up a website to manage the village's cultural and land assets," Ndiare Mdoye, the young website overseer, told us. "The entire population has supported the project, so now the site is an amazing source of information. Everything about the village is put on and updated, be it historical information, information about the village's traditions, resources, day-to-day urban management or even its inhabitants. This makes it possible not only to manage local development better, but also to facilitate dialogue."

One notable aspect has been the fact that setting up the website has brought young and old together. "Formerly, young people had no say in matters. We were living under a gerontocracy. But we asked them to help us set up the site, particularly to tell us about their past, in order to supplement and enrich the site's content. When we'd explained everything and shown them the results on screen, they couldn't believe it! Since then, they have actually listened to us and are giving us their full support."

The creation of the SIUP and the use of the new information technologies that it involves is based on a genuine social project. Is that always the case? Will the information society not, in reality, simply increase the North/South divide? The issue is still being hotly debated.



Send a message or surf the net, free of charge

African radio stations face techno-apartheid

by Serge Bailly*

Recent liberalisation of the airwaves has led to a whole crop of radio stations opening up amid glorious chaos. In West Africa, Mali was the radio pioneer - in 1992 there were only four radio stations, as compared with the 95 which now have an official frequency. The initial enthusiasm of the broadcasts entertained listeners with its audacity; then things slackened and led to increasing demands for a professional approach.

As Fily Keita, the President of Urtel (Union of Free Radio and Television Broadcasters of Mali), explained at the Festival of the Airwaves, a major gathering of representatives from African radio stations organised in November 1999 by the Panos Institute, "analogue radio is practically a thing of the past. It's definitely on the way out. If African radio stations want a role, they are going to have to adapt. If they do not, information and news will be shaped by international groups."

The challenge of new technologies is at odds with the day-to-day problems encountered by radio presenters in Africa. A station's survival depends firstly

on its being connected to the genie of electricity: the station has to be able to pay the bill or to find the means to purchase the fuel to enable it to operate a generator. Solar technology is indeed an alternative in rural areas, but despite there being no fuel costs, the initial investment in solar panels is much higher. Everyone agrees that setting up an FM studio costs less today than it cost to get a radio station off the ground 10 years ago, but digital radio is still exorbitantly expensive in terms of reception.

'Sponsorship' by market traders

Radio stations are usually forced to struggle along, their only income coming from local small businesses or for the broadcasting of family news. At certain small radio stations in Mali, presenters receive CFAF 200 (FF 2) from peanut vendors in the market.

Popular sponsorship has turned out to be a stroke of inspiration on the part of African station managers. One station in Bamako was able to ensure its survival in 1995 because a presenter had

persuaded local market traders to sponsor a broadcast about popular sayings and proverbs. It was an instant success. The close relationship between a radio station and its audience is a permanent feature of the African landscape. Radio Bamakan once appealed to its listeners to help it pay the electricity bill, and they turned out *en masse* to contribute a few coins in order to enable the station to continue broadcasting.

Radio stations also often organise listeners' clubs. Radio Rik, a small community station in Bamako which targets the youth market, has set up just such a club simply in order to be able to continue broadcasting: in exchange for a few francs per month,

In the region, there had been talk of the formidable power of radio, with the presence of Radio Kayes, Mali's pioneer station, which devotes a great amount of its time to programmes of development and education. However, proof was needed of the old men's support

people become members and are entitled to a say in what is broadcast.

Nevertheless, this close relationship between listener and presenter is not always good: the spectre of patronage is omnipresent. Not long ago, a rich family in Bamako had no scruples about handing out money to a radio station for it to announce the marriage of one of its daughters.

Part of the decentralisation process

Radio in Mali also has a major role to play in the process of political decentralisation. The government has deemed it necessary to use the services of radio to promote peoples' awareness about the division of the country into communes. For several weeks, the rural Oualia radio station, in the West of Mali, explained on air the consequences of decentralisation, namely greater responsibility on the part of the communes in the management of their resources, the grouping together of villages, educational advantages, etc.

In a remote mountainous region, the Oualia commune is more than 300 km from Bamako and almost 200 km from the principal town of the Kayes region. It began broadcasting in May 1998 thanks to financial support from an Italian NGO, Terra Nuova. The project was encouraged by the Alliance of Associated Groups of Badumbé, an assembly of wise men from a number of villages in the vicinity. In the region, there had been talk of the formidable power of radio, with the presence of Radio Kayes, Mali's pioneer station, which devotes a great amount of its time to programmes of development and education. However, proof was needed of the old men's support. As Moctar Foulani Sissoko, founder and main presenter of the small Oualia radio station, remembers, "we had to have the approval of the village leaders in order to set up the radio station. Initially they were not very positive, and we had to hold regular meetings. We had to persuade them that a radio station would be advantageous for the community." The wise men finally accepted and clubbed together to set up a rudimentary studio with solar panels for its power supply. The radio station changed everything. "Before, it took from two days to a week to call together the village elders. We had to cover a region of approximately 1,000 km² with about 30 scattered villages. We used to do it on foot or by bicycle, but it took a long time and was sometimes impossible, particularly in the rainy season," the radio station's young manager explained. The announcements convening the meetings of the Alliance can be heard up to 90 km away without any relay facilities, as can notices of death (very important to the community), appeals for people to come forward as part of immunisation programmes, and awareness campaigns in connection with the education of children. "With the distances involved, parents are often reluctant to send their children to school, so they have to be reminded on a regular basis. Women also have to be warned about the re-emergence of malaria or informed about childbirth or antenatal facilities. An agricultural technician regularly comes to talk about new techniques, the use of pesticides, etc."

In normal times, Radio Oualia broadcasts six hours of programmes per day, from 8 to 10 in the morning and from 6 to 10 in the evening. However, the lack of sunshine in winter means that it is not possible to charge the solar batteries sufficiently and the station is then forced to limit its programmes to two hours in the evening.

Radio Menaka, a radio for peace

A different region, and a different reality. Northern Mali, marked by the Tuareg rebellion between 1987 and 1995, was unsafe and insecure. After several years of latent conflict between nomadic populations and Mali's army, a peace treaty was signed. Menaka, 1,600 km from Bamako, is the principal town of a large *cercle* (province) two and a half times the size of Belgium. Its population of almost 64,000 inhabitants is made up of both sedentary and nomadic peoples, divided into different groups: Kel Tamacheq, Sonrai, Haoussa, Arabs and a few minority ethnic groups (Peul, Bamanan). In collaboration with the Netherlands Volunteer Service, the Panos Bamako team looked into installing a local radio station in Menaka, as part of a conflict-resolution project. The principal aim was to find the best way in which to pursue peace together. Nowadays, Radio Menaka supports and promotes the *cercle's* development activities, promotes local know-how and cultural heritage, seeks to step up the use of local languages and also to further peace and understanding between all strata of the population. In addition, it is a driving force behind the life of local communities. Its first success was securing popular involvement in the construction of the building which is home to the studio. Never before had Sonrais and Tamacheqs been seen to become involved together in the same project. In order to guarantee support from local populations, the Netherlands Volunteer Service gained the trust of local leaders: Radio Menaka's Board of Directors is composed of leading figures from the region. Nowadays, the radio station broadcasts three hours per day via a one-kilowatt transmitter which has a range of 120 km. The station has succeeded in persuading both Sonrai and Tamacheq journalists

and presenters to work as reporters. News is still a rare commodity, owing to difficulties of travel, and programmes are limited to regional news, official notices and announcements of deaths or marriages, etc. Nevertheless, the next step looks set to be a filling-out of the information content, leading to the setting-up of a network of correspondents to expand the *cercle*.

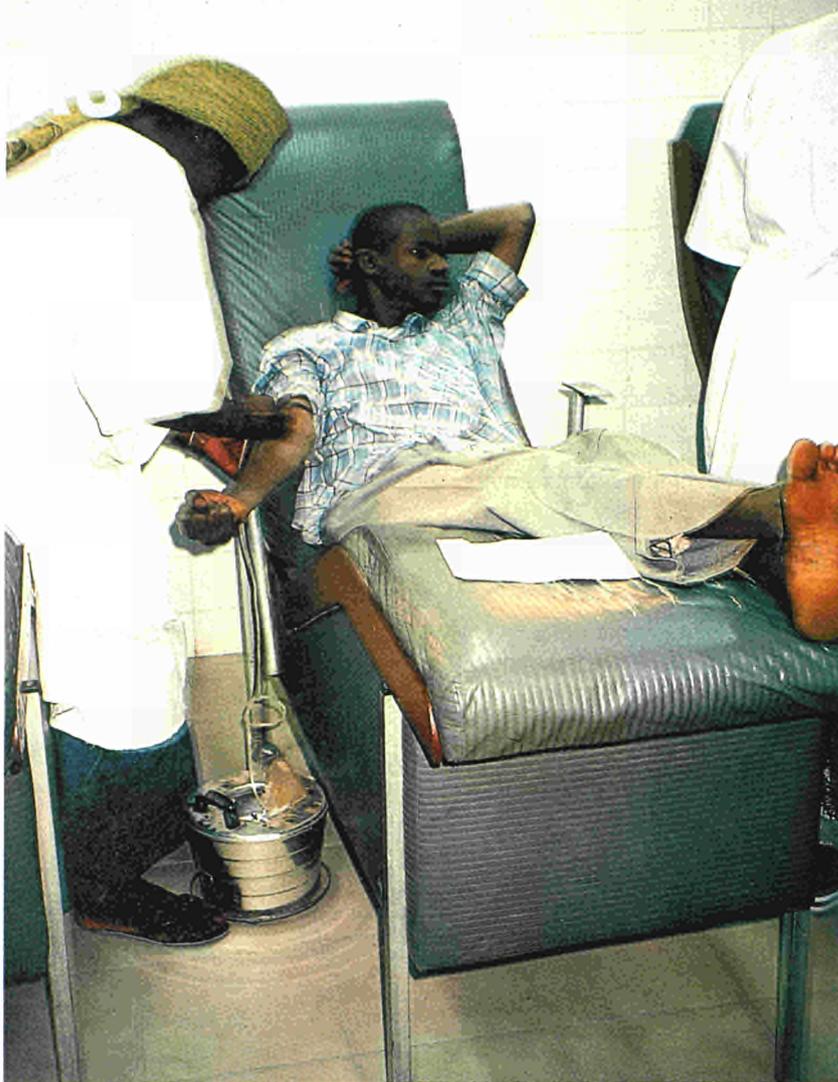
Local information

Programme content is the central concern of presenters at Radio Menaka, Radio Oualia and other rural radio stations in Mali. Should they favour neighbourhood information or information about the rest of the world? "What is the use of reporting that a plane has crashed in Massachusetts if listeners are unaware that locusts have devastated crops in a neighbouring village? The role of neighbourhood radio stations is not to carry the same information as international stations," André-Eugène Ilboudo (AMC), responsible for rural radio stations in Burkina Faso, told us. "The choice of format is fundamental for our radio stations. Neighbourhood radio cannot consist of broadcasts of jazz music. The fact that we are neighbourhood radio stations means that we have to be relevant to our area rather than, for instance, providing news about the war in Chechnya."

Most community radio stations have no programme schedule and continue to improvise on a small scale thanks to donations of equipment and community subsidies. Reference to audiovisual considerations often comes down to a question of survival: are we going to be able to find the fuel for the electricity? Will the income from classified ads enable us to pay the presenter at the end of the month? And so on. Talk of technological change and going digital is just about as far from reality as it is possible to be - in fact, often light years away. Nevertheless, radio stations can no longer ignore the need to be self-financing. To miss the boat would be to expose themselves to what is already being termed "techno-apartheid."

What is the use of reporting that a plane has crashed in Massachusetts if listeners are unaware that locusts have devastated crops in a neighbouring village?

*Journalist, Media Résistance Project Coordinator (Cota)



Making a difference

Updating a Bamako blood-bank

by Jos van Beurden

blood checked for HIV infection."

All blood received is analysed for Aids, syphilis, hepatitis B and blood group.

"Although we would like to make a more thorough analysis, our approach has yielded a reasonable first result. In five years the proportion of blood from HIV-infected people has been reduced from five per cent to less than 2.5 per cent."

The CNTS blood-bank has only 400 regular donors. Together with a much larger number of incidental donors they provide 12,000 bags of blood annually.

"That is very few indeed," admits Professor Tounkara, "but we lack the people and the means to raise public awareness."

All over the country large billboards call upon people to take responsibility for the prevention of the further spread of AIDS. "For AIDS awareness there are many funds, that makes the difference."

One way to increase the number of donors is a mobile blood-bank to visit larger companies in the area. "More donors means more stock. If blood is received now, it is distributed almost immediately. More stock will enable us to keep it a bit longer and to do more research."

Outside the Bamako area, at regional level, there are no separate blood-banks. Each hospital has its own policy and makes its own arrangements.

"We would like to have antennae in those regions to be sure that blood is collected, researched and distributed in a responsible manner."

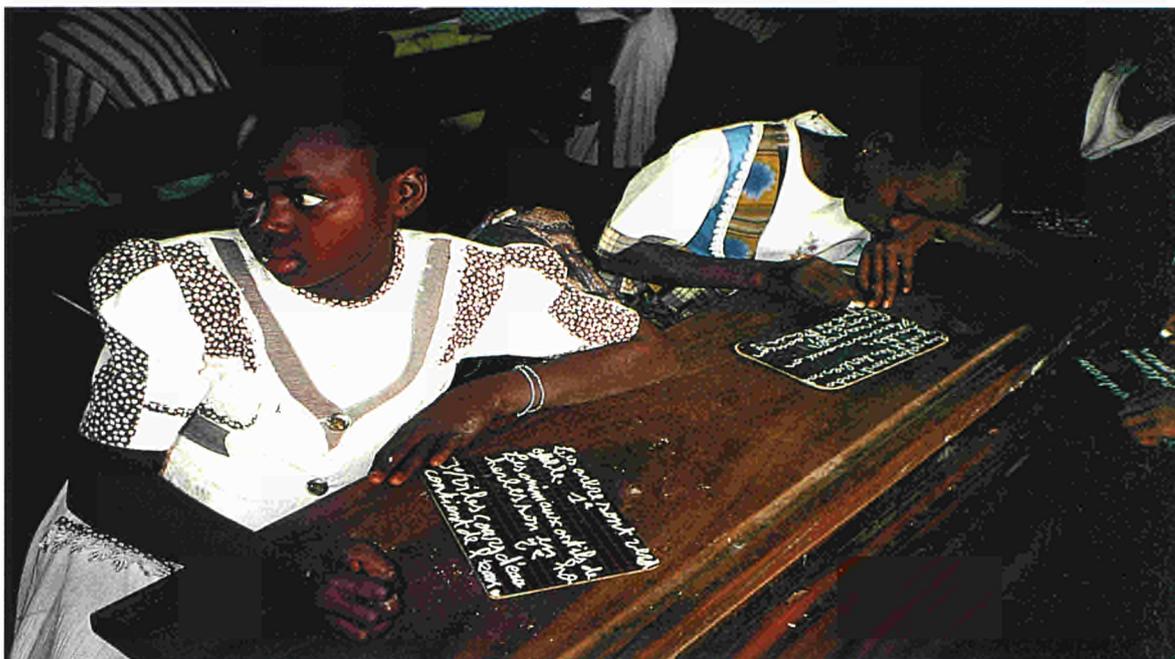
Bamako's hospitals and clinics and its surroundings need 20,000 blood donations every year. A great deal of progress has been made to improve the blood-bank's operation. Recently the building was refurbished and improved.

The fresh colours of CNTS (*Centre National du Transfusion Sangline*) in the centre of Bamako catch the eye. Inside the wood still smells of its rose paint while the new white tiles shine like mirrors. The red dust of the northern Sahelian harmattan has not yet been able to dim them.

At Reception a nurse takes the name of a new donor. In a separate room two men are lying on beds with small tubes in their left arms. A nurse is watching them.

"Our selection has become rather rigorous," explains CNTS Director, Professor Anatole Tounkara. "No people with fever or who have been seriously ill during the last year are accepted as donors. During the intake we discover sometimes that potential donors have a hidden agenda. They have come to have their

Environmental training



Students of Class Six following environmental education

Fragile ecosystems, desertification and drought are the Sahal's major environmental problems. Ten years ago an environmental education programme was initiated which aimed at sensitising Sahelian youth about these problems and teaching them that simple actions help. Hundreds of primary schools in nine Sahel countries have participated. Mali is one country where the programme has been successful.

A group of pupils of the Madame Sow Aïssata Coulibaly public primary school on the outskirts of Bamako is sweeping the courtyard. They put the leaves on a pile, to be removed later that day on a donkey-cart for compost. The rest of the litter is put in big green bins. The trees in the courtyard are well kept and watered. There is a vegetable and flower garden.

Interactive learning

Class Six has 58 pupils and is relatively small. Classes with 100 pupils are not uncommon. The teacher, Alion Tounkara, has just pushed away a blue curtain from the blackboard and one of the girls has to read aloud:

"Every region experiences changes. That is

part of life. Dry regions change according to the manner they are treated. These changes do not necessarily represent dangers. But when a cultivator has too many cattle or if the villagers cut too much firewood, the natural cycle is disturbed. Vegetation becomes rarer. The soil is washed away easily. This process is called erosion."

Others repeat the text. Then Tounkara asks questions and encourages the pupils to interrogate each other on the subject. Next each pupil takes his slate and a piece of chalk and writes a text on it. Alion Tounkara calls this "interactive learning."

The lesson is part of the large Training and Information Programme on Environment, financed by the European Union and implemented in Mali, Burkina Faso, Capo Verde, Chad, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal. About one million primary school students have benefited from it, 135,000 in Mali. It was started in 1990 when drought and desertification were key problems in the development of the region. Soon 25 per cent of the primary schools in each country were selected, and



Teacher Alion Tounkara and his class during environmental education

there are signboards all over the region saying *PFIE Halte au Desertification*, with the name of the primary school concerned.

"The Programme has been planned at a regional level," explains Brehima Tounkara of PFIE-Mali, "but each country adjusts it to its own circumstances. In Gambia for instance the focus is more on the crumbling of the coast and coastal management. In many parts of Mali desertification is the key issue, while in Bamako it is more waste."

Each pupil has a book and a notebook. For teachers there is a guide. All materials have been produced in the French language. Why not in the local languages? Director Tounkara: "That is a weakness we are working on. But many parents want their children's education to be in French and not in a local language."

Pupils are supposed to convey their newly acquired knowledge to their families. Is this not going against Mali's culture? "On the one hand that can be a problem. On the other, parents send their children to school, because they expect them to learn more than they themselves ever did. Most parents think that their children have no future without education. In general, respect is more crucial in the relationship between a child and his parents or teachers than hierarchy."

In many schools pupils have staged sketches: for instance, a father and mother are quarrelling about the lack of firewood. Their neighbour enters, asks what is going on and says, "I have a solution for you." She tells them about her own cooker which needs only one third of the firewood a traditional cooker needs. "Parents have shown their appreciation," assures Tounkara. "The pupils explain

to their parents and other family members about the connection between firewood and desertification."

About a quarter of all primary schools in Mali and the other countries has been reached by the Training and Information Programme on the Environment. All directors and some teachers, all in all 3,500 people, from 350 schools have attended courses to teach Environmental Education.

The PFIE would like to extend the programme to other sectors in society, to secondary education and women's groups for example. In Bamako the Programme has approached women who are painting material. They unthinkingly throw away the used painting-water without realising how this damages the environment.

"We are discussing other methods with them and they show a lot of willingness to change their habits. For them we do need instruction materials in local languages," says PFIE director Tounkara.

That is also true for a number of unemployed youngsters who have formed a cooperative and who come to the PFIE schools to gather leaves and other garbage which can be composted. "Environmental education is crucial for the future of Mali and the rest of West Africa."

Many primary schools in West Africa have this signboard



PROFILE

Mali



General Information

Area	1,240,192 km ²
Population	10,108,569 (1998, est.)
Capital	Bamako. Other towns: Segou Mopti, Sikasso
Languages	French (official); Bambara 80%, numerous African languages
Religions	Muslim (90%), indigenous beliefs 9%, Christian (1%)

Economy

Currency	CFA franc, 1€ = 655,95 FCFA
GDP per capita	US \$ 271 (1997)
GDP growth	5.1% (1997)
GNP per capita	260 US \$ (1997)
Total external debt	2,945.1 US \$
Debt service ratio	10.5%
Main primary products	Cotton, fish, groundnuts, livestock, maize, millet, rice, sorghum, sugar cane, vegetables
Main sectors(GDP)	Agriculture (46%); only 3% of the total area is arable, but 80% of the people make a living in agriculture, which accounts for about 80% of GDP. Industry (17%), services (37%) (1996) and tourism
Main exports	Cotton (55%), groundnuts, livestock and gold (1996)
Main trading partners	France, Ivory Coast, Germany and the UK

Politics

Head of State	President Alpha Oumar Konaré (since 8 June 1992)
National government	The Prime Minister (Mandé Sidibé) and his appointed Council of Ministers; the current government is dominated by Adema
Political structure	Presidential system. The president is elected by universal suffrage for a five-year term. The legislative branch is composed of a unicameral National Assembly or <i>Assemblée Nationale</i> (147 seats; members are elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms). Much of the opposition boycotted the last elections, held 11 May 1997; next elections for 2002
Main political parties	Alliance pour la démocratie au Mali (Adema, the ruling coalition).
Others	Parti de la renaissance nationale (Parena); Rassemblement national pour la démocratie (RND); Parti pour la démocratie et le progrès (PDP); Union pour la démocratie et le développement (UDD). The main opposition alliance is the Collectif des partis politiques de l'opposition (Coppo). It includes the Mouvement Patriotique pour le renouveau (MPR); Rassemblement pour la démocratie africain (US-RDA); Congrès national d'initiative démocratique (CNID); Mouvement pour l'indépendance, la renaissance et l'intégration africaine (MIRIA)

Social Indicators

Life expectancy	53.3 years (1997)
Infant mortality	145/1000 births (1997) (221/1000 in 1970)
Access to primary education	38.1% (1997)
Access to secondary education	17.9% (1997)
Adult literacy	28.3% female; 43.1% male; combined : 35.5% (1997)
Access to drinking water	34%
Access to health services	80%
Human development index rating	0.375 (166th out of 174) 1998

EBAS - Four letters that really make a difference

by Laurence Guigou and Aya Kasasa

Clearly, Dakar designer Claire Kane has hardly had time to draw breath. She heard of EBAS (the ACP-EU Business Assistance Scheme) through a European official working for the Abidjan delegation. "Since 1989 I have been involved in the whole production process,

from weaving to dressmaking. My business had reached a crucial point in its development: a team of 30 people, several sales outlets. It was time for me to give it new impetus, to take it a step further."

Her product is unusual - clothing labelled 100% Dakar,

designed and made with local materials and using exclusively local manpower.

"It's part of an initiative to support the local craft industry. All the materials are hand-woven according to an ancestral method mastered by Mandjak craftsmen who were originally from Guinea Bissau." When she heard of EBAS, she wasted no time at all: "it all happened really quickly. I submitted two portfolios - a marketing dossier and a reorganisation dossier. The latter is about drawing up an inventory of fixtures, in order to restructure my business and attract financial partners. Our aim is to be able to expand overseas, to widen our market."

Thanks to EBAS, Claire Kane has been able to launch two promotional campaigns, one in Paris and one in Dakar.

"EBAS met half the costs of the press officer who assisted me in these campaigns. We have also begun to audit for the reorganisation. The analysis, the business plan and the support for setting up the procedures, especially in terms of accounting and taxation - all this is very expensive and would have been impossible without EBAS."



The work of Claire Kane

Other sectors

As soon as EBAS was launched, we were contacted by Catherine Guichard, Managing Director of COLEACP (the ACP-EU liaison committee for the promotion of ACP horticultural exports) in Rungis. She told us: "African horticulturists need to improve the quality of their products for exportation, to set themselves standards and to take responsibility for monitoring their own businesses internally." She described a plan to draw up Codes of Conduct, which the national associations of five countries in Southern and Eastern Africa intend to enforce in their countries. The idea has certainly been generally welcomed, but monitoring is costly: small horticulturists cannot afford the luxury of calling in the SGS or Bureau Veritas to ensure that standards are adhered to. "Can EBAS help the horticultural associations to train their own inspectors?"

Horticultural agronomist Bob Bush is one of the senior managers of NZTT - the Zambian centre for horticultural training and research. He offered to organise training courses for the 12 future auditors. Visiting us in Brussels, he told us: "The Zambia Export Growers Association (ZEGA) will submit an application for a grant on behalf of the 6 other African associations in the region. We

will run the courses and follow them up in the field."

The application, formulated jointly with the EBAS services, was duly submitted to the ACP secretariat, which approved it, and the European Commission granted ZEGA a subsidy of €40,000. COLEACP gave an additional subsidy representing 17% of the total cost.

A delighted Dr Mabel Mandela, Managing Director of ZEGA, rang EBAS in May 2000: "Training of the inspectors has gone well. They are now getting practical experience among producers, under the supervision of the NZTT experts. In a few months, they will be able to carry out inspections for compliance with the Codes of Conduct on behalf of the horticulturists of their own countries. The cost of their operations is a third of what it was before! All horticulturists can now have access to the internal auditing services of their association. Their capacity for export is greatly enhanced, thanks to the aid this programme has given us."

Solid backing

Claire Kane and ZEGA are just two of the 19 projects already benefiting from the EBAS facility. More than 200 applications for services and technical assistance are currently being processed. EBAS is the latest in a series of schemes aimed at supporting the private sector in ACP coun-



tries. Just a few weeks away from the signing of the new partnership agreement which will unite the European Union and ACP countries for the next 20 years, the emphasis is firmly on regionalised economic integration of ACP countries to enable them to join the world markets. It is only natural, then, that all energies should be focused on giving assistance to the principal actors for economic integration. EBAS - four letters that can make all the difference - is a matching grant fund primarily aimed at private enterprises and intermediary organisations such as professional associations and Chambers of Commerce. This subsidy, for a maximum amount of 70,000

euros for companies (unlimited for associative organisations) can cover up to 50% of the costs of services (technical or intellectual) or consultants which the business or association might need to make it more competitive. Eligible costs include all expenses incurred in the recruitment of a consultant or a service provider: training, technical assistance, restructuring, ISO certification, commercial and/or marketing strategy, technology transfer, etc., and exclude all other expenditure: purchase of equipment, staff salaries, working capital, investment.

"We insist that the results of EBAS action be measurable in the short term, which means that no intervention with hypothetical results can be eligible, be it feasibility studies or market research." As Laurence Guigou explains, "it is imperative that any business making an application to us be in a position to contribute to the financing of its own project. EBAS will contribute up to 50% of the eligible costs. A firm can, of course, look to other sources of subsidy, but its own contribution must amount to at least 33% of the total eligible costs."

The programme is a response to very specific needs and subsidises simple, practical projects which have a direct and immediate impact on the competitiveness of the recipient. However, it is important to remember that EBAS is part of a strategy coordinating a whole group of community schemes initiated by COLEACP and the Trade Development Programme, all set up to encourage development of the private sector in ACP countries. Diagnos is a programme targeted at analysing the business environment to help governments take the necessary measures to improve the socio-economic and legal background to business. ProInvest, scheduled to be operational by the end of 2000, will promote new business partnerships and assist the implementation of cooperation agreements. As for the Investment Facility, which is also scheduled to be operational in 2000 and is administered by the European Investment Bank, this line of credit will



make access to finance easier for businesses wishing to invest.

Although there is no Regional Office in the Pacific, George Mills has every intention of promoting and following up applications from the area. "The Brussels Project Management Unit (PMU) is also acting as the Regional Office for the Pacific. Missions are organised on a regular basis to promote the programme, and local information relays will further the public awareness campaign and mediate between applicants and the PMU."

Over to you, businesses!

The team

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Mining in Africa

An example of why aid doesn't always work

by John Hollaway*

In 1988 I attended a United Nations conference in Ankara, a modest-sized one and so appropriate to its subject, which was to do with small mines. Here I was surprised to find that the definition of such a mine was a matter - an issue in the language of such gatherings - which aroused such emotion that eventually the whole of the final two days were given over to heated arguments about it.

These discussions to a mining consultant from a mining country were incomprehensible.

Definitions and distinctions

In our mining law there was no distinction made by size, nor was there in successful mining countries like Australia, Canada or America. Everybody worked under the same system of pegging claims, whether peasant or potentate. It was not practicable, anyway, to split up the industry into large and small. A mine that hoisted a thousand tons a day would be small by coal mine standards, but very big if it was a gold mine.

The impracticalities did not end there; as soon as one starts trying to specify mine

sizes a major semantic slough halts all progress. There were medium scale and small scale mines, which seemed to be simple enough, even if not definable. But then, what were small mines *per se*? And what were - a word I had first heard used only a few years before - artisanal mines?

My own contribution in Ankara was limited to suggesting that any mine without a defined ore reserve was a small mine and asking why was this nonsense (I didn't say that) necessary? My interventions, to use the correct term again, were met with some bemusement. It was politely pointed out that of course definitions were necessary. Governments needed to know.

I gave up, mystified. Why did they need to know? We were evidently on different wavelengths.

Discovering mines

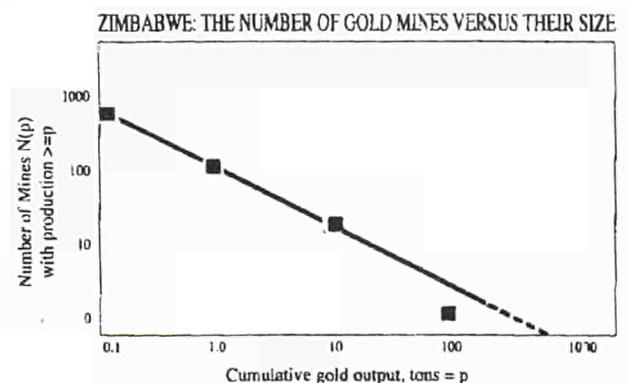
The mystery was slow to clear, although over the years I managed to become something of an authority on small mines in developing countries in the eyes of the multilateral aid

agencies. Not entirely accurate; I am actually an authority on why there aren't any to speak of except for one or two very important exceptions.

What had happened was that when the gold price was freed up in 1971 and went rapidly upwards, thousands of barefoot prospectors in developing countries were spurred to discover new mines.

This they did, in astonishing numbers. Starting from almost nothing in 1970, by 1994 Africa was estimated to be exporting (illegally) about 65 tons of artisanal gold a year. At the prevailing prices this gold would have been worth over 700 million dollars. For diamonds the quantities are even less certain, but all in all well over a billion

Figure 1

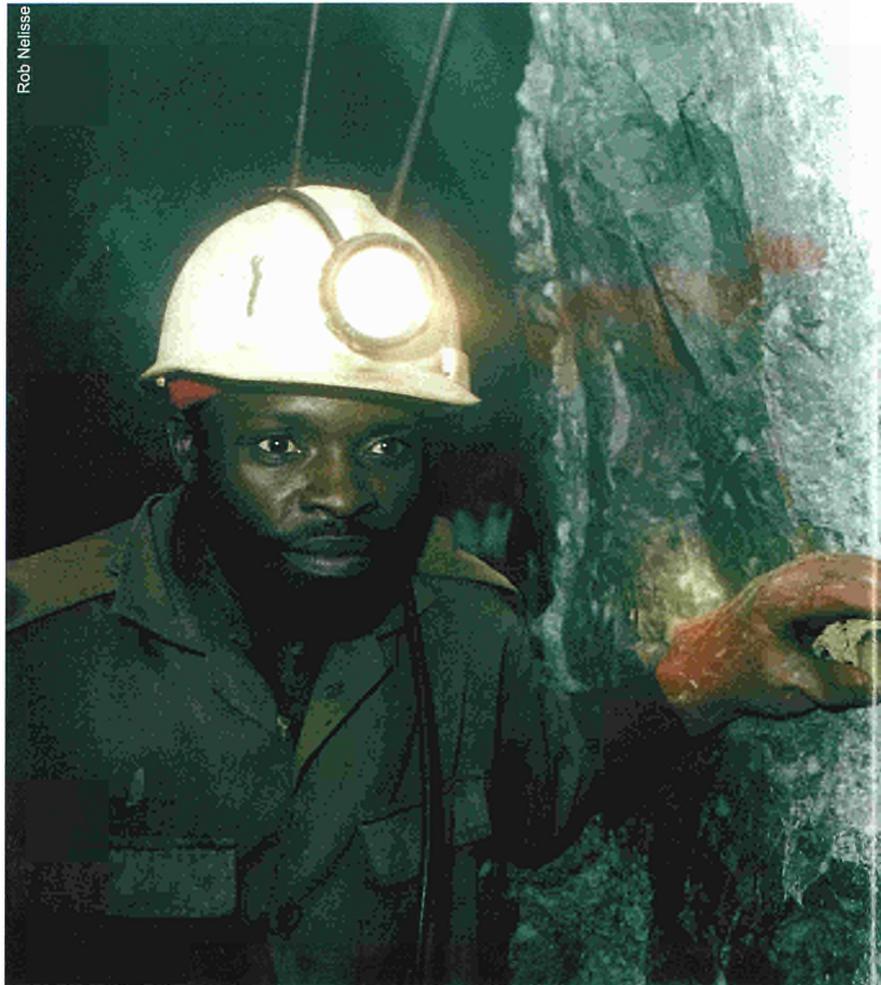


dollars of gold and gemstones leave Africa illegally every year.

Faced with this growing situation numerous governments asked for assistance from the donor community. It was hardly an area in which most donors had direct experience, but it was depicted to them as a legal problem, and they had ample resources of lawyers. Consequently, numerous legal projects ensued, usually in conjunction with an overhaul of the mining law inherited from colonial times.

The general conclusion of all this work in perhaps a score of countries was that artisanal mining and large scale mining were incompatible. The received wisdom arose that artisanal mining was "a process set apart from the 20th century concept of mining." Such mining (however defined) was, if not actually illegal, to be subject to detailed regulation.

The enthusiasm with which these arrangements were received may not have been so much for a fine bit of legal drafting as for the immense discretionary powers they presented to the Minister and his officials. The more opportunities for decision making, the greater the scope for exacting a contribution from those needing a decision.



Rob Nelisse

Who gets title?

The upshot of these well-intentioned changes to third-world mining laws was to segregate the local miners from the foreign investors. Local people who made discoveries were not allowed title to what they found, and were forced to hand them over to foreigners, who were seen as better equipped to develop them.

But why is this so important? After all mines - real, big mines - are found by geologists, working for big companies, are they not? Sometimes, yes,

particularly with non-gold mines. But for gold mines in Africa, no, very seldom. In 1998 Pierre Goossens of the Belgian BUGECO consultancy pointed out that the Morilla discovery in Mali by the Australian mining giant BHP was the only new mine in West Africa that had not been previously worked by artisanal miners. In Zimbabwe, out of 4,000 or so gold mines, only perhaps a score have been found by geological inference. Intriguingly, most of the rest date from discoveries in the days of the Empire of the



Munhumutapa, 400 years ago.

In 1994 the Zimbabwe Geological Survey published a major scholarly work entitled *Structural Controls of Gold Mineralisation in the Zimbabwe Craton*. This noted that when the cumulative number of mines were plotted on a log-log scale against their cumulative outputs, a straight line relationship emerged, as the graph on page 93 shows. The only point that falls off it is at the extreme right, for the very largest mines. The plot suggests there should have been

about five mines which produced over 100 tons; in fact there have been only two. Perhaps there are other elephants lurking in Zimbabwe's geology.

What has happened is that in Zimbabwe the size and numbers of the mines that have developed reflect the natural distribution of geological opportunities. This is because of the free-access, finders-keepers, full-property-right type of mining law there, which allows the owner - a BHP Ltd or a barefoot prospector - to sell, option or tribute a discovery without interference from the government. This leads to vigorous, nationwide prospecting, together with an equally vigorous marketplace in claims.

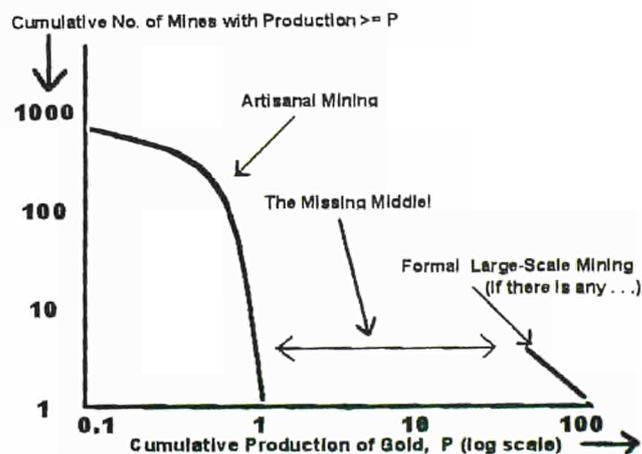
Countries that do not have this sort of law end up with either (as in Tanzania) almost no mines apart from small scale diggings, or (as in Ghana) nothing between the small-scale diggings and huge Ashanti-type operations. Here the graph looks something like Figure 2.

So there it is. Development assistance caused Africa's mining laws to be rewritten to be appro-

appropriate to "the 20th-century concept of mining." The effect was to institutionalise corruption, to ensure a missing middle and to prevent the development of an indigenous formal mining industry. Impoverished Africans who had found valuable minerals were forced to exploit them with their own miniscule resources; they could not sell the title to their find. The result, improbable as it may seem, is that in the whole vast expanse of sub-Saharan Africa north of the Zambesi there are no more than about 40 formal gold mines, almost all of them large and foreign-owned.

*John Hollaway is a Zimbabwean mining consultant whose work has taken him to 18 countries in Africa. Small-scale mining is his special area and this article is taken from his book *All Poor Together*, to be published by Capricorn Books later this year

Figure 2



SME-SMI Projects: The name of the privatisation game

by **Ascanio Graziosi***

The promotion, support, financing, marketing and management of small and medium-sized enterprises

Since people started saying that small is beautiful and statistical analysis has shown that big business is no longer creating jobs, policy makers have been intensifying their efforts to boost smaller businesses because, among other things, their development can help unemployment.

In a less-developed economy, by and large, the common denominator for interventions in favour of SME-SMI is taken from government policy to promote privatisation.

Taking stock

After almost a decade of intense SME-SMI programming there is a need to take stock. Usually this begins with a post-evaluation analysis to show that a project is sustainable until a donor

An SME-SMI project can be set up to implement an entire process, from disbursement to collection of money. Usually this happens in an environment without a well-developed economy. Intervention changes as an economy develops, until a situation arises where third parties can be approached to cooperate, and some tasks and responsibilities can be delegated to them

and industries is the core business of any privatisation programme.

has the goodwill to take over the supporting services.

Field experience has made it clear that conclusions about the performance of a project are difficult to come by, and they don't tell us what we need to know.

The activities of a project vary according to the environment: the more advanced the country, the more sophisticated the project needs to be. An SME-SMI project can be something which has been set up to implement an entire process, from disbursement to collection of money. Usually this happens in an environment without a well-developed economy.

Intervention changes as an economy develops, until a situation arises where third parties can be approached to cooperate, and some tasks and responsibilities can be delegated to them.

At the top of this pyramid we can have a situation where the local banks are entrusted with the management of the financial agreement between government and donor. There can also be a guarantee fund which shares tasks and responsibilities with other financial providers. Between the top and the bottom of the pyramid the types of projects are as varied as the situations they have to deal with.

How is a project implemented?

Say we have a government programme which supports the private sector. Within this framework all the protagonists (government, donor, local financial providers, beneficiaries, management unit) agree on the rules for supporting SME-SMI.

Each protagonist has their own interest to defend and consequently tries to get the maximum benefit from the available resources. A government supports the private sector; the donor is concerned with the correct procedure for the allocation of resources and their management; the beneficiaries wish to have easy access to the available resources in terms of money and services; the local financial providers ask for strict compliance with the disbursement procedure; the Management Unit is asked to apply as accurately as possible the rules in the financial agreement that everyone has signed and to set up an appropriate organisation: with so many interrelated factors involved this is not easy.

Cooperation among those involved is the *conditio sine qua*, and a firm agreement is necessary. There must be a very clear definition of the objectives and how to achieve them. In other words, the expected results of a project will vary in relation to the relative importance of the interests/positions stressed by the stakeholders.

We must understand the role of each of these, within the existing socio-economic context. This is usually set out in a framework paper, the source-

The expected results of a project will vary in relation to the relative importance of the interests/positions of the stakeholders. We must understand the role of each of these, within the existing socio-economic context

document of a project. An SME-SMI project can have either a development objective or a trade objective, depending on how advanced the economy is. The two objectives can stand together by opening two credit windows because an economic environment that is not very developed is usually dominated by the so-called underground economy. Good management is vital.

In this way one can say that the project doesn't mean the same to everyone involved. Indeed, each beneficiary can require a different strategy. A project must be able to cope with the demands of the beneficiaries, and of the environment as well.

Since the boundaries among the above variables are not

easy to draw, the equation has to be adjusted to meet continuously-changing demands. It is of vital importance to the sustainability of a project how resources, tasks and responsibility work together towards a common objective.

Although we can see the equation is not balanced, it is not clear to which side it tips, and which player it favours. To see that, we have to examine their role and how far their interests have influenced the project as a whole.

If, therefore, we want to measure the performance of an SME-SMI project we need parameters, which are closed, related to each other, coherent and homogenous. A post-evaluation analysis which considers the behaviour of the protagonists could meet these requirements. The debate remains open.

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Women: the world stagnates

"Beijing +5": on 5 June, in New York, UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, and Hillary Clinton opened the Special session of the United Nations General Assembly on women. Initial observations were depressing: the situation of women throughout the world has not improved substantially. Despite efforts to improve their situation, women nevertheless continue to suffer poverty and violence. From 5 to 9 June, representatives in the US capital reviewed such progress as has been made since the Beijing Conference, reaffirmed the undertakings made by 181 countries and decided on the measures to be implemented in order to achieve improvement. The meeting, entitled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century," reviewed strategic goals and the list of actions which were to be implemented before 2000 on the part of governments,

the international community and the private sector with a view to combating sexual discrimination. Twelve critical areas had been identified as constituting fundamental obstacles to the promotion of women: poverty, education and training, health, violence, armed conflicts, the economy, empowerment and decision-making, institutional mechanisms, human rights, the media, the environment and female children. As regards poverty, this is becoming more female: 70% of poor people on the planet are women, and the gulf between men and women continues to grow. As for health, although progress has undoubtedly been achieved, statistics remain a cause for concern: taking the world as a whole, one woman dies every minute from complications linked to pregnancy or to delivery, and the number of women infected with HIV continues to

increase. Violence within the family is still regarded as having a more detrimental effect on women's life expectancy than breast and cervical cancers, and between 85 and 114 million women and young girls have been the victims of genital mutilation. No improvement, either, in terms of conflicts: 90% of victims are civilians, principally women and children. Finally, the proportion of women in national and international decision-making structures has not increased, remaining at 13% at world level. Nevertheless, there was a small degree of optimism concerning education, as the situation is evolving favourably, with illiteracy levels of those aged 15-25 years showing practically no difference between the sexes in several regions of the world, except for Africa. In the case of adults, however, illiteracy is still higher amongst women.

Culture

The objective: To set up an art market on the African continent. The sixth Biennial of Contemporary African Art, Dak'Art, was held in May in Senegal's capital. Inaugurated by the country's new president, Abdoulaye Wade, it included group and individual exhibitions by African and foreign artists selected by an international panel, a plastic arts market, a salon for young Senegalese exponents of the plastic arts and a salon for African design and textile creation. Dak'Art receives a grant of CFAF 250 million from the European Union.



Health issues

"Only \$150 million for HIV prevention in Africa. One cannot expect miracles with such sums." This was the sad observation of Dr Peter Piot, Executive Director of the United Nations AIDS Programme (UNAIDS) at the meeting of OAU health ministers in Ouagadougou in May. AIDS is devastating Africa's health systems, reducing the chances of success of campaigns implemented to combat the pandemic. Some 33.6 million people are currently living with the virus, including 23.3 million in sub-Saharan Africa. In the majority of these countries, patients infected with HIV occupy 50 to 80% of hospital beds in the towns and cities, leaving practically no room for other patients. Dr Piot called for an "international partnership," and his appeal appears not to have fallen on deaf ears, particularly in the US, where President Clinton has signed a decree aimed at making enforcement of laws protecting

patents for AIDS medicines more flexible in connection with Africa, so that countries might be able to obtain such drugs more easily. This policy change had been announced at the WTO Ministerial Conference in Seattle. The WTO enabled governments to authorise laboratories in their countries to produce medicines without licence in cases of medical emergency, although hitherto Washington had been asking its partners to apply these intellectual-property-protection agreements more strictly on a national basis. The European Union and the United States reiterated, during the EU/US Summit in Washington, their commitment to combating HIV/AIDS and also malaria and tuberculosis. They called for an international partnership, greater public awareness, a stepping-up of research into a vaccine and easier access to medicines.

Muzzling racism

The offices of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia opened in Vienna on 7 April 2000. This independent European watchdog body is composed of 18 persons appointed by the Member States, the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council of Europe. Their task is to study the evolution of racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism in the EU and to analyse the causes and consequences of it. The Centre is also setting up a European information network on racism and xenophobia. For further information: EUMC, Rahlgasse 3, A-1060 Vienna, Austria. Fax: (+43 1) 580 30 99/ e-mail: office@eumc.at /website: www.eumc.at, not forgetting the Commission website: http://cc.cec:8082/comm/dg05/fundamri/eu_racism/index_en.htm



"Dirty" diamonds

Within the UN Security Council, France and Great Britain are considering imposing an embargo on "illegal exports" of diamonds from Sierra Leone. France confirms having stressed very early on that the problem of Sierra Leone should be understood in terms of rival claims for control and

exploitation of the country's natural resources, particularly its diamonds. Control of the diamond-producing areas is often put forward as the main objective of the Sierra Leonean rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and as one of the causes of the civil war which has ravaged the country for almost 10 years. UK Foreign

Secretary Robin Cook appealed to the Security Council for an embargo on diamond imports from Sierra Leone to be set up in the next few weeks. An embargo would, however, allow export of diamonds from areas controlled by the legal Sierra Leonean government. Moreover, the European Commission has released

urgent supplementary humanitarian aid for Sierra Leone amounting to €12 million. After consulting Member States, the Commission set in motion the commitment procedure for this supplementary aid, which will be managed by the European Humanitarian Office (ECHO) and will be aimed at resident populations inside Sierra Leone and at displaced persons. The Commission is to increase its aid to health and food services for the 350,000 or so refugees living in neighbouring countries (Guinea, Liberia). It will also finance specific programmes aimed at women and children affected by the conflict and at the disabled and injured (with AFP).

Costia



Europe - an invitation to immigrants?

Europe looks set to receive an additional 160 million immigrant workers between now and 2025. This fact emerges from a report by the UN population division, the aim of the authors of the report being to demonstrate that greater attention should be given to the problem as soon as possible. The issue is not one of staving off the ageing of the population through immigration, but politicians ought to implement adequate measures. The problem of ageing and of maintaining retirement and pension systems is felt most keenly in the

European Union. In 2025, it will have 5 million fewer inhabitants and this trend will continue after that. The ratio of those of working age to those of retirement age, which is currently between 4 and 5 workers for one pensioner, will be halved globally. In order to maintain its working population at its absolute 1995 level, Europe should therefore open its frontiers to 24 million immigrants between now and 2025. Specialists stress that solutions will undoubtedly have to be sought elsewhere, either by raising the retirement age to 75 or by adopting an intermediate solution, accepting more immigrants whilst raising the retirement age.

On the Agenda

An African conference on penal reforms is to take place in the capital of Cameroon from 23 to 25 November 2000 on "The effects of globalisation on the penal reforms in Africa." Further information can be obtained from: www.geocities.com/tmukete. Coordinator: Mukete Tahle Itoe.

Europe fights against discrimination in its many forms

In Luxembourg, EU Employment and Social Affairs Ministers have adopted a directive aimed at combating all types of discrimination based on race or ethnic origin. Europe thus has its first anti-racist legislation: the text adopted defines the notion of race, even though a number of Member States have long excluded the idea of race from their legislation. Based on the principle of equality of treatment, the directive extends the

recommendations of the Amsterdam Treaty against discrimination. It covers all aspects of daily life, from the world of work to school, and includes transport and social protection.

EU Migrants Forum and the IOM enter into co-operation "Improvement of working efficiency through greater cooperation:" such is the aim pursued by the directors of the EU Migrants' Forum and the Assistant Director General of the International Organisation for Migration. With this aim in view, the two institutions have signed a memorandum in Brussels. Set up in 1992 after a lengthy campaign,

"a voice for migrants and ethnic minorities across Europe," the EU Migrants' Forum is today acknowledged by the various European institutions as the mouthpiece body on issues relating to migration and the rights of citizens from third countries. Its membership includes 190 national migrant organisations and associations representing over 2000 grassroots associations. Contacts: 23A rue Belliard, 1040 Brussels, Belgium / Fax: + 32 2 230 22 70 / e-mail: forum.migrants.ue@skynet.be

Signing of the Cotonou Agreement

23 June 2000 - the 25th anniversary of the Lomé Convention which links the 71 ACP states and the European Union - the new ACP-EU Partnership Agreement was signed in Cotonou, capital of Benin.

This Agreement, regarded as innovative in adapting to a changed global environment, was concluded after 18 months of intense negotiation between the partners. It will link the ACP states - now numbering 77 - and the European Union for a period of 20 years.

There are six new Pacific members of the ACP Group; the Cook Islands, the Republic of Nauru, the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Niue, and the Federated States of Micronesia.

The signing ceremony of the Partnership Agreement, informally called the "Cotonou Agreement", took place in the sports stadium "de L'Amitié" with all the solemnité required to inaugurate a new era of ACP-EU cooperation.

No funding for terrorists!

The Council is recommending intensified cooperation in order to cut off finance from terrorist groups. EU Member States have agreed to exchange all available information from competent authorities concerning groups posing a specific threat. Source: Eur-Op News

The journalism of resistance

Média Résistance, a project implemented by the COTA (Appropriate Technology Exchange Collective), provides a forum for grass roots initiatives which use the media as vectors for democracy. This project was born of the desire to take full advantage of the expressiveness of men and women who, in writing, sound or image, refuse to submit or to re-transmit ready-formatted information. The stories told are eye-witness accounts of the difficulties of the journalism of

resistance in the Balkans, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa.

This work also includes a chapter on *Medias en mouvement* [Media on the move] which gives 10 reference websites and an alphabetical list of addresses and websites for various communication and information associations throughout the world.

Média Résistance, Un écho pour les Média Résistance, Un écho pour les voix discordantes, by Serge Bailly and Didier Beaufort.
www.media.resistance.org.
Published by Editions Karthala; 22-24 Boulevard Arago; 75013 Paris. pp. 324.
ISBN: 2-84586-015-3



On International Freedom of the Press Day, 3 May, *Reporters Sans Frontières* put on sale a book of photographs by Robert Doisneau, post-war photographer. The money they make from it will pay for activities supporting freedom of expression, and in particular, to help journalists and their families who have been put in prison. This money will also allow them to continue supporting media

that has been censored, to put pressure on governments who prevent freedom of the press, and to alert public opinion and international bodies in charge of defending human rights.

Robert Doisneau, Pour la liberté de la Presse, Reporters Sans Frontières, 2000.
Distributed by Les NMPP, Press Services - 38 FF/240 Bcf/£4.50 -
ISBN 2-908830-49-3

The media in Central Africa

Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Chad: these nine countries, for the duration of the study, were the target for a survey conducted by the Panos

Institute into the position of the media in Central Africa. What are these media? Within what legal context and what socio-economic context have they evolved in the region? What are their problems, particularly in terms of professional organization? What are their strong points? And, in particular, how representative are they in a region in the grip of so many conflicts and power struggles?

Afrique Centrale: Des médias pour la démocratie, Panos Institute Paris and Editions Karthala, Paris 2000. pp. 198.
ISBN 2-84586-000-5.

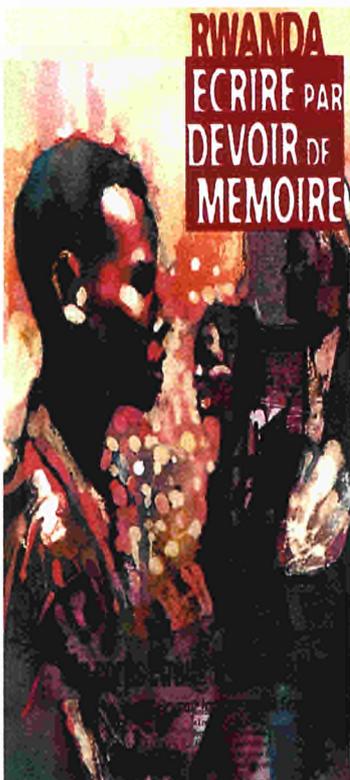
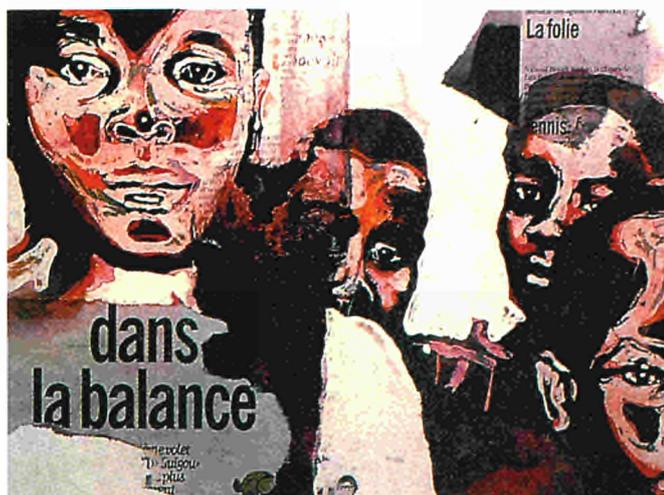
RWANDA ECRIRE PAR DEVOIR DE MEMOIRE

Nyamirambo

A huge cemetery of mutilated bodies and souls. It was here that Man's most bestial instincts were made flesh and where humanity's shame was revealed for all eternity.

It is precisely to awaken numbed consciences, to open eyes that refuse to see, that the author cries out. These are verses of blood which tell of the Rwandan nightmare; verses of fire to break humanity's silent collusion; verses of hope that such events will never again come to pass.

Nyamirambo! recueil de poésies, by Nocky Djedanoum. pp. 50.



Murekatete

Because of Murambi and its mounds of human bodies, a macabre consequence of Man's folly which swept through the tiny country of Rwanda, love struggled to gain a foothold. At Murambi and elsewhere, terrible carnage left its imprint in hearts and on bodies. So, why is there hope for Muekatete and Venant's love? If there is not, how can such a memory of blood-letting ever be put out of the mind?

The author has successfully depicted the drama of an entire people through that of a young couple, with a restraint and sensitivity which makes this novel so deeply moving.

Murekatete, by Monique Ilboudo. Novel. pp. 75.

The Tutsi genocide explained

Rwanda will undoubtedly always be a shameful memory, the Rwandan genocide now standing alongside the Shoah. But, life in Rwanda must go on for all Rwandans, despite such memories.

It is to confirm this need that the author has taken the lead, with passion, admittedly, but also with courage and lucidity, moved by a love for his country and his people. The text is in the form of an interview which attempts to portray the true nature of the Rwandan genocide.

Le génocide des Tutsi expliqué à un étranger, by Jean-Marie V. Rurangwa. Essay. pp. 85.

The above three works have been produced as part of the **Rwanda: our duty to remember** project initiated by the Fest'Africa Festival (African Arts and Media Association). They are published by Le Figuier, BP. E 2605 Balako, Mali, and Fest'Africa, 9/2 Petite rue de l'Alma, 59800 Lille, France. ISBN 2-84258-067-2.

Compiled by Anne Steger



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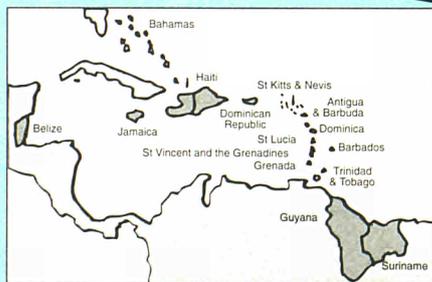
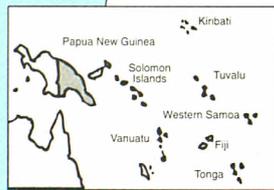
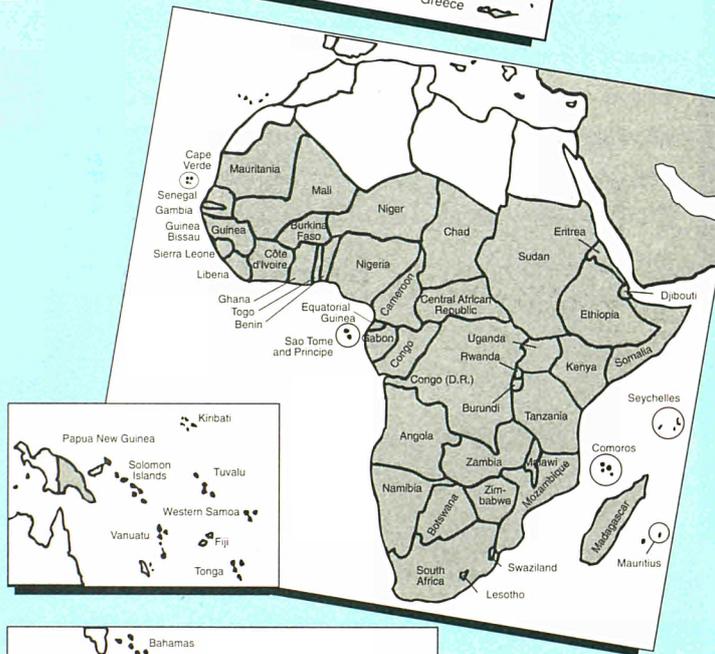
France
(Territorial collectivities)
Mayotte
St Pierre and Miquelon
(Overseas territories)
New Caledonia and dependencies
French Polynesia
French Southern and Antarctic
Territories
Wallis and Futuna Islands

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

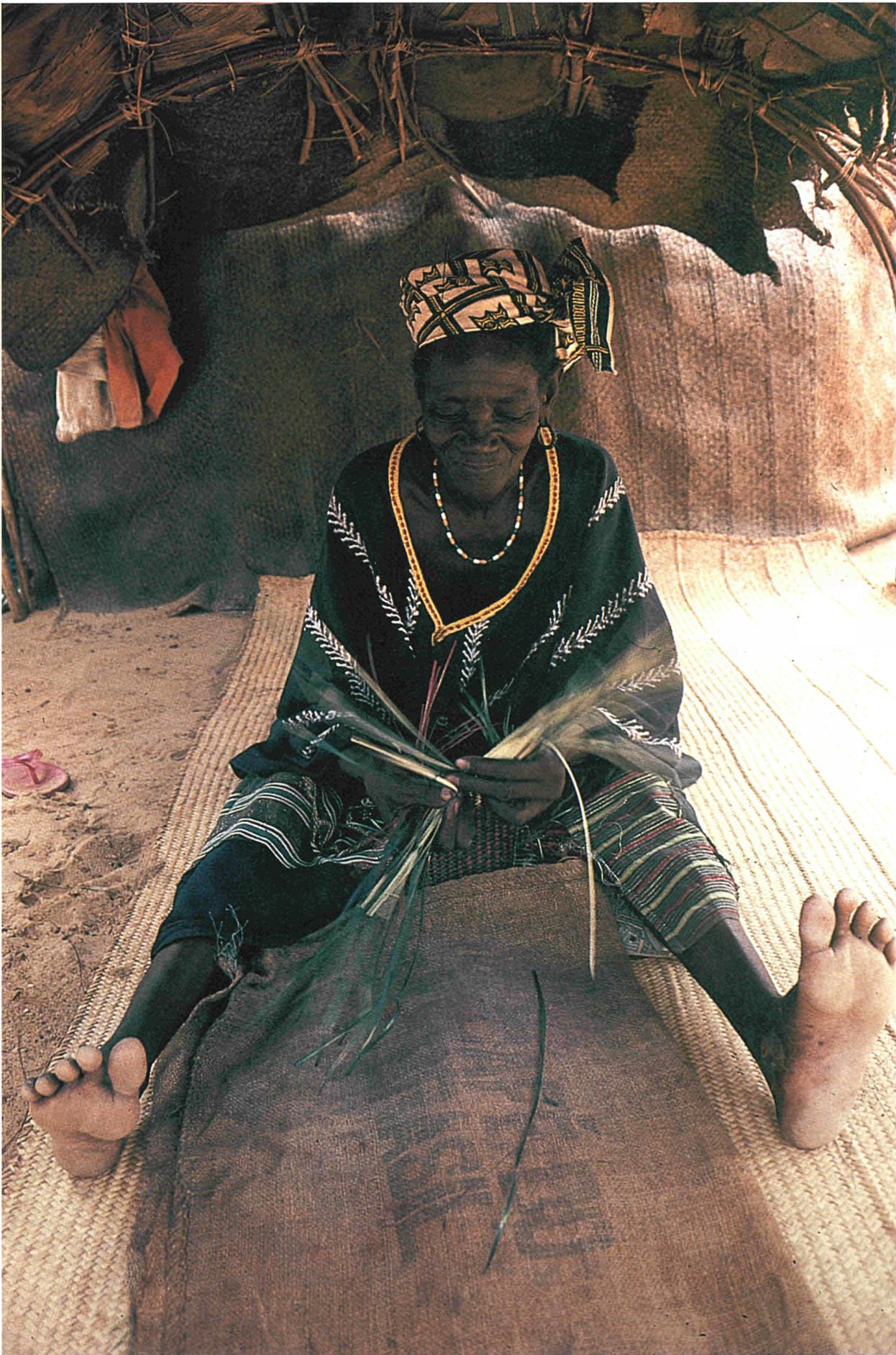


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Giacomo Pirozzi/Panos Pictures

**Income generation in Mali.
A woman turns to basket weaving**



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