

the Courier

the magazine
of ACP-EU development cooperation



**Joint Parliamentary Assembly
Cariforum St Kitts and Nevis
Press and Democracy
Lorenzo Natali Prize
Kenya Somalia Japan
Mamphela Ramphela**

henna - a new future for somali women

Ailsa Buckley, MAPP



Hinda works in the Hargeisa shop of the NGO Candlelight project in Somalia selling henna and other ground products to the local market. Her hands are decorated traditionally with the Asli henna

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Cover

Clowns, a painting by St Kitts artist Rosey Cameron Smith; carnival costumes that came to the island with Sierra Leonean slaves

Corrigendum

The *ACP-EU Courier* recently published a special supplement on the Cotonou Agreement. An error has appeared on page 17 of the white pages. The photo caption should read "the Representative of Cameroon" and not "the Representative of Congo." There has also been a duplication of signatures on page 7 of the blue pages, subsequently corrected.

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the ACP and Europe

- 2 Poul Nielson, Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid
- 6 the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly

focus on development

- 10 Aborigines
- 14 Japan's development aid
- 17 GM foods
- 20 Chad/Cameroon oil pipeline
- 23 supporting the private sector
- 26 NGO henna project in Somalia
- 29 Cariforum
- 41 Country Report: **St Kitts and Nevis**
● introduction ● interviews ● tourism ● profile
- 53 Dossier: **Press and democracy**
● Lorenzo Natali prize ● press and democracy ● press watchdogs ● Congo ● James Deane at Panos ● local radio in Madagascar ● internet ● the press in the Caribbean ● InfoSud
- 77 Round Table on communicable diseases
- 79 AIDS in Uganda
- 82 Biodiversity in Kenya
- 88 Solomon Islands - EU cooperation
- 91 COMESA

face to face with...

- 3 Mamphele Ramphela, new Managing Director of the World Bank
- 86 Michael Maina, Solomon Islands' Minister for National Planning and Human Resource Development
- 92 maps of EU and ACP countries

The ACP - E U Courier
is the main publication of the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and the European Union. The EU provides ACP countries with preferential access to EC markets and substantial development assistance (some two to three billion Euros a year). The ACP and EU cooperate at a political level and engage in a continuous political dialogue: in trade, to promote the integration of the ACP countries into the World Economy and in development assistance, with the clear objective to promote sustainable development and the reduction of poverty.



by **Poul Nielson**
**EU Commissioner
 for Development
 and Humanitarian Aid**

Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and malaria are all diseases that kill in developing countries. And they are all exacerbated by poverty.

What can be done? First, although AIDS is the problem everyone mentions, we must urge people not to forget malaria and TB, which wreak their own particular havoc.

People must be informed about prevention, shown that it works, and convinced that not all of it is prohibitively expensive or high tech. Impregnated mosquito nets have been proved to be extremely successful against malaria if used correctly, and the same goes for both male and female condoms against HIV/AIDS.

Prevention must not be dismissed. What is needed is information and often, financial help.

We must, as always, work constructively together as a community, and step up the flow of disbursement to where it is needed. The European Union is a major donor - its commitments to health, AIDS and population between 1990 and 1998 amount to around €3.4 billion. The European Union and its Member States now provide more than half of all development assistance to health-related programmes around the world.

The treatment for TB costs a total of €15. AIDS treatment costs US \$30 a day, and the sufferer also needs two square meals and access to clean drinking water. This is simply out of reach in countries with US \$2-300 *per capita* a year and with health sector spending around US \$5 *per capita* a year. Key pharmaceutical

products must become more accessible and affordable, and there is no doubt that new and better vaccines are vital. The EU and its Member States and partners can and will contribute by investing in the research institutes of developing countries, as well as funding research in developed ones.

Health will remain a priority in the future, and the EU will contribute funding and resources to health problems worldwide. Assistance has shifted from an initial focus on curative medicine and building up health infrastructure towards support for basic health services, including developing fully-fledged HIV/AIDS and reproductive health and population programmes and supporting health sector reform efforts. As part of a collaborative approach, developing countries governments and the private sector are being involved.

We must get our policy right, and make sure it is consistently and correctly applied. Some countries have had their own opinions about treatment of these diseases, others have followed advice. Uganda, for instance, has acted on clear and honest information, and is showing a decrease in the number of AIDS cases. Zimbabwe is also now following this strategy. Results like these will make all the difference.

The Commission, the WHO and UNAIDS held a high-level Round Table on transmissible diseases last September (see Page 77), to bring together stakeholders with different opinions to formulate a coherent policy for collaboration on the eradication of HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB.



An interview with the new Managing Director of the World Bank on her first visit to Brussels

“There has to be life after poverty”

Mamphela Ramphela became Managing Director of the World Bank in May this year. Awash with degrees and qualifications (B.Med, PhD in Social Anthropology, BCom in Administration, diplomas in Tropical Health and Hygiene and Public Health), she refreshes the corridors of the establishment. She began her career in the 1970s as a student activist in the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa, and her activities led her to being banished from 1977 to 1984 to the remote township of Lenyenye near Tzaneen. Even here she refused to keep quiet - she established the lthuseng Community Health Programme.

Her transition from activist to pillar of the international community amuses her, but she is not intimidated by it. I wonder if she is intimidated by anything. She is not tall, but her personality is considerable. She has opinions and voices them, her feelings are strong, her laugh loud and clear. It rang out when I asked her what part of her job she was really really excited about.

"I would have been out in the streets of Prague in the Sixties. I was a community health activist,

struggling like hell to get donors to believe that these dreams could be made real. I became semi-part of the establishment when I moved to the University of Cape Town and sat on the Board of the Independent Development Trust." (She was the first black woman Vice Chancellor in what she says was a 19th-century white male college when she arrived, and is now a real South African University). "The government gave us 2 billion Rand and for the first time I was faced with the problem of how to disburse money.

"That's a huge area which we haven't really thought about. How do we build the capacity of poor people to absorb the help they need?"

She is quite clear that "if the Bank had not changed the way it has changed over the past five or six years, I wouldn't have touched it with a barge pole. But it has come to a point we hoped it would reach, at least conceptually - the commitment to comprehensive development. Understanding that countries should be in the driving seat, bringing in the private sector, not just government. But have we arrived in terms of

day-to-day practice? NO! You can change structure, you can change policies, but to change behaviour means changing vision and institutional culture - that takes much longer."

Working with the EU

She came to see Commissioner Nielson in September, her first visit to Brussels - which she calls "in itself a major statement." She calls herself the New Girl on the Block and is at pains to spread the word that the Bank is keen to forge relationships and strengthen partnerships with other development agencies. She says she is listening, and that she welcomed Nielson's "constructive criticisms" of the Bank and also his

comments on their comparative strengths. Both want to work together towards the development goals that have been drawn up at meetings such as the Copenhagen Social Summit, and the Millennium Summit in New York.

"But it's all very well making commitments. Now we have to draw up action plans. The use of poverty-reduction strategies. Loan assistance complemented by donor support, particularly on the issue of debt relief."

Both Nielson and Ramphela embrace the long term view - five year cycles, so that countries can learn how to become properly consultative.

"It takes a long time for countries to get their act together, to get up to speed, and start on the path to prosperity. There has to be life after poverty, otherwise I shouldn't be in this business! It is very encouraging that the Commission wants to work in concert with us. The Commissioner wants to mainstream the work of the Commission, so that we are all partners in country assistance and poverty reduction strategy."

Capacity-building

She is in the business up to her neck and proud of it. For her, the challenge is for big aid organisations to catch up with community-based players.



"The cost of consultation with communities has to be built in, not as an expense item but as an investment item. We must build the capacity to share knowledge. This is beginning. Lots of NGOs have been doing this as a matter of course. We must make them confident that their voices are important."

She describes her vision of the future, almost breathlessly.

For her, it is vital to build the capacity of poor people to participate in consultation, and she envisages a time when these people are effective as citizens, able to negotiate and hold government accountable.



"I ask 'why are you doing it that way?' and say 'have you thought of doing it this way?' The views of an outsider can be useful. Coming into a smoke-filled room it is always easier for you to open the window!"

Her conversation is peppered with words like exciting, wonderful, amazing. She calls her new job an "absolute learning opportunity...every day I'm learning. It's an explosion!" She loves the diversity of the people at the Bank - more than 140 countries are represented, and she revels in the "concentration of intellectual resources," revealing the Vice Chancellor in her. "PhDs aren't everything, but they count for something!"

During the four months she has been at the Bank, she says she has been asking stupid questions to make people reconsider how they approach issues.

"I ask 'why are you doing it that way?' and say 'have you thought of doing it this way?' The views of an outsider can be useful. Coming into a smoke-filled room, it is always easier for you to open the window!"

Her excitement is not rose-tinted however. She admits there hasn't been effective communication:

"There is a gap between what we are doing and what people perceive us to be doing, and this has to be closed. Not by PR but by listening to criticism and communicating better. There has to be better communication with the NGO sector - we are committed to the same things and we could do better."



It doesn't seem as though she will let the grass grow under her feet, although working in the bureaucracy of an enormous aid agency will undoubtedly slow her down. The spirit is willing, nevertheless. She supports what she calls "the vision of Jim Wolfenson" and wants to work "to turn it into a programme of action which really makes a difference on the ground and which begins to reflect the way we do business."

It looks as though a lot of that business is going to be done in collaboration with the European Commission. If her energy and commitment is anything to go by, we shall be seeing results sooner rather than later.

She wants the work of the Commission and the World Bank to be "productive and meaningful - especially in human development, education for all, HIV/AIDS," and directed towards the goal of halving poverty by 2015.

"We can make it happen!" she cries, and her conviction makes you believe her.

Sylvia Howe

Mamphela Ramphela wants to work for "a programme of action which really makes a difference on the ground"

Below, her colleague James D. Wolfenson, World Bank President, at work in Mali



ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly launched

by Kenneth Karl

Between 9 and 12 October, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and parliamentarians from the ACP countries met in Brussels to hold the first session of their Assembly since the signing of the Cotonou Agreement in June. This discussion forum has now been christened the

When launching this first Assembly, Co-Presidents John Corrie (UK) and Serge Clair (Mauritius) set the tone of the session by calling for a dynamic Assembly to play a more significant political role in the new ACP-EU cooperation. In his opening speech, the European Co-President said that it was time for the Assembly to act; it should not simply become a talking shop, but rather a space to consider new ideas and make cooperation closer and more effective.

At a theoretical and practical level, the provisions of the Cotonou Agreement, intended to reinforce the political dimension of the partnership between the EU and the ACP countries, impose new responsibilities on the Joint Parliamentary Assembly for political dialogue and promoting democratic processes. According to Article 17, the role of this Assembly is to:

- promote democratic processes by means of dialogue and consultation;
- make it possible to increase understanding between the peoples of the European Union and the ACP countries and raise public awareness of development problems;
- consider questions relating to development and the ACP-EU partnership;
- adopt resolutions and send recommendations to the Council of Ministers in order to achieve the objectives of this Agreement.

Joint Parliamentary Assembly, and has six new member countries from the Pacific region. It is becoming one of the main meeting points for the nations of the 92 member countries and should henceforth play a more important political role in the new ACP-EU partnership.

The ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly is the first international parliamentary assembly to include 92 countries from four continents, pointed out Nicole Fontaine, the President of the European Parliament, in the speech read for her by Renzo Imbeni (PSE). According to Mrs Fontaine, the work of the new Assembly must take account of the main objective set by the Cotonou Agreement - the fight against poverty - and must help to achieve it. Some members of parliament consider that the new Assembly should also consolidate its future role, particularly with regard to monitoring the actions of the Commission, the Council and the governments of Member States in Europe and the ACP countries, and should strive to implement the new cooperation more successfully.

To increase the legitimacy of its role and enable it to contribute more fully to the success of the new partnership, the Assembly will in future be composed of members democratically elected in their countries, and not appointed by the government and the party in power, as still occurs in certain countries. Although most participants enthusiastically welcomed this new, ambitious goal, they were aware of the difficulty of the task facing them as they set about determining the structure of this new Assembly. How can they ensure democratic legitimacy and independence

of members of parliament meeting in this forum when the evolution of democratic processes varies between countries?

The Joint Parliamentary Assembly also included another major innovation in its restructuring programme: regional meetings. ACP representatives from a particular subregion will meet the European members of the Assembly at regular intervals. These meetings will be accompanied by contacts between representatives of civil society and economic forces in the region in question. The aim is to establish links with each region in order to respond appropriately to their problems. Co-President Serge Clair was in no doubt about the usefulness of such meetings. It was, however, necessary to consider carefully a number of practical details, in particular the way in which regions were defined.

Facing the challenges of globalisation

The demands arising from the inevitable reality of globalisation and the need to fight effectively against poverty in the ACP countries need to be reconciled; and the reconciliation between sometimes contradictory objectives that must be achieved by the member countries is already proving complicated. The Joint Parliamentary Assembly has already become aware of this. It has therefore very carefully examined the report by Abednego Seisa



Nqojane (Lesotho) on "EU-ACP partnership and the challenges of globalisation" which says that greater account must be taken of public expectations regarding the regulation of globalisation in order to make it more equitable. "The failure of the Seattle World Trade Conference was a strong signal of the need to stop liberalising trade and to initiate in-depth reform of the World Trade Organisation in order to place unequal partners on a more equal footing and to take account of potential impacts on vulnerable groups," this rapporteur emphasised. There was a danger that the differences between the countries that might benefit from globalisation and those that are effectively excluded would widen as a result of the rapid development of information technologies over

the past few years. Mr Nqojane did not hesitate to describe this situation as "technological apartheid." Most ACP countries were finding it extremely difficult to benefit from opportunities presented by technology, according to the Ghanaian delegate Emmanuel Baah-Danquah during the discussion.

The Swedish Conservative Anders Wijkman considered that globalisation offered numerous opportunities, despite the problems that it produced. He declared himself in favour of liberalising markets and also of increasing cooperation between countries. Liberalisation cannot be an end in itself, but must also be based on social justice, and must not exclude half of humanity, according to the British Labour MEP

The Cotonou Agreement sets out the role of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly: to promote the democratic process by discussion



The two Presidents of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly: left, John Corrie; centre: Serge Clair

Glenys Kinnock, who went on to call for amendment of the WTO agreements in order to support the agricultural sectors of the ACP countries more effectively.

Two experts invited by the Assembly, Mrs Pheko, the African coordinator for the Gender and Trade Network, and Fournou Tchuigona spoke out against the new free market ideology on which globalisation was based. The first of these two experts called for the deconstruction of globalisation, while the second warned of the risk of a disastrous deterioration in the situation over the 20 years of the Cotonou Agreement if globalisation triumphs in its present form. Levison Numba, a delegate from Zambia, pointed out that private investment did not necessarily flow towards developing countries, even if they did liberalise their economies by taking the risk of selling off the flagships of their industry, as had occurred in the case of the mining sector in his country.

The delegates then heard the speech by Pascal Lamy, the European Commissioner responsible for trade, who had come to present the commercial proposals of the Commission intended to benefit the Least-Developed Countries (LDCs). Confronted with the fears of members of parliament regarding the disadvantages of globalisation, Mr Lamy took a more qualified view, by

insisting on the benefits of liberalisation, which should not however be carried out blindly. He declared that foreign trade and investment brought a lot of benefits from a development viewpoint, but did not necessarily have the same results in all countries. He considered that the LDCs benefited least from it. Mr Lamy summarised the Commission's "Everything except weapons" proposal. This initiative is intended to give the 48 LDCs access for all the products they can export, apart from weapons, in the hope that other developed countries would adopt the same approach. At the end of the discussions, the Joint Parliamentary Assembly adopted the report by Mr Nqojane requesting the northern countries to open their markets to developing countries and, to an even greater extent, to the LDCs while at the same time eliminating all the tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade.

The Assembly called for a moratorium on any negotiations within the WTO until procedures and conditions of transparency and publicity ensuring fair results were respected. The Assembly also called for reform of the international financial architecture and greater access to knowledge and information technologies for developing countries.

Speaking on behalf of the President of the ACP Council Anicet Dologuélé, Zounguere Sokambi, President of the Committee of Ambassadors, confirmed during questions to the Council that the search for alternative commercial arrangements had begun and that the ACP Council of Ministers would shortly meet to consider them. Mr Josselin, French Minister for Cooperation, spoke for the country holding the presidency of the European Union by providing assurance that regional economic partnership agreements were being prepared and were based on a desire to improve the integration of the ACP countries into the world economy by placing the emphasis on regional integration.

Against AIDS

Although it has become impossible to ignore the ravages and the disastrous consequences of the HIV virus in developing countries, it is much more difficult to find effective solutions and in particular a clear political will on the part of the international community to stem its progress. The ACP-EU delegates and the guest experts therefore devoted an entire morning to this topic. After long discussion of the fight against the AIDS pandemic, the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly called on the European Commission to give greater priority to the fight against this scourge and to devote appropriate technical and financial resources to overcoming it. The cost of medicines, especially the medicines required for innovative treatments, is still prohibitively high and unaffordable for developing countries, and the Assembly considered that it should be greatly reduced. It called for the EU funds to be used to improve primary healthcare, public education, levels of awareness and systematic screening for the virus. Poul Nielson, the European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, reported that the Commission had devoted over €82 billion to the fight against AIDS between 1990 and 1999 and was collaborating closely with the WHO and UNAIDS. Mr Nielson went on to applaud the efforts made by the pharmaceutical industries to reduce the cost of treatments and announced the setting-up of a workshop to consider pharmaceutical products and the impact of taxation and customs duties on these products. The fight against AIDS should concern everyone, and also needed to be considered in the context of education, culture, science, health and even trade. A real war was being waged, and those involved needed to act accordingly and allocate resources on a comparable scale, emphasised Mr Piot, Executive Director of the UNAIDS Programme. Regarding the cost of treatment, James Cochrane, representing the pharmaceutical company Glaxo Wellcome, pointed out that AIDS was not just a public health problem, but also a development issue. Mr Cochrane also mentioned a joint declaration by five producers of anti-retroviral drugs and five major United Nations agencies such as Unicef, the World Bank and the WHO.

The role of civil society in fighting against the disease was also pointed out by Dr Fatim Dia, representing the Centre of Pharmaceutical Excellence in Senegal. Dr Dia drew on his experience of the field to list a number of obstacles facing civil society, such as the influence of the socio-economic structure, access to funding, administrative delays in the performance of projects, etc.

The new Joint Parliamentary Assembly discussed the situation in certain countries and adopted 22 resolutions at the end of the session.

Resolutions adopted by the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly at its first session

- 1 - Resolution on the situation in Guinea
- 2 - Resolution on the role and position of women in development
- 3 - Resolution on armed attacks on the southern border of Guinea
- 4 - Resolution on the situation in Burundi
- 5 - Resolution on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo
- 6 - Resolution on improving regional infrastructures in Central Africa
- 7 - Resolution on Zimbabwe
- 8 - Resolution on the situation in Ethiopia and Eritrea
- 9 - Resolution on support for crossborder cooperation between Haiti and the Dominican Republic
- 10 - Resolution on elections in Haiti
- 11 - Resolution on reform of the EU banana regulations
- 12 - Resolution on rum
- 13 - Resolution on sugar
- 14 - Resolution on WTO waiver
- 15 - Resolution on the special session of the United Nations General Assembly of 5-9 June 2000 on 'Women 2000: equality, development and peace for the 21st century'
- 16 - Resolution on follow-up to Copenhagen-Geneva conferences on social development
- 17 - Resolution on small-scale fisheries
- 18 - Resolution on migration flows
- 19 - Resolution on trafficking in human beings
- 20 - Resolution on AIDS
- 21 - Resolution on decentralised cooperation
- 22 - Resolution on the impact on Belize of Hurricane Keith

Source: European Parliament

Healing the wounds of the past

by Stéphane Hiscock

At 7.30 p.m. on 25 September 2000, the whole of Australia held its breath as Aboriginal athlete Cathy Freeman took to the starting blocks for the 400 metres final at the Olympic Games in Sydney. Crowded into the stadium or glued to the television, an entire nation was united behind its favourite athlete. Cathy flew out of her starting blocks and won the race with 10 metres to spare. The crowd went wild, and Cathy started her lap of honour draped in two flags - the Australian flag and the Aboriginal flag. It was much more than a gold medal Cathy won for Australia that night. In less than a minute, this Aboriginal athlete had become the symbol of reconciliation between her people and white Australians.

In Australia, sport is practically the only vehicle for expression of nationalist sentiment. Moreover, its inhabitants still see no need to cut their ties once and for all with Britain.

Australian politicians from all sides were unanimous in their description of this race as "the 400 metres of national reconciliation." By reconciliation, Australia means improvement in relations between blacks and

whites, acknowledgement of the racist policies of the past, and organisation of frameworks for dialogue between the two communities.

Not just a question of sport

The reason why Cathy Freeman's success has so often been quoted as an example is that, for the majority of her Aboriginal brothers and sisters, life is far less rosy. A few statistics make this very clear. Life expectancy among the Aboriginal people is 15 to 20 years shorter than among the rest of the population. Only 33% of Aboriginal children finish their schooling, compared with 77% of other children. When it comes to the employment market, the inequalities persist. 38% of blacks are unemployed, in contrast to the national average of eight per cent; as for those in prison, members of the Aboriginal community are nearly 20 times more likely to be arrested than whites.

Tourists visiting the Australian bush in their 4x4s often come back feeling distinctly uneasy. In the few towns which they come across, the poverty of the so-called natives is only too obvious.

Thirst for justice

In response to protests by a host of Aboriginal organisations, successive governments have been trying to improve this situation over the last 10 years or so. In 1997, a damning report was submitted to the federal parliament. Australians learned for the first time of the existence of a "stolen generation of Aboriginal children" - children taken from their families by force and placed in assimilation centres, where they were taught to behave as whites and to forget their "primitive" culture.

This parliamentary report estimates that, from 1910 to 1970, between 10% and 30% of children from a single generation were taken into institutions in this way.

Thanks to lessons in ironing, cooking and washing-up, these children went on to become servants in the houses of "good families." They were living proof that it was possible to civilise Aborigines.

Most Australians claimed to be shocked by the report, and yet the current government, led by John Howard, still refuses to issue a formal apology to the generation of stolen children. There is a very good reason for

this: all these Aborigines might well claim financial compensation through the courts.

The labour parliamentary opposition accuses the government of burying its head in the sand with regard to the whole Aboriginal issue. There is, in fact, a minister for Aboriginal Affairs, but he is viewed as the enemy by most native organisations. The minister in question, Philip Ruddock, is prone to making startling announcements. At the beginning of the year, he refused to acknowledge the existence of the stolen generation of children, arguing on the basis of numbers. He believes it is inaccurate to speak of a generation if only 10% of



children were taken from their families....

Words which the members of the generation in question considered insulting.

Recently, the minister spoke

to the French newspaper *Le Monde*. He spoke as an anthropologist, explaining that "the social disadvantages of the Aboriginal people were due to the tardiness of their contact

Cathy Freeman, symbol of reconciliation in Australia

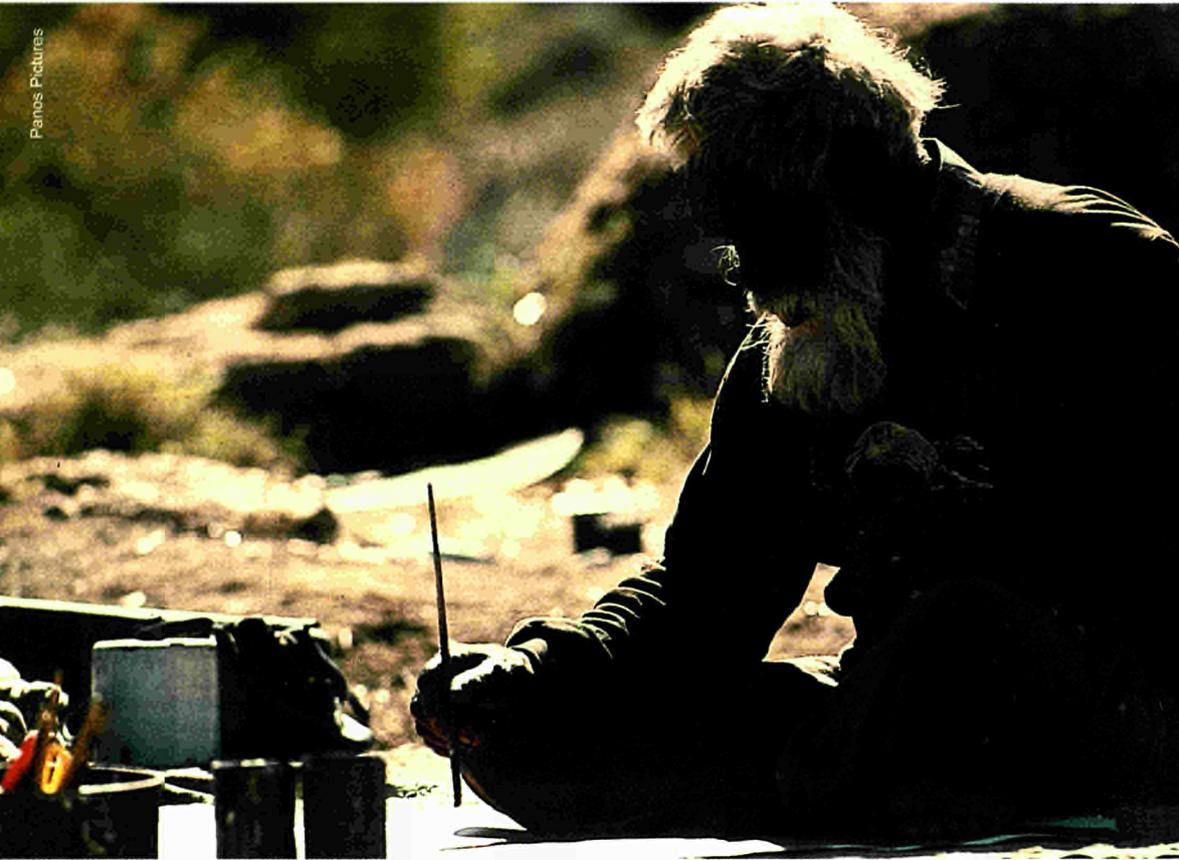
Death of a leading Australian Aboriginal activist

Charles Perkins, a leading figure in Aboriginal activism, died in Sydney on 18 October 2000 at the age of 64, after a long illness. In 1966, he became the first black Australian to obtain a university diploma, and his radical views were often very controversial. If personalities like Cathy Freeman are to enter the political arena, as black leader Ruby Langford Ginibi believes they should, they will undoubtedly be inspired by the example of the first champion of the Aboriginal cause. In the 1960s, with a few comrades, Perkins laid the foundations for a movement fighting for the rights of Australia's earliest inhabitants. Before that, the only people discussing the situation of the indigenous Australians were a few intellectuals in London. Perkins and his comrades travelled the length and breadth of the country in a bus, denouncing the racism and inequalities endemic in their country.

Perkins's foundation, Student Action for Aboriginals, scored its first victory with the majority Yes vote in the famous

referendum of 1967. Australians decided that the time had come to grant them the status of citizens.

Perkins went on to become a key figure on the political stage and in 1984 was appointed Secretary of State for Aboriginal Affairs, a post he held until 1988, when he was forced to resign in the face of criticism for his failure to take action against corruption in the various land-rights commissions. This was not, however, the last we heard of this militant Australian equivalent of Martin Luther King. Just a few months ago, prior to the Sydney Olympic Games, he was again venting his anger at the government's treatment of his fellow Aboriginals. He interrupted a speech by Prime Minister John Howard on the steps of the Sydney Opera House, shouting "Say sorry!" Charles Perkins is no longer with us, and John Howard has still not apologised to the stolen generation of Aboriginal children. Today, Australia must put its faith in powerful symbols such as Cathy Freeman to advance along the road to reconciliation.



with European civilisation, and the fact that, unlike American Indians, the Aborigines did not farm and had not even discovered the wheel."

From a legal perspective

Another sensitive issue, over which much ink has been spilled, is the legal system which, according to ATSIC (the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commission), discriminates against the Aboriginal community. In the Northern Territory and in Western Australia, where most Aborigines are to be found, the courts take a hard line when it comes to petty crime. A law imposing custodial sentences on repeat offenders has been in existence for several years, resulting in hundreds of teenagers being locked up for stealing tins of food, pens or sweets. The United Nations Human Rights Commission has decided to look into the devastating effects of this law.

According to UN special reporter Dato Param Kumaraswamy of Malaysia, this law should quite simply be repealed. The international NGO Oxfam goes even further in its criticism. In the opinion of Hedy D'Ancona, Australian laws amount to discrimination against the Aboriginal minority and are reminiscent of the apartheid system in South Africa.

Back in Canberra, the federal government still refuses to listen. It has also just decided to suspend its participation in

the various UN commissions. Australian Foreign Affairs Minister, Alexander Downer, believes that the United Nations pays too much attention to pressure groups and not enough to governments.

The victory of Cathy Freeman at the Sydney Olympic Games is undeniably a positive step for the Aboriginal community. It is a victory for a nation which is still searching for an identity and which would dearly love to heal the wounds of the past.

Australians are not renowned as great political activists except, perhaps, when it comes to the environment. Yet on 28 March this year, almost 250,000 people gathered in Sydney for a march organised by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. Hand in hand, blacks and whites walked together across the famous Sydney Harbour Bridge. In the sky, the word SORRY could be read, a message written in the trail of an aeroplane.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders

Australia is a multicultural society. The lifestyle of its inhabitants reflects the essentially western origins of the nation. The first Aborigines arrived on the continent of Australia 50,000 to 60,000 years ago.

At the last census, taken in 1995, there were approximately 300,000 Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, i.e. roughly 1.5% of the total population of Australia. About 66% of Aboriginals live in the towns, but a large number of them live in isolated, rural areas, and some have held on to a traditional way of life.

The Australian government has sought through legislation and policy to right the wrongs suffered as a community by the Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. Its policy rests on recognition of the right of the indigenous population to determine its own future - a policy of self-determination, the cornerstone of which is economic independence.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), set up in March 1990, is an instrument giving Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders the power to make decisions in the context of programmes relating to health, education, employment, housing and other issues which concern them.

Land rights

At the end of 1993, the Australian government presented a law to Parliament to enforce its policy regarding Aboriginal rights of land ownership. The legislation aims to allow for the consequences of a ruling made by the High Court of Australia in June 1992, in what is

commonly referred to as the Mabo decision.

The ruling of the High Court rejected the theory of *terra nullius* (which held that the continent of Australia was uninhabited when European colonisation began) and, for the first time, it was accepted by a court that the Aboriginal people and the Torres Strait Islanders could still have native title to land by virtue of their traditional law, on condition that this entitlement had not been abolished by the Crown or the traditional connection to the land lost.

Source:

<http://www.austgov.fr/ausbrief/lesgens.htm#aborigènes>

The Aboriginal community on the internet:

ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission):

www.atsic.gov.au

Council for Reconciliation

<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/orgs/car/>

Aboriginalaustralia: information on various aspects of the Aboriginal people.

<http://www.aboriginalaustralia.com/>

FAIRA: The Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action

Official website of FAIRA, a foundation trying to protect the traditions of the indigenous people of Australia

<http://www.faira.org.au/>

Aboriginal writers: An impressive list of Australian Aboriginal writers

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~ozlit/abowrits.html>

Australian government

A description of Australia's governmental system. Includes the federal government, the state government and local government.

<http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Square/5589/AusGov.htm> and

http://www.theodora.com/wfb/australia_government.html

Information on the government administration, political divisions, on national holidays, independence and constitution days, and description of the legal system.

Goliath goes on a diet

by Laurent Duvillier

Japan is tightening its belt when it comes to development cooperation. Yet the world's biggest provider of aid says that it is not forgetting Africa

The bright red circle clasping the globe in its warm embrace is an arresting image. Emblazoned on a vehicle, a T-shirt or a building. In Latin America, in Africa, in Asia. Is there anyone who hasn't at some point encountered this emblem of Japanese development aid? Its symbol calls to mind the flag of the Land of the Rising Sun. It had to be conspicuous: Japan has remained at the top of the list of bilateral donor countries since 1989, with a PDA (Public Development Aid) quota of close to \$10.6 billion in 1998. Certainly a respectable sum, exceeding the performances of North America, France, Germany and even all Europe, since the European Community's PDA amounted to \$5.2 billion in 1997. However, if we measure the contribution of each country based on the percentage of GNP donated to developing countries as PDA, then Japan only managed 0.28% in 1998. This means that it barely scrapes twelfth place in the table of the 21 member countries of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development), a long way behind the United States, despite the fact that the Far Eastern giant alone accounts for between 15 and 20% of the world's GNP.

Faced with the financial crisis in the Far East as well as a downturn in its own economic growth, Japan has been forced to cut drastically its budget for development aid. After nose-diving from \$14.5 billion in 1995 to \$9.4 billion the following year, a plunge of almost 35% in just 12 months, Japanese PDA has picked up slightly since 1998, though never reaching its former level over the last 10 years. There is nothing to suggest that the Goliath of development (in terms of net volume) will do more to reverse this reduction in the years to come. The structural tax reform law, introduced in December 1997,

heralded a decrease in PDA of approximately 10%, spread over three years from 1998. In August 1998, the implementation of this austerity measure was frozen for 1999 in order to stimulate reflation of the economy. Guided by these budgetary constraints, Japan also had to reorientate itself towards less ambitious and less costly activities by more frequently subcontracting to the country's 250 or so NGOs. After years of concentrating on Pharaonic projects relating to infrastructure - today deemed too far removed from the immediate needs of the population - Japan has redrawn its plans. Farewell to colossal bridges, roads, viaducts and dams - the time is now ripe for social development, centred more than ever on the allied Asiatic countries.

Asia before Africa

It is Asia, right next door to Japan, which gets the lion's share of bilateral aid. In 1997, the top 10 beneficiaries were all Asian countries. Indonesia, China, Thailand, India, the Philippines, Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Vietnam have formed a close, antediluvian partnership with Japan.

"It is certainly true that our aid is focused on the Asian countries," admits Yoshie Kobayashi, First Secretary for trade and development at the Japanese Mission to the EU. "While they remain the primary beneficiaries, however, we should remember that Japan is still the biggest donor in many ACP countries. In particular, we do not forget or ignore the countries of Africa, which are distant from us but at the same time close. Most Europeans are not aware of the extent of our presence in Africa. Of course, Europe remains the major aid provider on the African continent, but in certain African countries, it is actually Japan which gives the most."

As if to prove her point, the First Secretary

brandishes the impressive list of 55 developing countries where Japan ranks as principal donor of bilateral aid. Among them are ACP countries such as Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, the Maldives, the Dominican Republic and Grenada. The geographical focus on Asia, however, is a trend which is unlikely to be reversed, in spite of the possibility of more funds being transferred to Africa in the future.

"It might increase," says Yoshie Kobayashi, "but I cannot predict to what extent. It depends very much on whether or not the situation in Africa is conducive to cooperation, on civil wars, on the progress of democracy...."

The first two meetings of TICAD (Tokyo International Conference on African Development) are further proof of Japan's involvement in the realities of Africa. These conferences, entirely devoted to establishing a coherent plan of action for the continent, were yet another opportunity to hammer home the point that yes, many African countries have recently recorded rates of growth in excess of five per cent per annum, but it is still the case that 40% of Africa's population is trying to survive on a net income of less than 1 dollar a day per person. How can we stamp out this poverty and integrate Africa into the global economy? The third TICAD conference, currently in preparation, will respond to this diagnosis of isolation, nurtured by

war and instability, by harnessing the potential of the African people and encouraging greater involvement in the partnership of other players from the international community.

A clear appeal to the other international organisations and multilateral agencies to join the initiative, so as to prevent efforts being dissipated in Sub-Saharan Africa. Who will take up the gauntlet?

Trade comes first

The Land of the Rising Sun first achieved its international stature as assistance-provider in 1954, when it launched a huge public relations campaign regarding its Asian neighbours which had been occupied in the Second World War. First came financial reparation, followed by incentives to promote exports, both of which made the whole of Asia ripe for Japanese investment. The volume of aid swelled to such an extent that it was becoming imperative to redefine the policy on bilateral cooperation. Today, Japanese aid is based on a charter drawn up in 1992 which has remained unchanged since then. Its main directives cover environmental sustainability, a ban on the diversion of aid to military ends, special attention to trends in military spending, the process of democratisation and support for market economies. Nothing terribly innovative, since the general principles are inspired by Western models along the same lines but with a specifically Asian slant. The thinly-veiled demands of business are implicit in many of the proposed



JICA © Hanako Okuma

aid programmes. Nor is development at the top of Yoshie Kobayashi's list of priorities - and she makes no secret of the fact. To take another example, Japan is willing to grant loans on favourable terms to the governments and private enterprises of poor countries, but it balks at the idea of making donations.

Whilst development cooperation does not necessarily have to serve the interests of Japanese commerce, it certainly does not do them any harm, given Japan's acknowledged intent to maintain the world's monetary order - and therefore its own economic well-being. Straddling three different departments (Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Agriculture), the Japanese agency JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) has very little room for manoeuvre. The principle of free aid is the subject of fierce internal debate, and it is far from being unanimously approved in Tokyo. On the contrary, some - like the Keidaren employers' group - have always

Japanese development aid focuses on Asian countries, but Japan is still an important donor in many ACP countries



JICA © Isao Shimizu

championed the idea of much greater overlap of Japanese business with the development projects under way in the South. Indeed, *The Medium-Term Policy on Official Development Assistance*, a reference document setting out the priorities for Japanese cooperation until 2004, informs us that "PDA plays a significant part in safeguarding the prosperity and the very stability of Japan" by promoting "Japan's best interests, including the maintenance of peace." To arouse public interest, it also talks of boosting "future efforts making use of Japan's experience, its technology, its know-how, taking account of growing opportunities for Japanese markets to take part in PDA projects and to encourage the participation of a wider public in development cooperation through the universities, the 'think tanks', local governments and NGOs."

Raising the spectre of world monetary imbalance at the last G8 summit in Kyushu-Okinawa, Japan reiterated its firm intention to support the countries most severely in

debt. Last July, the government sketched out three new areas of priority. First, measures to curb diseases such as HIV and AIDS. Second, steps to reduce the digital divide between countries which have access to information technology and those which do not. Finally, the environment is confirmed as an essential concern of Japanese cooperation, in particular through support for those developing countries countering the effects of global warming. What, do the Japanese people - the taxpayers putting money into the public purse - make of all this?

For the Japanese government, there is now a very pressing need to regain public confidence and to unite its people around the aid programmes by convincing them of its effectiveness and their efficiency on the ground. These programmes must be made tangible, transparent, concrete and visible. According to a Japanese opinion poll taken in December 1998, only 3.5% of those asked advocated completely scrapping any form of development cooperation. Yet the proportion of those in

favour of maintaining it, let alone increasing it, is being whittled away. It is now barely 70%, as opposed to 77% or 75% just a few years ago. At the same time, the citizens of Japan are recommending greater caution at a time when the donor country itself is not immune from bankruptcies and the resultant unemployment. In the image of the emblem symbolising Japanese cooperation, Japan's policy for communication of that cooperation must remind its compatriots that it was foreign aid which, half a century ago, made it possible for them to rebuild their country out of the ruins remaining at the end of the Second World War, thereby laying the foundations for the prosperity it enjoys today.

More information:

Internet: <http://www.jica.go.jp>

Documents: Japan's Official Development Assistance Annual Report 1999, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Efforts and Policies of the Members of the Development Assistance Committee: 1998 Report, DAC, OECD, 1999 Edition.



JICA © Kiyoshi Kitazawa

GM foods - the answer or the enemy?

by Emma Young *

Scientists think they know how to transform European attitudes to GM foods.

Maize resistant to herbicides, or tomatoes with a longer shelf-life, are good news for no-one but the company behind the genetic tinkering and the farmer. The public needs products that benefit them: vegetables genetically modified to contain more substances that reduce the risk of cancer, or peanuts with the allergen removed.

European consumers might not be persuaded by the promise of hardier plants to help feed the hungry in the developing world, or even fruits modified to act as cheap vaccines for diseases such as Hepatitis B. But give them potatoes that will turn into low fat chips and they'll rally to the GM cause.

Or so the thinking goes.

But some commentators believe claims of what can be achieved by genetic modification are often overhyped. Others think a series of GM setbacks and fiascos, from the recent acquittal of Greenpeace campaigners who destroyed trial GM crops in the UK, to the sale of *tacos* containing transgenic corn not approved for human consumption in the US, will be hard to overcome. There are even signs that the American public, which has largely turned a blind eye to the GM debate, is starting to come around to the European way of thinking. "Europeans are much more concerned about what they eat as a result of the BSE affair," says Adrian Bebb of Friends of the Earth. But there is another reason for the difference in GM attitudes between European and American consumers, he says. "Americans haven't generally been told they're eating GM foods. There is no

labelling and no choice. When they're informed, it may be that US consumers will feel the same way as Europeans."

American attitudes do seem to be slowly changing. A poll last year found that 68% of American adults wanted food that contains GM ingredients to be labelled. This surprised many in the food industry. Around 70% of items on American supermarket shelves currently contain some genetically modified material. Half of America's corn and one third of its soya is transgenic.

European hostility

American farmers and biotechnology companies have certainly been hit by European hostility to GM crops. Novartis, one of the world's leading producers of genetically-engineered seeds, announced in August that it will no longer use GM ingredients in its food products. And in February, a report by the Washington-based Worldwatch Institute predicted that farmers in the US, Canada and Argentina (where the vast majority of the world's GM crops are grown) will cut their GM plantings by 25%, in response to reduced demand from Europe.

If the future of GM crops in the US is looking less certain, in the UK, where GM crop planting is still in the trial stage, the future is "grim," says Bebb.

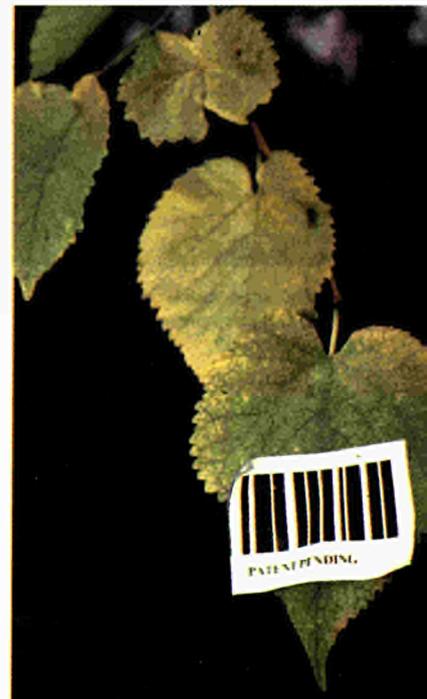
"There is currently no market for GM foods, so farmers are unlikely to plant them despite the government's enthusiasm," he says.

Many scientists working on transgenic plants agree. Early last year, British company Axis Genetics began clinical trials of the first plant-based vaccine for Hepatitis B. Last September, it went bankrupt, citing



Genetically modified sugarbeet

Leaf of a strawberry plant with a bar code sticker indicating that the plant has been genetically modified





An emotive issue which gives rise to active protest - but is it justified?

public hostility to GM crops as the reason it failed to receive the necessary funding.

Public fears - true or false?

Webb points to several major public fears about GM foods.

The first is that eating GM food may be harmful. Most scientists think it isn't. But the results of major studies into health effects should help resolve the issue.

There are also fears that crops genetically modified to produce toxins that kill insect pests may poison other, beneficial, insects. The evidence that this will happen is mixed.

In 1997, a team at the Scottish Crop Research Institute found that the lifespan and egg production of ladybirds eating aphids reared on transgenic potatoes was reduced. However, they also found that the protein introduced into the potato was stunting the growth of the aphids, and this accounted for at least some of the negative effects on the ladybirds. Ladybird larvae that were fed more aphids to compensate developed normally.

Other, more controversial, studies have looked at Monarch butterflies. They feed on milkweed, which grows in and around cornfields. Some research has suggested that pollen from corn genetically modified to contain an insecticide may harm the butterfly larvae. However, the methodology of the studies has been called into question. And in September, the US Environmental Protection Agency concluded that insecticide-containing corn, cotton and potato crops offer "significant benefits" to farmers and few risks.

There is stronger evidence that farmland birds could suffer if GM crops become widespread. Earlier this year, a team at the University of East Anglia used a mathematical model to investigate the effects on skylarks if sugar beet modified to be

herbicide-resistant was widely introduced on farms in the UK. Farmers who currently have difficulty in getting rid of weeds would use single massive doses of herbicide on the new crop, researchers reasoned. This would kill the weeds the skylarks feed on, and lead to mass bird starvation, they claim.

Critics of GM crops say that until the plants' effects on wildlife are properly understood, the crops should not be planted outside a greenhouse lab. Their opponents counter that unless naturalistic trials of GM crops are carried out, any adverse effects on wildlife cannot really be known. Environmental campaigners also protest that GM crops could contaminate wild plants, transferring genes for insecticide-production, or herbicide resistance, for example.

In July, a team at the University of Reading in the UK studied wild turnips growing close to fields of normal oilseed rape. They sampled 505 wild turnip plants and found one hybrid. This was created by cross-pollination between the oilseed rape and its close turnip cousin.

This raises the possibility that traits could pass from fields of GM crops into their wild relatives.

According to Adrian Bebb, the risk of contamination is one of the major stumbling blocks to public acceptance of GM crops. "The problem of contamination is a big issue that neither the UK government nor the industry has come close to solving," he says. "To think you could grow GM and non-GM oilseed rape, for example, in Europe and not see any cross-contamination is laughable."

He thinks the public is also concerned about the effectiveness of GM seed and control.

Earlier this year, governments of 166 countries voted against the US for the

right to block imports of GM crops if there was "reasonable doubt" that they could cause harm to the public or to the environment.

The Biosafety Protocol

The Biosafety Protocol was welcomed by environmental campaigners. But in March, the US Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies announced that it would not guarantee that seed exports to Europe were not contaminated with GM seed. And in May, Pioneer Hi-Bred, an Iowa-based supplier of seeds worldwide, accepted that claims that up to 15% of Europe's maize crop contains GM material may be true. This announcement came just days after Canadian firm Advanta admitted it had mistakenly supplied 600 farmers in Scotland with GM oil seed rape seeds. These seeds were sown on 11,000 acres of land.

There have been calls for an international advisory organisation to oversee developments in genetic engineering - focusing on genetically modified animals as well as crops.

John Krebs, chairman of Britain's Food Standards Agency, hopes that an intergovernmental panel of scientists could do the same for the GM debate as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is doing for the debate on global warming. He thinks the panel should offer governments independent scientific assessments of the risks associated with GM crops, and contribute to the wider public debate about the implications of GM foods. Representatives from developing countries should be on the panel, he says.

In the meantime campaigners want laws regulating the sale of genetically-modified organisms to be tightened. Some think the European Parliament's directive on GMOs should be changed so that companies that produce or disseminate GM seeds would be liable for potential damages.

"If these crops were as safe as companies claim them to be, they should have no problems in accepting full liability for them," argues Ceri Lewis of Greenpeace.



Benefiting everyone

Some scientists think increased regulation will help draw public support for research on GM organisms to benefit humankind.

Many in the western and developing world think GM crops could be vital in helping to feed a growing human population.

"With the very considerable increase in world population over the next 25-30 years, from six to eight or nine billion, quite clearly there is going to be a very important need for new ways to produce food and secure food production throughout the world," says Brian Heap of Cambridge University. Heap chaired a report entitled *Transgenic Plants and World Agriculture*, published in July. Nearly one in six people alive today do not have enough to eat, according to new UN figures. Heap thinks GM plants - modified to flourish in dry conditions, or to contain higher levels of essential minerals, for example - could help feed the world's 836 million hungry people. But his report concludes that governments must pay attention to concerns about the safety of GM foods, and carry out in-depth research into health effects. Without public backing, many scientists think the future of GM crops, whether beneficial to farmers, or to the sick and the hungry, is bleak.

Banana seeding
biotech lab,
Malaysia

*New Scientist Magazine
Photos: Panos Pictures

In the pipeline

by John Bowis MEP

Work has started on a Cameroon-Chad oil project, marking a new era for development aid

After years of commercial wrangling, environmental doubts and political uncertainty, the Cameroon-Chad oil pipeline finally seems set to flow. The huge project, worth over US \$3.7 billion, was endorsed by the World Bank back in June. But it represents a big, risky test for the World Bank and for our own African development policies.

It will undoubtedly help Chad, which is one of the world's poorest countries and ranks 167th on the 174-nation UN table of human development. The poverty is all too obvious, as I saw first-hand when visiting Chad and Cameroon earlier this year as part of the European Parliament's team assessing the oil pipeline's potential impact.

But two major questions remain. Will the pipeline damage the beautiful and fragile environment of west Africa? Do the innovative financial safeguards put in place by the World Bank mark the start of a new era for all our development policies?

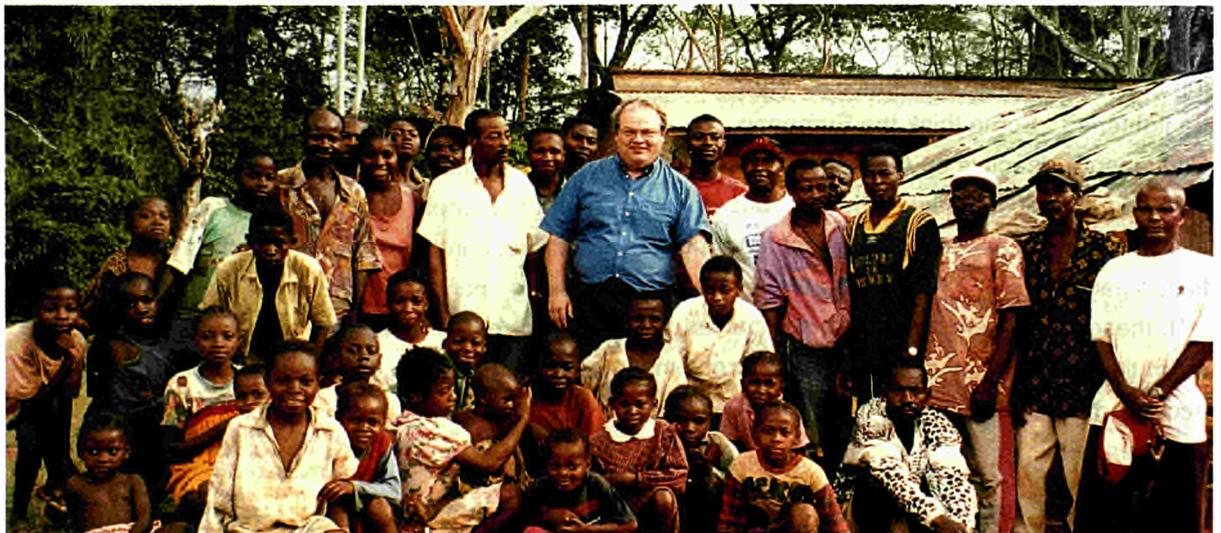
For these reasons, Europe's politicians - be they in Brussels, Berlin, Lisbon or London - should watch the developments closely.

The pipeline - disaster or opportunity?

The underground pipeline starts in southern Chad and will end its 1050 km (665 mile) journey in Kribi, on the coast of Cameroon. Oil will flow under some of the world's most beautiful landscapes, from the Sahel in Chad to the savanna and mountains of northeastern Cameroon, to the virgin rainforests in the south - where the canopy of trees is already pock-marked by slash and burn subsistence farming, alongside the loggers' quest for profit.

In Brussels, our twin concerns have been environmental and social. Nigeria's above-ground web of pipes have proved to be a tempting but dangerous target for local people desperate to siphon off liquid black gold. Likewise, the plight of the 100,000 Pygmies - the indigenous rainforest dwellers of Cameroon - raises fears of lost habitats and displaced peoples in the Amazon basin. But understandable misgivings based on past tragedies must not be replaced by obstinate intransigence based on dogma. There are differences between the Cameroon-Chad pipeline and the twin spectres of the Niger Delta and the Amazon Basin.

Discussions with pygmies along the road between Lolodorf and Kribi



Firstly, environmentalists have been involved right from the start. During meetings in Chad and Cameroon, one swiftly realised that extensive consultations have been conducted, but this does not always mean that everyone understood what was going on. Therefore, civil society in Chad and Cameroon must continue to be involved at all stages during the construction and life-time of the oil pipeline project. It is encouraging to see multinational oil giants appear to learn from past mistakes. Yes, there were complaints and disagreements, but these were partly due to different economic and social developments in Cameroon - one of Africa's potential successes, albeit with human rights challenges still to overcome - and Chad, a country trapped by 30 years of civil war and political instability.

There are also other fundamental differences between the Chad-Cameroon pipeline and those in the Niger Delta. The Chad-Cameroon pipeline will be buried underground and carry heavy crude oil - not the lighter version produced in Nigeria. These two factors alone should reduce the risk of local people tampering with, or sabotaging, the pipeline. And whilst there will inevitably be some environmental damage as the pipeline is laid, there is an extensive, complicated compensation scheme in place, reinforced by a replanting scheme.

Economic expectations and safeguards

The second dilemma stems from involving local people, as their expectations grow and frustrations rise as the project suffers delay after delay. An unavoidable consequence of consulting local communities along the pipeline's route is that people are banking on the promised compensation. The "economics of expectation" have for example arrived amongst the Pygmies, who are now spending on the basis of future promises. Here Europe's environmentalists and politicians can play a valuable role by monitoring the project to ensure that the oil giants Exxon-Mobil, Chevron and Petronas deliver on environmental and compensation promises. In this way the pipeline could become a benchmark for coping with the environmental impact of future development projects.

Another area where the Chad-Cameroon project breaks new ground is the innovative package of financial safeguards and incentives on offer: particularly the earmarking of oil revenue to benefit ordinary people in Chad. Under an agreement with the Bank, Chad has agreed to a rigorous spending plan for its oil revenues, with 80% percent allocated for education, health, social services, rural development and infrastructure; 10% in a trust for the



One of the beautiful beaches at Kribi, Cameroon, where the pipeline will end

future; and five per cent earmarked for development in the oil-producing region of Doba. This last five per cent will be discretionary.

In Chad - where 80% of the seven million inhabitants live on less than US \$1 a day and 60,000 children die each year before reaching the age of five - the oil revenues could add up to as much as half the national budget. And that calculation is based on a relatively low oil barrel price.

With oil-generated income widely expected to start flowing by 2004 and set to last for 25 years, the total economic impact will amount to at least US\$ 2 billion. To distribute earnings, a Control and Management board will be set up for the first time and will involve local NGOs. A further innovation is the establishment of an International Advisory Group to check all projects to ensure social and environmental safeguards are respected. Underpinning this, the World Bank has approved a US \$222



The poverty of villages such as these will be alleviated by the benefits from the pipeline

million loan to help Chad and Cameroon buy a stake in the oil project.

Optimism and the EU's role

In such a project it is easy simply to highlight potential pitfalls: political instability, pervasive corruption, environmental damage - all of which could rupture the pipeline's prospects. But to many observers the Chad-Cameroon project reflects an unprecedented collaborative effort between the World Bank Group, the consortium of US and Malaysian oil companies, and the two governments of Chad and Cameroon.

An increase in economic optimism throughout the region was already noticeable this

summer as the Cameroon economy picked up. Infrastructure investments are on the increase as major efforts are made to improve the rail network - which also serves Chad and will transport raw materials for the new pipeline.

The European Union is also investing over € 220 million in upgrading and building a 627 km road network to link Cameroon, Chad and the Central African Republic. Further plans are under discussion to extend this transport artery into Gabon and Equatorial Guinea.

So as Chad and Cameroon see cuts in interest payments to the governments of rich countries start to take effect

later this year, one can sense a new energy and dynamism in West Africa. Over the past few weeks the six countries in the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) - Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon - have been moving toward closer cooperation. This bodes well for an economic region of 30 million people.

The jury is still out as to whether the Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline project and the EU's investment in the region's infrastructure will work. But the starting point is a considerable improvement on past projects. Cooperation between donors in the developed world and recipients in the developing world, matched by the watchful eye of NGOs and politicians, show the way forward.

Multinational companies and international bodies cannot afford to ignore the opinions of pressure groups. But everyone must balance western beliefs against the interests and desires of millions living on less than US \$1 per day. Let us not deny them the opportunity of future economic success, but work together above all to ensure that past mistakes and tragedies are not repeated.

EU, CDE and ACP enterprises

A growing role for a changing institution

by Viktor Rousseau

The new partnership Agreement between the ACP States and the European Community sets out new guidelines aiming first and foremost to combat poverty while also helping to anchor ACP countries to the world economy. To meet these objectives, it has been agreed that the 9th European Development Fund (EDF) will be given a budget of €13.5 billion over seven years, plus the remaining funds carried over from previous agreements - approximately €10 billion.

Both parties see the private sector as the starting point for economic growth, and an important link between the strategic and operational structure of the new partnership. Substantial resources have been allocated to ensure its promotion and expansion. The Cotonou Agreement provides €3.5 billion for this, mostly in an Investment Facility of €2.2 billion administered by the European Investment Bank (EIB), which will replace the risk capital and the interest rate subsidies of Lomé IV. To this is added another €1.7 billion in loans from the EIB. The aim of the Facility is to fund private enterprise as long as it is economically and commercially viable, and also to finance public enterprise, as long as it fulfils the same criteria. It will also serve to support the privatisation process and stimulate internal and external savings investment by helping to develop the capacities of financial institutions and local financial markets, and by increasing investment. The Centre for the Development of Industry/Enterprise (CDI) can steer businesses towards access to these various investments made by the EIB in local financial institutions.

The CDI should no longer limit itself to industry, but evolve to become a greater support to companies in general

In its document presented to the Council and the European Parliament, *Strategy of the European Community for developing the private sector in ACP countries*, the European Commission highlights the problems inherent in this task: limited confidence in weak economies, restricted markets and deficiencies in policies, institutions or public infrastructure. It also points out organisational weaknesses in the private sector, in financial and non-financial services aimed at businesses, and queries the administrative capacities of the businesses themselves.

In response to this rather gloomy diagnosis, the Commission advises devoting more

resources to the private sector as part of an integrated approach to its cooperation with the ACP countries. The proposed strategy consists of encouraging dialogue between the private sector and

governments, improving services - financial and otherwise, improving the flow of private investments, and promoting small businesses and development of trade between the EU and the ACPs. The document also defines the roles of the institutions and available instruments.

If the Commission is to coordinate strategy and back both reforms and the private-public dialogue, then it will need to share responsibility with the EIB and the CDI for supporting the development of small and medium-sized businesses. It also plans to instigate rapid access to aid for potential investors. An agency for guaranteeing investments is currently being considered.



The private sector has become an important link in the strategy of the new ACP-EU partnership, above

A wider role

In order to offer better technical assistance, to both European and ACP companies, the Centre for the Development of Industry/Enterprise should no longer restrict itself to industry but evolve to assume a wider role, supporting all types of business and becoming the body to which the Commission would always refer for advice in this domain.

In January 1999, a meeting was held in Las Palmas on Gran Canaria (Spain), bringing together representatives of the Association of National Chambers of Commerce, representatives of industry and of other ACP economic operators, in order to examine the role of the private sector in future ACP-EU relations. The Commission's recommendations were very well received. A closing resolution emphasised that "the remit of the CDI should be widened to enable it to deal with all aspects pertaining to the world of business."

The CDI's role is to help businesses in EU/ACP countries plan and implement new partnership projects, and also to expand existing operations, while resolving technical problems such as the transfer of technology and know-how from North to South.

The future Centre will have a role to play, with the European Commission, in helping to mobilise the EU private sector

In future, the CDI should be in a position to extend its expertise beyond industry to cover related services, in view of their increasingly important role in modern economies and the gradual erosion of the traditional distinction between the manufacturing industries and the service sector. This new orientation will be reflected by a change of title after the new EU/ACP agreement is ratified, with the CDI becoming the CDE (Centre for the Development of Enterprise).

The Commission proposes that, in line with its existing country on country strategies, the Centre should increasingly become the Commission's advisor and active partner in the task of drawing up an inventory of all service providers in the ACP countries - technical, commercial, administrative - including the ones involved in the

preparation of projects intended for the local private sector. CDE will continue to act as a supplier of information to European businesses regarding the concrete possibilities and practical conditions for developing business in ACP countries. The Centre's strength will derive from its knowledge of the private sector in the ACP and EU countries, the financial bodies which exist to support them, and the current deficiencies in services available to businesses.

Mechanisms to help implement the strategy

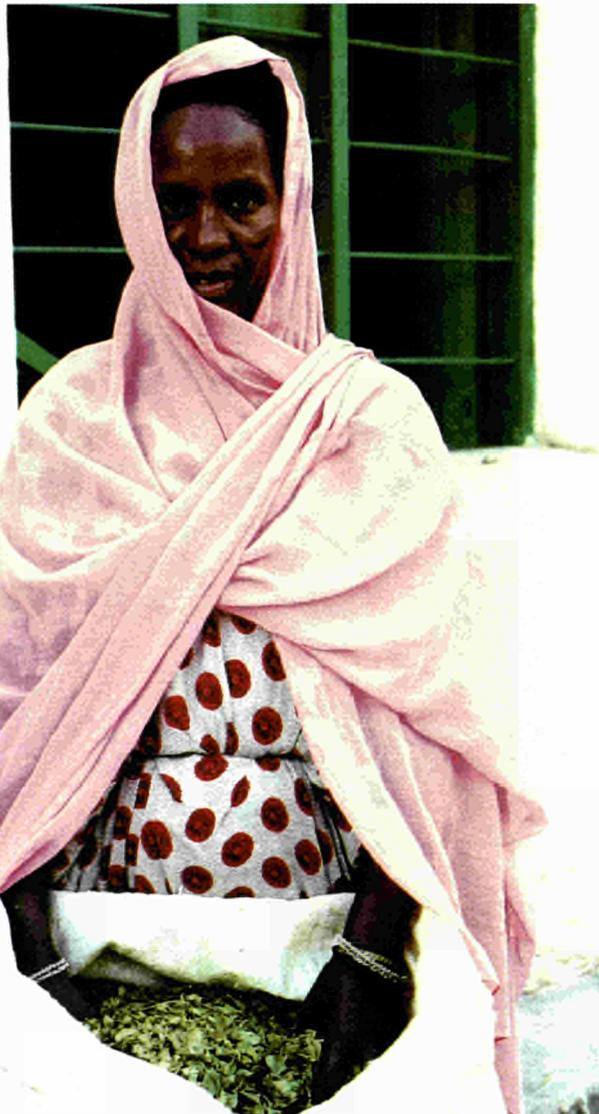
Other organisations and programmes, already in place or in the process of being developed, will work with the CDE to implement this strategy to develop the private sector. One such programme is *EBAS* (the EU-ACP Business Assistance Scheme), which partially subsidises enterprises needing access to advisory services in all areas relating to business competitiveness. Another is *Diagnos*, a project focusing particularly on research and improvement the business environment. A third is *Proinvest*, a programme currently under preparation, which aims to increase investment (domestic, cross-border and foreign) in the ACP regions by strengthening organisations such as the professional associations, the chambers of commerce and industry. All these programmes can make a significant and useful contribution to the development and support of the private sector in ACP countries.

The strength of the CDI comes from its knowledge of the ACP-EU private sectors



Somali women at heart of henna business

by Ailsa Buckley *



Somalia is a country that changes very fast.

In the face of great adversity, new businesses emerge each day. Businesses that can and do provide jobs and income to disadvantaged young people. Businesses that, if nurtured and supported, will be the future mainstay of the national economy.

Since the nation state of Somalia disintegrated in 1991, the civil war tore the country and its fragile economy apart,

"Business should be about exchange and value, trade and respect, friendship and trust"

The Body Shop

decimating business activity and creating high levels of unemployment. Disparate economic structures exist across Somalia and multiple currencies circulate. In the emergent Somaliland Republic, decreased trade with Europe and a lack of external investment have resulted in an over-reliance on traditional activities and a greatly reduced industrial base. There is a distinct lack of knowledge about or access to global markets. Little or no value is added as exports are sent out as raw commodities. However one new business in Somaliland is managing to change all this while helping Somali women to build a new future for themselves.

Asli Grinding Mills produces quality henna powder that can be found not only in the local market places in Somaliland, but also increasingly in the markets of neighbouring countries. Asli Grinding Mills is also a supplier to Body Shop International (BSI) in the United Kingdom, their first major international export customer. This ethical trading company specialises in body and skin care products.

The Asli business venture has received marketing assistance from the Marketing

One of the nomadic collectors delivering her bags of henna leaves to the mill in Hargiesa ready for grinding to powder

Assistance and Product Promotion project (MAPP), implemented by Progressive Interventions (PI), the Irish business development NGO, and funded by the European Commission. The MAPPs programme is dedicated to the creation of sustainable employment opportunities by providing support to enterprises focusing on natural resources and value-added products with market potential.

Henna - a natural cosmetic

Henna is one such resource: a natural cosmetic extracted from the leaves of the Ellan tree, which grows wild in the mountainous regions of Somalia. Somalis use this cosmetic as a hair dye and to decorate their skin and nails with intricate designs. It is an indispensable household cosmetic with many women operating a beauty business called *cilaan soar* (body decoration with henna) to earn income for their families. The dried and powdered leaves are also thought to have cooling and astringent properties. In African folk medicine, henna is even used as a treatment for leprosy.

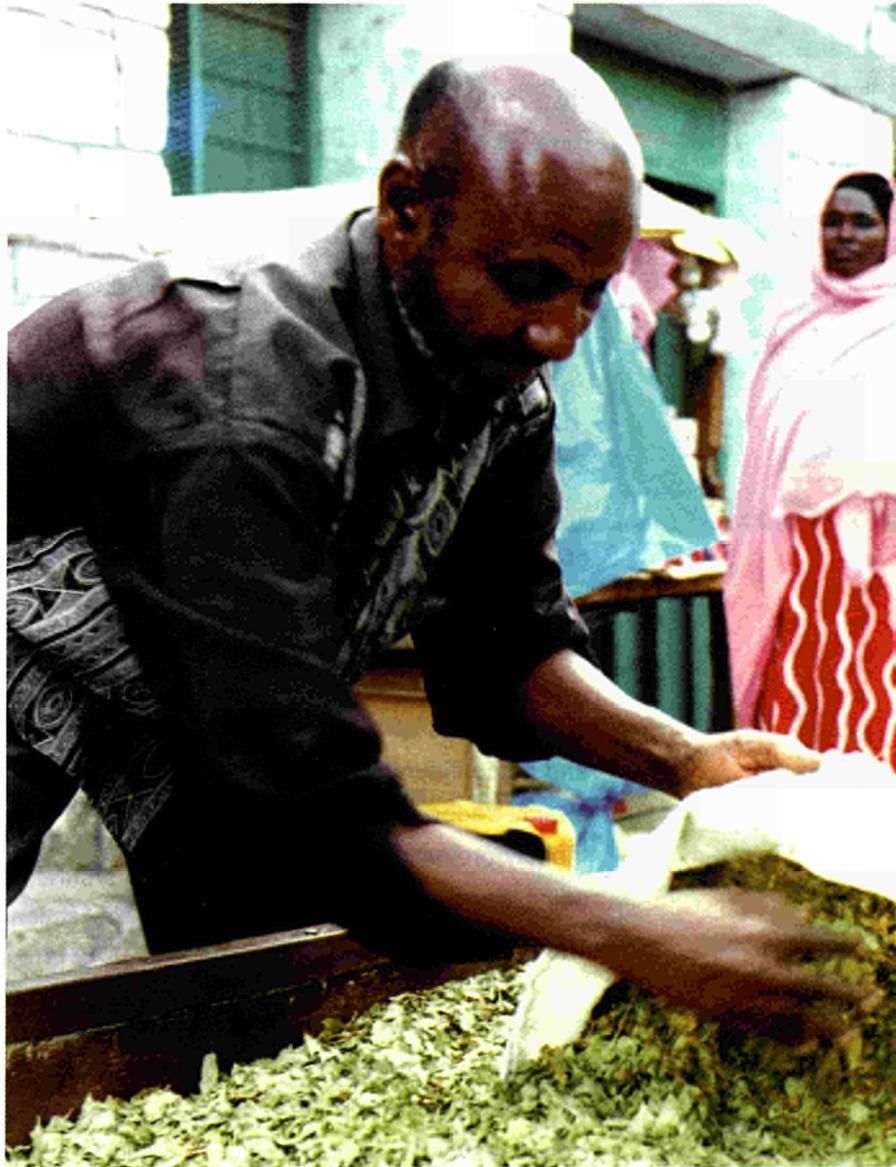
Despite the abundance of henna trees in Somaliland, the henna powder is primarily imported from Yemen. In October 98, having recognised the economic importance of this local resource, the Somali NGO Candlelight embarked on a project to develop commercially-viable henna processing in order to create jobs in the region. Candlelight Health & Education (CLHE), the sister organisation of Asli Mills, received initial project start-up support from the Danish Refugee Council while the MAPP project has provided technical assistance and facilitated local and overseas market links for the new product.

CLHE was founded in 1995 and addresses the health and educational needs of local people. The organisation is actively involved in environmental issues with a general focus on sustainable development, gender and human rights. Asli Mills, the income generation project founded by CLHE, prepares and markets other natural ingredients as well, such as the local Gob tree from which Somalians make facemasks and shampoo.

Nomadic people gather and dry henna leaves before they are sold to CLHE, which then grinds the leaves into henna powder. Since January 2000 Asli Mills, the trading arm of CLHE, has supplied approximately five tonne of red henna powder to BSI for use in four products in its new Henna Hair Colour range.

During August and September BSI launched these new products in some 1,700 branches in 49 markets worldwide. However, the company is not simply a global retailer of toiletries and cosmetics, BSI is committed to environmental protection and social change through its trade-based approach to sustainable development. The BSI Community Trade Programme sources

Mohamed,
drying the henna leaves
in preparation for grinding
at Asli Mills





Ibrahim (Asli) and Shukri (CLHE) selling their products at the first Hargeisa Trade Fair in 1999. Here they won the prize for best product. The trade fair was organised by Progressive Interventions in collaboration with the Somaliland Chamber of Commerce

ingredients and accessories from communities in need around the world.

The Body Shop is celebrating this new community trade ingredient by giving away baskets of products to the winner of a new competition. The BSI and the UNEP magazine "Our Planet" is running this competition, which highlights the work of Asli Grinding Mills and Candlelight through the website <http://www.ourplanet.com>.

BSI branding allows the consumer to look behind the label and be confident of purchasing a fairly-traded environmentally-friendly product, with returns going directly to Somali society. New jobs have been created and many of the beneficiaries are women pastoralists or nomads who now earn incomes by collecting the henna leaves for grinding.

A new future for women

One example is Khadija, a 44-year-old nomadic woman, mother of six children, who lives in the mountainous area of Adadlay village. Her husband was killed in the civil war and her only means of income was rearing and selling cattle. But the effects of overgrazing, recurring drought and unstable livestock prices put her source of income at risk. The family owns a herd of 30 goats, 90 sheep and one camel for transporting their portable house (*Aqal*) from place to place in search of water. Khadija collects an average of 30 kg of henna leaf per month and delivers them to the project leaf collection area nearest her. The project monitors collection to ensure that the trees and the local environment are not damaged during the process. As a result of the additional income she receives,

Khadija's herds of livestock are growing and she and her family are increasingly secure.

CLHE is also active in domesticating the henna tree (and growing henna trees as live fences) in remote agricultural areas to support agro-pastoralists who have difficulty in competing with farmers close to urban centres. Already, the CLHE initiative has provided people with additional income and access to education and health programmes from which they would not normally have benefited.

Exhibiting at Trade Fairs

During the 1999 Hargeisa Trade Fair, organized by the Somaliland Chamber of Commerce and PI, Candlelight/Asli Mills were awarded the trophy for Best Product in recognition of their work in the region. They will be exhibiting their products at the next Hargeisa Trade Fair planned for February 2001. Their products and activities are currently also being promoted on the PI website: buysomali.com.

The MAPP project continues to support Asli Grinding Mills with business advice and counselling. Like The Body Shop, Progressive Interventions believes that "commerce can act as a force for positive social change and that commerce must come with a conscience."

The Cariforum Meeting

by Aya Kasasa



The invitation had come straight from their government, so it was under the watchful eye of students from the Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College that the opening ceremony of the annual meeting between Cariforum and the European Union took place. Clearly the gesture had not been lost on any of the participants, showing as it did that the leaders of the Caribbean States

are intent on cultivating their future elites as they negotiate the terms of their development with the international community.

The annual meeting provides an opportunity for the members of Cariforum and the representatives of the European Commission to exchange opinions on key aspects of cooperation programmes and bilateral relations.

This year the discussions have turned to cooperation issues based on the 6th, 7th and 8th programmes of the European Development Fund (EDF). The list of projects covered by these programmes feature plans for regional economic integration and regional cooperation - including trade and development of the private sector, development of tourism and the services industry and rural development of economic infrastructures. The plans also cover human resources development and the strengthening of the knowledge and skills base, including education, training and research.

The meeting was held in St Kitts and Nevis on 20 October 2000 under the joint chairmanship of Sam Condor, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Caricom affairs, and Friedrich Hamburger, Director

at DG Development for the Caribbean, Pacific and Indian Ocean. After the opening speeches it was the turn of Billie Miller, Barbadian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade to speak.

Immediately, the tone was set: the Caribbean states were anxious to express their very real disappointment at the "All except Arms" initiative that had been put forward by the European Union last September. European Commissioner Pascal Lamy, whose brief covers trade, had proposed the initiative to enable all the least developed countries (LDCs) to benefit from the liberalisation of trade by exempting their entire range of exports to the European Union from all customs duties, with the exception of arms and munitions. This commitment has been written into Article 85 of the Cotonou

Agreement, which provides for "special treatment" of the LDCs with the aim of reducing their economic and political marginalisation. For the EU, the proposal is viewed as a sign that it has taken the initiative in post-Seattle trade deregulation and shows that it is quite serious about taking on board the needs and concerns expressed by the LDCs in the run-up to a new round of multi-lateral trade negotiations. Apart from the strong signal the initiative has sent out from the EU, it could serve as an example of good practice for other members of the WTO, particularly industrialised economies. In global terms, the EU is by far the biggest importer of products from the LDCs: in 1998 its share stood at 56%, compared with 26% for the United States, six per cent for Japan and two per cent for Canada. As a result, any decisions taken by the Community on trade with the LDCs can impact strongly on the economies of the latter. And this is precisely what the Caribbean countries fear, as each of the speakers repeatedly stressed, saying there was a risk that the initiative would leave them all the poorer and whittle away any benefits they had achieved over the long years of cooperation. For the ACP countries, the very substance of the Cotonou Agreement was now at stake, with the real possibility that the unique nature of the partnership could be reduced to



ashes. The Cariforum representatives also took note of ACP disappointment at the lack of consultation prior to the EU launching its proposal: "The ink on the signatures was not even dry," Billie Miller declared loudly, "before one of the parties started taking decisions that might well spell the ruin of the other! During the period of transition, any threats directed at the ACP countries should be firmly resisted. We have not been consulted, and this solution would run counter to our partnership agreement. We all know there is no point in further impoverishing the poorest of the poor. Some of our countries have only just emerged from absolute poverty: they have no desire to repeat the experience."

The other side of the argument

The European Union immediately tried to play down any misunderstandings. Friedrich Hamburger clarified the positions of the 15 Member States, saying that the EU had an obligation to respect the rules of the WTO and, eventually, to provide free access to the products of the LDCs. "Of course we need to discuss the principle that access to markets should apply to all products apart from arms. But we're talking about a proposal we're still in the process of drafting," he emphasised, "a proposal that, in accordance with due procedures, has yet to be submitted to the European Parliament and Council of Ministers. I have to say that these procedures take

time, nothing has been decided yet, and it would be wrong to draw premature conclusions. We have listened to you carefully and will be passing on your concerns, but you should rest assured that the key principle of consultation at the heart of our partnership will never be broken." With this, the two sides went back to their deliberations and discussed issues related to the EDF programme. In this regard they noted the progress that had been made, the difficulties that still lay ahead and agreed on ways of improving joint collaboration procedures wherever required. The representatives of Cariforum and the European Commission also discussed an outline strategy leading to the establishment of a framework for a regional cooperation programme under the 9th EDF. They exchanged opinions on the guiding principles and policies for the regional programme under the provisions of the new Cotonou Agreement.

What does the future have in store?

Questions still remain on what the future holds for Cariforum and what kind of assistance the EDF can provide to help the rum and rice producing industries adapt to the new framework of international trade. There seems little doubt that the new package of measures for the region will see the stepping up of resources in the field of trade policies and negotiations. In terms of developing trade relations, the Commission

is gearing itself up to staging negotiations on the drafting of a regional economic partnership agreement (REPA) on trade and trade issues. These preparations are due to begin in 2002, with the regional agreements being finalised and launched in 2008. After this long period of transition, trade practices will then be fully compatible with the legal requirements of the WTO. What is more, Europe will start to view the Caribbean region in a broader context, one which encompasses the Latin American and Caribbean countries. "The most recent summit held in Rio between the EU and these countries," Mr Hamburger said, "is a harbinger of things to come. Rio illustrated the need to open up the process of political dialogue, to intensify moves towards trade deregulation and the free flow of capital, and to attach greater priority to cooperation in the fields of education and culture."

At the end of the meeting the participants expressed their overall satisfaction with the outcome of the negotiations and were pleased that the issues of concern to the ACP countries had been brought fairly and squarely to the bargaining table. So it had been an "excellent meeting," with both sides stating in their closing remarks that they were determined to overcome the outstanding obstacles on the path to cooperation in a spirit of amicable relations.

Cariforum

Cariforum (the Caribbean Forum of African, Caribbean and Pacific States) acts as the mechanism of coordination between the Caribbean ACP countries and the European Union in preparing and agreeing strategies to support the regional integration process of selecting and drafting projects eligible for assistance from the Regional Indicative Programme for the Caribbean Region (RIPCR), which was signed in July 1992 under the Lomé IV Convention and funded by the EDF. Cariforum is based in Georgetown (Guyana), and its Secretary-General, Edwin Carrington from Trinidad, is well known for his work with Caricom.

Given that Cariforum has managed to acquire considerable political clout over the years, it is hardly surprising that the press frequently confuses it with Caricom. There are plenty of observers who believe that the best

thing would be for the functions of the Cariforum secretariat to be merged into Caricom at the earliest opportunity.

While the Cariforum countries differ in the disparity of their economies, levels of development and diversity in terms of race, history, culture and language, they nonetheless share common characteristics and problems. As stable countries with moderate incomes and slow but steady growth rates (apart from the notorious case of Haiti, the bottom-ranked LDC in the zone), they tend to remain over-dependent on the primary sector or on tourism in terms of creating jobs or building up trade links. The narrow geographical confines of most of these countries constitute a major barrier to their development, particularly since their economies are regularly thrown into turmoil by natural catastrophes.



Left to right,
Edwin Carrington,
Sam Condor and
Friedrich Hamburger

An initiative set to cause much ink to flow

In terms of its commercial impact, the "All except Arms" proposal affects imports that currently amount to some €78 million - compared with a total of €8.7 billion for products imported from LDCs. A drop in the ocean? Not necessarily, for the simple reason that the new proposal covers a wide range of products that until now have been excluded from the official import statistics because of the excessive customs duty levied on them. The removal of a high degree of protection is aimed at stimulating the growth of imports from these countries.

However, the granting of free access to products from the LDCs is not the only important step intended to stop the downward economic and structural slide of these countries. In order to benefit from the possibilities opened up by the deregulation of trade, these countries will also be forced to find ways of producing a greater number of quality products for export. This explains why a cornerstone of European policy will no doubt continue to remain focused on maintaining technical and financial assistance to the LDCs so that they can improve and broaden their export capacities.

The initiative itself can be traced back to a meeting of ministers in Singapore at which WTO members decided to ease the access of LDCs to the markets of the industrialised countries, principally by granting exemptions to their

exports from excise duties on an autonomous basis. In June 1997, the Council of Ministers decided to extend the benefits enjoyed by ACP countries to the LDCs that had yet to sign up to the Lomé Convention, and to provide free access in the medium term to the vast majority of LDC products.

Bananas excluded

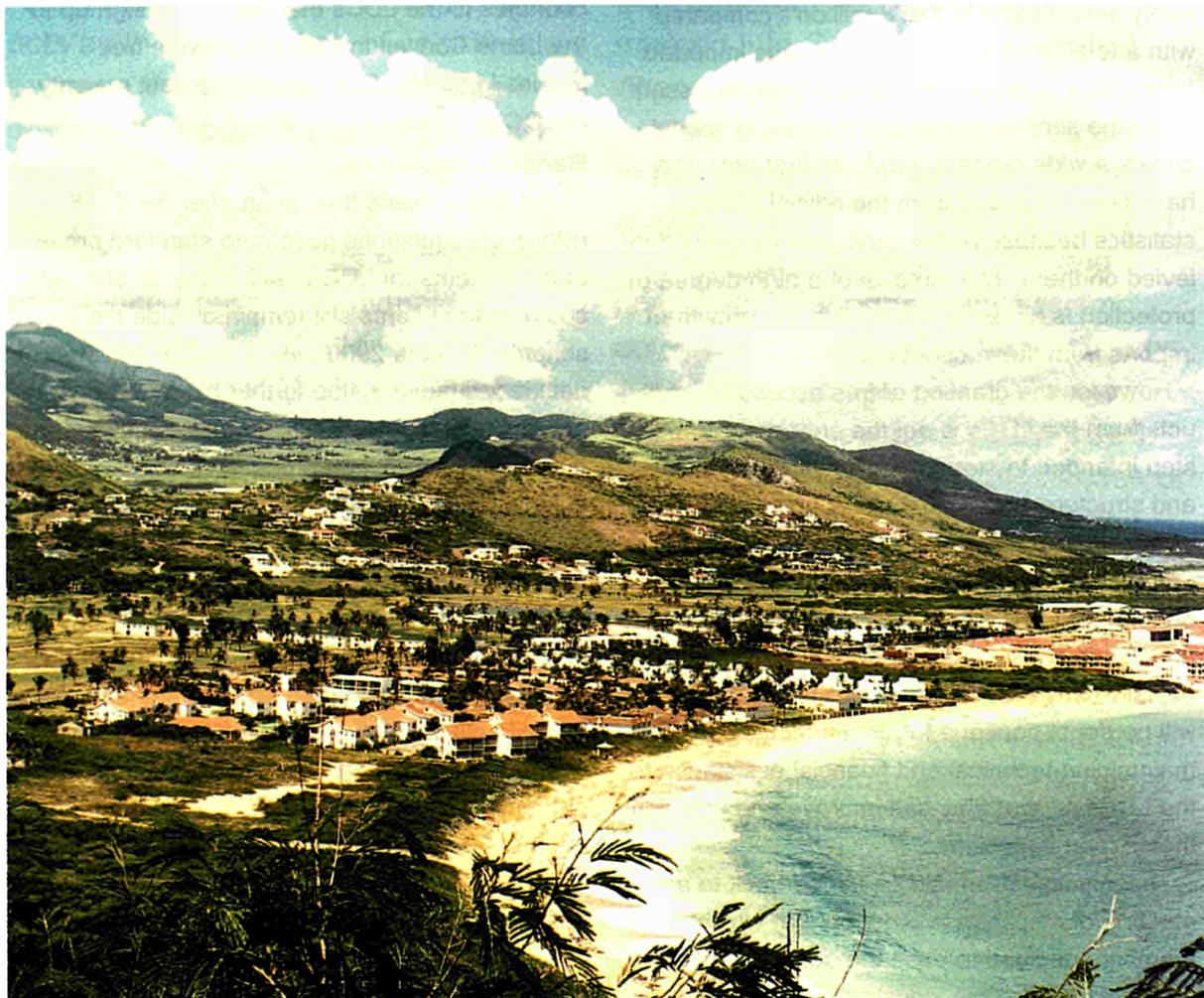
The fact remains that, even after the 1998 reform of regulations governing standard preferential systems for LDCs, 944 of the 10,500 joint customs tariff items still remain outside the scheme. In June 2000 the Council of Ministers decided to move a step further by concluding an agreement with the ACP countries to initiate an excise duty exemption process and free up access for virtually all products originating from each LDC by 2005.

The new proposal from the Commission now takes these commitments a stage further and affects 48 of the poorest countries in the world. It intends to add a further 919 tariff items to the free access scheme. If the proposal is accepted by the Council and the European Parliament, all products originating from LDCs could be imported duty-free into the EU countries - with the exception of bananas, sugar and rice. Customs duties on the latter are due to be successively phased out in three stages over a three-year period.

Source: "Commission en Direct," I. Hvaas



A partnership with a bright future



Relations between the EU and the 15 independent countries of the Caribbean are based on the Cotonou Agreement. The Netherlands and the United Kingdom have constitutional ties with overseas countries and territories (PTOM), and France with overseas departments (DOM). The Caribbean ACP States and territories have a total population of approximately 22 million, over a total surface area of 599,276 km².

The existence of successive Lomé Conventions in the past, and the new Cotonou Agreement today, has given this group of countries the benefit of a harmonised reference

framework for handling matters of political dialogue, trade relations and development cooperation. This framework allows these countries to derive advantage from joint institutions with the European Union and regional representative agencies. All this has facilitated dialogue on policies and made it easier for the specific needs of the Caribbean region to be taken into account.

Political relations

Dialogue takes place primarily within the joint institutions provided for in the Cotonou Agreement, in particular the Council of Ministers and the Joint Parliamentary Assembly, composed

of members of parliament of the signatory States. At regional level, specific dialogue with the Caribbean region has been set up through The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and its vehicle for cooperation and dialogue, CARIFORUM. Founded in 1973, CARICOM's objective is to promote economic integration, coordinate foreign policy and provide public services in areas such as shipping, health, education and issues relating to women. Interdepartmental meetings between the European Union and the countries of the Caribbean are organised each year under the auspices of CARIFORUM. Despite the economic, commercial and political differences which inevitably characterise such a diverse region, CARICOM is a major catalyst for regional integration, thanks to the organisation's wide-ranging objectives and large number of Member States. New initiatives

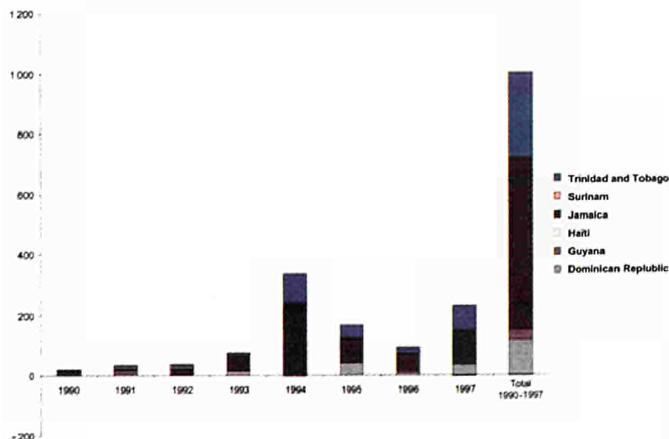
for integration in the region have led to the creation of the Association of Caribbean States, comprising all the countries in the Caribbean. This organisation for political cooperation is active on a number of fronts and has already seen concrete results in areas such as the fight against organised crime and illegal drug-trafficking, good governance, support for the democratisation process and respect for human rights.

The Lomé framework has gradually expanded to include more of the region. Haiti and the Dominican Republic are the most recent countries to have joined the ACP group (in December 1989, when Lomé IV was signed). Although Cuba did not sign that particular convention, it did participate as an observer in the negotiations on Cotonou.

The Caribbean States greatly value this strengthening of their

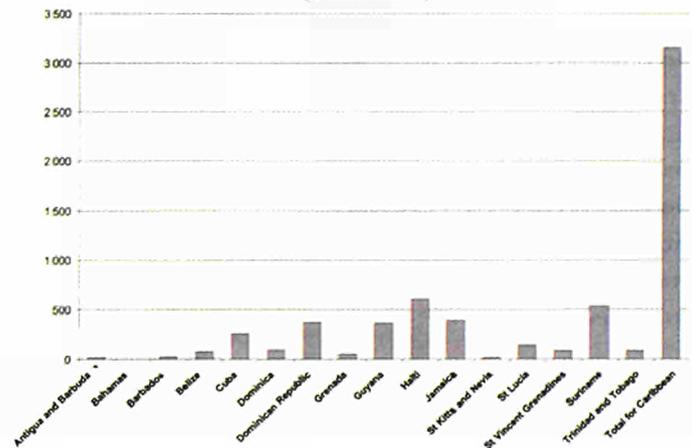


Direct EU investment in the Caribbean, 1990-1997 (net flows, in US\$ million)



Source : DG DEV

EU development aid (public sector) to Caribbean countries (in US\$ million)



Source : DG DEV

The Caribbean

- Antigua & Barbuda
- Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Dominica
- Dominican Republic
- Grenada
- Guyana
- Haiti
- Jamaica
- St Kitts and Nevis
- St Vincent and the Grenadines
- St Lucia
- Suriname
- Trinidad & Tobago

Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago are regarded as the most developed countries of the group. All the other member States, except the Bahamas, are regarded as less developed countries.

Overseas Countries and Territories (PTOM)

- Anguilla
- British Virgin Islands
- Cayman Islands
- Montserrat
- Turks and Caicos Islands
- Netherlands Antilles
- Aruba

Overseas Departments (DOM)

- Guadeloupe
- Martinique
- Guyana

INTERNET

<http://www.caricom.org>



links with Europe as a source of diversification in their commercial and economic - and also in their political - relations. The European alternative can look like a viable counterbalance to what is sometimes perceived to be economic and political over-dependency.

Economic and trade relations

Lack of diversity in most island economies means complete dependence on the EU market and the preferential conditions for access to it, in former times guaranteed by the successive conventions. Although the average *per capita* income level in the region is quite high (GDP of \$4,500 *per capita*), there is considerable disparity between countries (Haiti's GDP *per capita* is \$250). In the main, these island economies remain fragile, often dependent on a very limited number of export products

and therefore vulnerable to fluctuations in the price of raw materials; thus they rely on preferential trade agreements.

The Caribbean countries benefit from the Cotonou Agreement's ample non-reciprocal trade preferences. Indeed, for some countries the sugar, banana and rum protocols have ensured significant export revenues. This commercial relationship should in future evolve towards another form of agreement, to reflect better the mutual interests of both parties and to bring the trading system in line with WTO regulations. The European Union's mandate for negotiating the new agreement permitted a proposal for setting up a genuine economic and commercial partnership through the gradual introduction of reciprocity in trade links and the offer of a global trade policy strategy.

In 1997, the EU imported 3,137 billion dollars worth of produce from the Caribbean and exported 3,806 billion dollars worth of European goods to the same region. The EU is the Caribbean's main export market, primarily for certain agricultural products (bananas, sugar, rice, etc.) and certain manufactured goods. European exports principally take the form of manufactured goods, services and tourism.

Community cooperation in the Caribbean

With the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the EU is the region's biggest financial backer. In the context of the 8th EDF (1995-2000), National Indicative Programmes totalling €511,350 million were set up, as well as a €90 million Regional Indicative Programme. To these figures should be added €200 million for STABEX, SYSMIN and the Structural Adjustment Facility. EU aid is primarily directed towards transport and communication infrastructure, trade and tourism, agriculture and rural development, development of human resources and the environment, with the aim of promoting economic and social advancement in the Caribbean. It also supports the anti-drugs campaign, reform



The production of drinks contributes significantly to the local economy

and modernisation of the State, as well as regional integration.

The fact that many Caribbean economies are neither robust nor competitive makes regional economic integration essential, and here the EU example is unquestionably helpful. Almost all Caribbean countries have established stable political systems based on multi-party democracy. In the last few years, they have also implemented economic reforms which are having a noticeable impact on their growth. Further strengthening of democratic life in these countries would, however, be advisable if economic growth is to be transformed into long-term development.

To replace the current non-reciprocal trade preferences, the European Union proposes entering into "Regional Economic Partnership Agreements" (REPAs) with various ACP countries and territories. From 2005, while continuing to enjoy preferential access to the EU market, the ACP signatories of such agreements will be obliged gradually to open up their own markets to EU exporters on a preferential basis.

This text is a résumé of the publication Union européenne, Amérique Latine, Caraïbes: une progression commune [European Union, Latin America, Caribbean: Advancing together], published by DG Development (June 1999).

The regional challenge

Keeping up the good work

How are the Member States to develop in line with changes at international level without losing any of the social, economic and political achievements

The world economy has seen a great many changes over the last 10 or 20 years, not least the introduction of new international trade mechanisms, something of a challenge to the region. Service industries, information technology and capital flows have become more important in terms of companies' competitiveness and the means are available to governments for dealing with such developments, particularly the governments in developing countries.

The growth of the service industries has had a knock-on effect in this region, boosting tourism and enabling international financial centres to expand. At the same time the Caribbean has left itself open to the vulnerability that goes with specialising too closely in industries of this type.

At present, six countries in the Caribbean basin are facing sanctions imposed by the G7 countries owing to an alleged lack of cooperation in applying international regulations in the fight against money laundering. These countries insist that they were given very little opportunity either to state their case or to influence the decision.

As far as tourism is concerned the vulnerability is due to natural disasters, environmental damage, criminal acts and tourist behaviour.

To a certain extent, these factors can be controlled, especially the last two. This is why ecologically-viable tourism is now being looked into, a concept devised with the help of the OTC (Caribbean tourism association).

of recent decades?

In the eyes of the World Bank, this is the monumental challenge facing the Caribbean in the 21st century.

World Bank economists have stressed that the majority of the region's economies can make the transition from agriculture to the service industries, with tourism and financial services leading the way. However, the region continues to depend on preferential trade arrangements with its main partners, the European Union and the United States, particularly for exporting agricultural produce and manufactured goods.

Under these circumstances, the recent regulations imposed by the WTO against preferential European arrangements with respect to bananas is one of the biggest problems facing the region. Since the 1980s, economic growth has been satisfactory on the whole and has even seen some improvement in recent years. The region has gradually become better integrated at international level, with more trade openings and direct foreign investment.

This - following international trends - has become an essential source of funds, keeping debt levels in check. Recent World Bank studies show that the region's long-term growth is on a par with average growth in a great many countries, and programmes of reform and structural adjustment over the last two decades have influenced economic growth in line with the results obtained by other countries that implement similar measures.

A need for caution

Despite encouraging results, experts have expressed the need for caution. Indeed, good current performance is not necessarily an indication of future performance. As the experts see it, to keep up this trend, Caribbean countries will have to see their transition to economies based on service industries through to completion. They will have to move towards greater diversification of their core economies, continue to attract foreign investment and improve their competitiveness at international level.

Closer analysis is therefore required. Economies in this region are generally small and open to foreign investors. They are restricted in terms of export and particularly vulnerable to natural disasters, especially hurricanes.

Since the 1980s, the majority of Caribbean countries have opted for strategies to extend their economic base by building on their agricultural and manufacturing industries while simultaneously taking a more aggressive approach to promoting their services, especially tourism. In 1998, income from this sector amounted to one third of the total revenue from the export of goods and services, in other words 16% of GDP.



The agricultural value added made up eight per cent of GDP.

Over the last two years, inflation has generally been low in the majority of these countries, mirroring the situation in Europe and the United States, their main trade partners. Real GDP growth has ranged from 1.5% in Guyana (1998) to 8.32% in the Dominican Republic (1999). One of the factors that contributed to this variation was the fall in oil and commodity prices in 1998, closely followed by a rise in oil prices in 1999. The negative impact on production and worries over trade preferences with respect to bananas

and sugar, and the effects of climate conditions and the financial crises of 1997 and 1998, decreased the number of tourists visiting the region. The rise was particularly high in countries with significant services industries, where tourism and the construction industry have been major sources of economic activity (Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the Dominican Republic and St Vincent and the Grenadines).

Time for new strategies?

Today, tourism and the other service industries are first in line for development. The decision to invest in the sector

Open the door to the 21st century?



Economically-viable tourism, a future industry for the Caribbean States

has started to reap rewards, especially for off-shore services which are contributing more and more to real GDP growth. This proves that the countries have been working together, exchanging information and knowledge on the subject, to the benefit of all involved. The Caribbean States have also pooled their resources to tighten legislation on money laundering.

The construction industry is next. Several governments, including those of the Bahamas, Barbados and St Kitts and Nevis have continued to modernise their tourist industries. Others, such as Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and

Belize, have focused on improving their infrastructures (sea routes and defences). The countries worst hit by hurricanes have increased their public-sector investment in critical infrastructure.

Then comes agriculture. The region has seen a clear increase in agricultural production in Guyana, Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago. In St Kitts, hurricanes and high production costs have led to a decline in production. Banana production also seems to have dwindled slightly in most countries, partly due to the uncertainties that have crept in as a result of the slow abolition of trade preferences and the WTO regulations against the European Union's importation arrangements.

And what of manufacturing? This is an industry, with the exception of sugar production, that has shown strong performance (textiles, the clothing industry, beer, non-alcoholic beverages, fruit concentrates, etc), especially for those countries benefiting from special trade agreements with the USA.

Keeping up the good work

If the region is to flourish in the future, the easing of trade restrictions will have to continue. Non-tariff barriers still exist and a considerable degree of discretion still prevails in terms of the granting of tax incentives. Too many countries still have a tendency to protect their domestic sectors. They will also have to step up the development of human capital, along with the legal and regulatory framework within which business affairs are conducted.

In short, boosting the region's economies will require reforms that increase production and bring down costs.

Country Report

St Kitts and Nevis



by Aya Kasasa

Two islands, one paradise

It's Friday afternoon, and the streets of Basseterre are bustling with activity, in sharp contrast to their usual tranquillity during the rest of the week. The traveller makes slow progress along the pavements crowded with merchants selling everything from souvenirs to grilled chickens. Groups of young people stand around, chatting excitedly.

The Ministry of Tourism brochures capture the essence of St Christopher and Nevis with the slogan "two islands, one paradise." Part of the Leeward Islands group, St Kitts and Nevis were 'discovered' by Christopher Columbus, who was apparently so taken with them that he named them. What we now know as Nevis, he called *Nuestra Señora de las Nieves* (Our Lady of the Snows) - in honour, so the story goes, of the mysterious charm of the white mists which shroud its ancient volcanic peak - and he named Saint Kitts after his patron saint, San Cristobal (St. Christopher).

When the first settlers arrived in the mid 17th century, the Lesser Antilles were inhabited by the Carib Indians, a people originating from Amazonia and renowned for their cruelty and cannibalism. Today they have totally disappeared from St Kitts and Nevis, having been wiped out by the English and French. The only trace of this grisly episode in its history is Bloody Point on the island of St Kitts, where a plaque commemorates the battle. The islands were conquered by the English in 1623 and 1628; St Kitts was taken by the French several times during the 17th and 18th centuries and then permanently ceded to the British Crown under the Treaty of Paris in 1783. St Kitts and Nevis remained English colonies until 1983, and they are now part of the British Commonwealth and the UN.

An agriculture in decline...

The colonial past of the Federation is evidenced by the many sugar-cane plantations and mills dotted about on the landscape. Everywhere there are signs that this was an essentially agricultural society. Even the name of Mount Liamuiga, the original name for St. Kitts given by the Carib Indians, means "fertile land."

There are queues in front of the banks - Friday is pay day, a day for relaxing, and everyone seems determined to make the most of it. Basseterre is the picturesque capital of the Federation of St Kitts and Nevis, which has been independent since 19 September 1983. A country where life is sweet, and visitors are reluctant to leave....

Liamuiga is well named, for the ease with which everything grows here is attested by its luxuriant flora.

The economy of St Kitts and Nevis has been dominated by the production and refining of sugar since its introduction in the 17th century. While the sugar industry is still important, it was systematically scaled down in St Kitts during the 1980s and was completely abandoned on Nevis in the 1960s. Even today, however, the sugar industry still absorbs a large part of the workforce and occupies most of the arable land on St Kitts. "Sugar is our history - this industry has been pivotal for our social evolution," states Juletta Jeffers, economist at the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank. "The government is forced to subsidise it heavily, but we are going to have to consider the social consequences of this decline. We must find people new jobs and train the young to do different work."

The development of St Kitts and Nevis is hampered by the constraints inherent in all small island developing states: a small domestic market, a limited resource base, a high *per capita* cost of social and economic infrastructure and a fragile environment with difficult external dependencies, which is vulnerable to natural disasters - hurricanes and droughts wreaking serious havoc on the economy. The ruling Labour government has focused its energies on diversifying the sources of foreign currency. Economic growth, which held steady at around six per cent during the 1980s, slowed down during the first half of the 1990s (3.5-4%) as a result of the drought and particularly of the hurricanes of 1995, which affected the sugar industry and the tourist trade. The economy picked up again the following year, with an effective rate of growth in the region of 5.8%.

Stimulating the new industries

St Kitts and Nevis has broadened its economic base through the development of tourism, the assembly of electronics and other light manufactured goods, non-sugar agriculture and offshore financial services. Tourism is now the leading local industry. The manufacturing industry is negligible and most convenience goods are imported. The main trading partners are the United States, Canada, the UK and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

Over the last few years, the government has boosted the production of industrial goods and encouraged investment in the up-and-coming service industry. The expansion of tourism is a catalyst for the development of other business in this dynamic sector, particularly when it comes to services and construction. The development of the Frigate Bay area is a real success story - hotels, condominiums, apartments, private villas, restaurants and golf courses have all added to the attraction of this destination.

The government needs, however, to direct funds to repairs made necessary by Hurricane George and Hurricane Lenny, particularly in Nevis, where the biggest hotel complex was seriously damaged.

Annual economic growth has been stable at around the five per cent mark for 20 years or so. The government has given priority to the development of the private sector and the introduction of a wide range of tax incentives aimed at enticing business investment. To widen its domestic market, St Kitts and Nevis has formed an alliance with its neighbours within CARICOM.

According to the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, growth for the year 2000 should be in the region of six to seven per cent. This projection is based on an increase in the number of tourists as well as on the agricultural and manufacturing industries. The outlook is one which delights the Labour government, which made "well-being for all" one of the main aims of its administration.

Country Above Self

The country's motto might appear to have been specially invented for the Prime Minister of the Federation, Denzil Douglas, who is certainly succeeding rather well in applying it. Political life in St Kitts and Nevis has the added spice of a feature not to be found in any other constitution - it is the only federal administration in the region - indeed, in the world - to contain formal provisions for secession of a Member State (Nevis).

The St Kitts-Nevis Labour Party (SKNLP), led by the Prime Minister, was re-elected for a second term of five years at the general elections of 6 March 2000. The Kittitians and Nevisians were summoned to the polls to renew the 11 members of the National Assembly, elected by universal suffrage, after the early dissolution of this body, the previous general elections having been held in July 1995. The electoral campaign was marked by the extradition to Miami of a drug-trafficker who had managed to foil the USA's attempts to have him extradited for the last 4 years. This outcome boosted the position of Denzil Douglas, who had talked up his government's determination to fight crime.



The Berkeley Memorial Clock, right in the centre of the Federal capital

In St Kitts, then, all eight of the eleven seats to be decided for the National Assembly went to the Labour Party. The People's Action Movement (PAM), led by Kennedy Simmonds, who had governed the country from 1980-95, lost the only seat it had held in the previous legislature and is no longer represented in the new National Assembly. Kennedy Simmonds chose to resign and make way for the next generation. Lindsay Grant, the new leader of the party, is a young lawyer of 35, trained at the University of the West Indies and holder of a Masters from Harvard. Today, his party is embarking on a war it has every intention of winning: reform of the electoral system. Taking up the torch after Kennedy Simmonds is no easy task, but the new leader of the opposition knows that he can

always count on his predecessor. What should his party do now? "Our top priority must be the reforms. Not because we lost the elections and no longer have a seat in parliament. The Commonwealth observers have highlighted the weaknesses inherent in our system. If the government really cares about democracy, then it must address this issue as a matter of urgency. In St Kitts, we still represent more than 40% of the vote, which is a huge proportion, even if we don't have a voice in parliament."

In Nevis, the Concerned Citizens' Movement (CCM) took two seats, and the Nevis Reformation Party (NRP) held on to the third. Since gaining its independence, this Caribbean nation composed of twin islands has maintained a fragile union which almost fell apart after the referendum of August 1998 in Nevis, when 61.7% of the vote went in favour of secession - only just short of the percentage required for the island to break away.

Cooperation

Classed by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) as a middle-income country, St Kitts and Nevis enjoys exemplary political stability. With no unemployment and a literacy rate of 96%, the Federation is considered, from a socio-political perspective, to be a no-risk country. Links with the EU date back to 1976, when the sister islands were included in the agreements for association with the overseas countries and territories (OCTs). A year after its independence, the Federation became a full member of the Lomé Convention. It was allocated a sum of €3 million under the second financial protocol of Lomé IV (+ €1 million by the EIB) as part of its National Indicative Programme (NIP), and the country also benefits from various other provisions, such as the regional development programme and the Sugar Protocol.

Priority has been given to the social sector, and to health-care in particular - the NIP has made it possible to finance the extension and renovation of the two main hospitals, one in St Kitts and the other in Nevis. Last October, the Prime Minister once again cited the

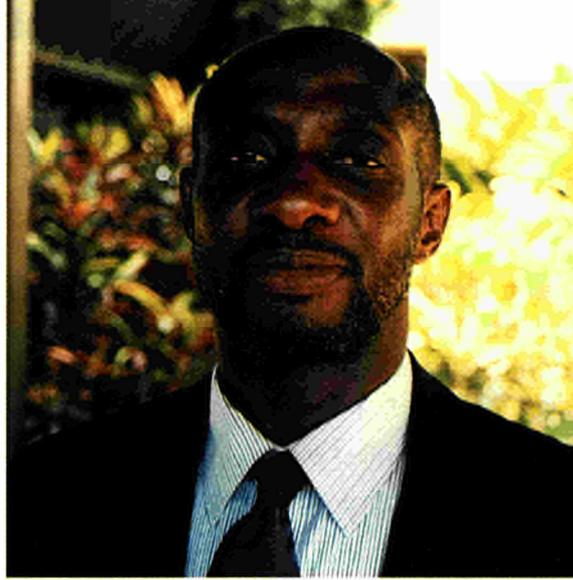
EDF as an excellent example of the fruitful relations existing between the ACPs and the EU. He was speaking at the signing ceremony for a new phase of the project to restore the Joseph N. Frances Hospital in St Kitts, a project which aims to provide increased resistance to hurricanes and earthquakes, to enable a larger number of patients to be treated and to improve the organisation of the emergency services. At the Alexandra Hospital in Nevis, priority is also being given to the emergency services, though the project will also provide equipment for the other services. This vital project for the people of St Kitts and Nevis should cost in the region of €7,012,500, with €2,700,000 coming from the 8th EDF.

Earlier programmes had mainly targeted educational facilities, particularly the construction of primary schools. Education also has pride of place in the regional programmes, which impact directly on the country. The Community College in Basseterre has recently been expanded and modernised. On Nevis, regional funds have been put to good use in improving transport infrastructure and upgrading the island's airport. Financing for this project has also been provided by the European Investment Bank (EIB).

In financial terms, the most significant aspect of the ACP-EU relationship for St Kitts and Nevis relates to its trade in sugar. Thanks to the Lomé Sugar Protocol and the special system of import quotas set up separately in 1995, the country can export a substantial quantity of cane sugar to the EU on extremely preferential terms. In 1996, a year in which 16,120 tons were exported to Europe, this arrangement was worth an estimated 8.35 million ECU to the Federation.

St Kitts and Nevis have also received EIB funds in the past to support the National Development Bank, while the CDI (Centre for Industrial Development) recently provided assistance to improve the technical capacities of a woodworking company. Aside from the Cotonou Agreement, the two islands have also signed the Regional Plan of Action to combat drug-trafficking - a project backed by the EU.

Sam Condor, Deputy Prime Minister



"St Kitts and Nevis is a success story"

Questioned after the annual meeting between members of the Cariforum and the European Union, the Deputy Prime Minister of St Kitts and Nevis was wearing a particularly happy expression.

The reforms introduced by his administration are unquestionably bearing fruit, and the authorities are now reaping the results of the efforts made in recent years.

Your government is confidently pursuing its self-imposed economic challenge of successful diversification. What are the most important means of achieving that at present?

We are living through a period of radical change. Our economy is moving away from its traditional agricultural basis towards a service-driven economy, with a very particular focus on tourism. As far as agriculture is concerned, the sugar industry provided the mainstay of growth for many years, but its contribution to GDP today has become less important - barely 2%. And that figure is still falling. Why? That's simple enough. In the last five years, especially 1998 and 1999, our islands have been hit by hurricanes and our crops sustained serious damage. Not only that, the falling value of the euro has had a direct impact on all our exports to the European market. Another point to bear in mind is that people are losing interest in the sugar industry, regarding it as too unprofitable. The younger generations have turned their backs on it, so that when the

harvest comes round we have to import foreign labour. Canadian consultants are helping us to find an answer. The industry is no longer profitable, and the government is having to subsidise it too heavily. So our party decided to consult the population and all the interest groups.

That process has just ended: we have set up a committee, which now has to draw the right conclusions and produce a report on the best way forward.

So you are going to bank on tourism. What steps have you taken in that area?

We intend to enlarge our hotel stock. On St Kitts we are intending to build more and more hotels, while Nevis is very proud of the building of the famous five-star Four Seasons hotel, which has boosted the economy. Two new hotels are being built at Frigate Bay, and there are plans for at least two more large-scale projects. The authorities expect a great deal from these new facilities, which should be finished sometime next year and will boost St Kitts' hotel capacity by 400 beds.

But one has to be realistic. If you compare this year's Ministry of Tourism figures with last year's, income has fallen. The blame for that rests with Hurricane Lenny, which led to the temporary closure of the Four Seasons. It is expected to reopen in November 2000, which should increase the number of bookings again, both for cruise passengers on stopover and for tourists spending a few nights on the islands.

Apart from tourism you are keen to invest in the new information technologies. How are you going to finance that policy?

This is an essential sector - information technology and new communications technologies. However, the high cost of telecommunications in this region is a major problem. The British company Cable & Wireless holds a monopoly. What we need to do is to deregulate the telecom industry, and the market should be opening up shortly. When that happens, costs will fall radically and this sector will become an enviable growth industry which will help us step up the pace of development. We must also not forget the manufacturing industry, especially the production of electronic components. We are welcoming a number of plants assembling components for the American market. Our government is encouraging private sector investment in all these initiatives, and it looks as though the private sector has decided to sign on!

Like other tax havens, you have been criticised by the members of the G7, who fear an increase in economic crime such as money laundering. How did St Kitts & Nevis react to that?

It is true that the offshore sector is also developing here along with tourism. It is bigger on Nevis, because Nevis has been focusing on this industry since 1984, which gives it a few years' lead. The sector covers banking, trusts and financial services in general. We are paying very close attention to this sector to ensure that we do not encounter the same problems as certain other tax havens. Yes, we were criticised by the G7 countries; but this sector is essential to our growth. We are working with other Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) to try and come up with solutions. We are particularly looking at possible amendments

to our legislation that would enable us to do more to counteract criminal activity, whether fraud or money laundering. The appearance of our name on the G7 list was beneficial, because it speeded up this process. The regional perspective takes precedence here, because most islands in this region are involved in the industry. We have already done some excellent work over the last five years, putting a lot of effort into education and into strengthening the forces of order. I would like to pay tribute to our police force, which has achieved an amazing amount of work in this field.

In general terms, the social problems of St Kitts and Nevis are similar to those found in other developing countries in the same group, especially where health is concerned. But the Prime Minister has several times stressed the importance of the campaign against AIDS.

We are classified by the UNDP as a "middle-income country." That doesn't mean that we don't have our problems! We are concerned about health, and especially about the health of our young people: too many unwanted teenage pregnancies and an alarming increase in cases of AIDS. It is not our practice to bury our heads in the sand: the Prime Minister regularly addresses these questions and encourages the public to adopt a responsible attitude. But I must say that we are really happy with our country's situation in general. We have kept our promise to build housing for thousands of people, and we can congratulate ourselves on that. The health sector can only get better. Currently, with European cooperation aid, we are renovating and enlarging the hospital on St Kitts. We have completed the upgrading of our national airport, which will enable us to accommodate even more visitors. There are plenty of education projects

under way, and European funding has enabled us to offer quality teaching to our schoolchildren and young students. Against the background of globalisation we want to be able to open up new careers for our young people which will help them secure a stronger foothold in the highly competitive world of today.

As a small island state, you rely on close collaboration with your neighbours in the region. Are you satisfied with your relations with them?

Our regional relations enable us to derive maximum benefit from the process of integration in terms of negotiation, and to profit from the increase in trade. We are a member of Caricom and the OECS, organisations which are ideally suited to the economic and social development of the Caribbean. We hold regular meetings, enabling each of us to benefit from our partners' experience. Regional cooperation really means something for this Federation, and we are committed to ensuring that the views of the people here are heard and respected. St Kitts is a political, economic and social success story. We are proud of what we have achieved so far, proud to know that our people appreciate the changes which we are now



Government buildings
at Basseterre

experiencing, and proud to know that they are one hundred per cent behind us.

There is one fly in the ointment, though: many of the residents of Nevis still feel marginalised. How does your government see its relations with Charlestown?

That is a problem we will never be able to sort out - the unending dispute between big brother and little brother. We are having to learn to live with our disagreements. I understand and sympathise with the Nevisians' anxieties regarding their right to administer their own island, but I believe that we are going to have to share

our programmes, policies and projects. We need to stay together. Nevis will never be able to branch out on its own, but in saying that I am not questioning their right to their own administration. Personally, I support their initiatives and their views, but I hope they don't really want to secede. As I previously said, the Cariforum states are combining to benefit from programmes which will enable them to develop. That in itself shows the power and importance of unity. And that is the message I would send to Nevis. I understand the desire for autonomy, but the reality is that our destiny is for our two islands to move forward together.

Vance Amory, Prime Minister of Nevis

**“Political argument is no longer
the most urgent thing”**

The ferry crossing between St Kitts and Nevis takes only 45 minutes. The tourists click away with their cameras, the regulars doze and businessmen take the opportunity to catch up on the newspapers. On arrival, you feel like a time traveller: the colonial houses bordering the main street of Charlestown, the capital of the island, are perfectly preserved - you almost expect to meet women in 18th-century costume around the street corner.

After soaking up the very special atmosphere of the Nevisian capital, the first port of call is the offices of the *St Kitts Nevis Observer*. Journalists are discussing the day's stories or going through their paperwork, hidden behind computer screens. After asking directions several times, we are received by Vance Amory, Prime Minister of Nevis and the leader of the majority party, a young, determined and athletic figure who realises that the way ahead for his island is through relations with the outside world.

Secession: a vanishing dream?

"Not at all," protests Vance Amory calmly. "The signal sent out by the referendum result is not that people are afraid of seeing Nevis in charge of its own destiny. There are some people who would like you to think so, people who have done all they could to create that fear. Consider what happens elsewhere: in most cases, a referendum of this kind will be carried if it receives 51% of the votes in favour. Here on Nevis, we have to produce a 67% yes vote. Well, in the present case, the message sent out by the Nevisians was clear enough - nearly 62% of them said yes to secession, and that is a significant figure. In fact, the margin was enormous!

"Our problem, to be totally frank, is the inconsiderate attitude of the federal authorities. Nevis' position - and I must stress that I personally was not responsible for this state of affairs - is that



the people and the administration here are very conscious of too many imbalances in the St Kitts and Nevis system. Nevis is not getting its fair share. We also fear an increasing tendency on the part of St Kitts to exercise control over Nevis's economic and social activities. We are aware of a process of government recentralisation, dissipating the gains we made as a result of the constitutional process in 1983. There are basic areas where the people of Nevis feel they are being marginalised. Yes, we had a referendum, and the figures say that we lost. But the figures also say that we won: the majority of the people of Nevis are in favour of secession. I know that the people want to control their own destiny, and that feeling is not going to go away unless the imbalances go away first. And that will remain true whether I continue to lead the administration here or whether someone else takes over from me. Only three years ago we were asked to vote. Today, political argument is no longer the most urgent thing - the essential issue is to ensure that people have jobs, good social services, a good education and good infrastructures. Those are the things we want to concern ourselves with at present."

The benefits of consistency

Eight years ago Vance Amory's party came to power, taking on responsibility for the economic and social development of Nevis. Today, he reasserts his determination to steer the process of development in the best interests of the people. Vance Amory mentions a number of development projects which are close to his heart, especially in the health sector.

"We want to renovate the Alexandra Hospital, which provides 64 beds for our people. We have been working on that for seven years now, and it should be financed by European cooperation. The EDF has also provided funds to upgrade

Nevis airport, through the Cariforum regional programmes. Thanks to a loan from the EIB, that project has been completed and we are very happy to have been able a beneficiary. The airport is a vital project for the economy of Nevis: all the essentials are now in place to attract more incoming flights. Our objective is to build a proper terminal, and we have already been able to persuade the Kuwaitis to finance the building work; it should be beginning shortly. I should also point out that European cooperation enabled us, a few years ago, to enlarge some of our primary and secondary schools."

Tourism and finance

Tourism is one of the mainstays of the Nevisian economy, providing the administration with 25% of its direct and indirect revenue. The leader of Nevis is delighted with the results achieved by this industry, and believes future prospects are rosy.

"Between 1998 and 1999, we welcomed 45,000 visitors to Nevis, and we hope to see a further increase in those numbers, despite the slow-down caused by the destruction of our main hotel by Hurricane Lenny. The reconstruction work is almost complete, and we are looking forward to an excellent season."

The biggest benefit to Nevis's economy comes from offshore



Nevis hospital, which the government would like to upgrade with European aid

financial services. This is a fast-growing sector, which in 1999 brought in EC \$6 million in direct income. But other benefits, such as the leasing and construction of buildings, are the most important.

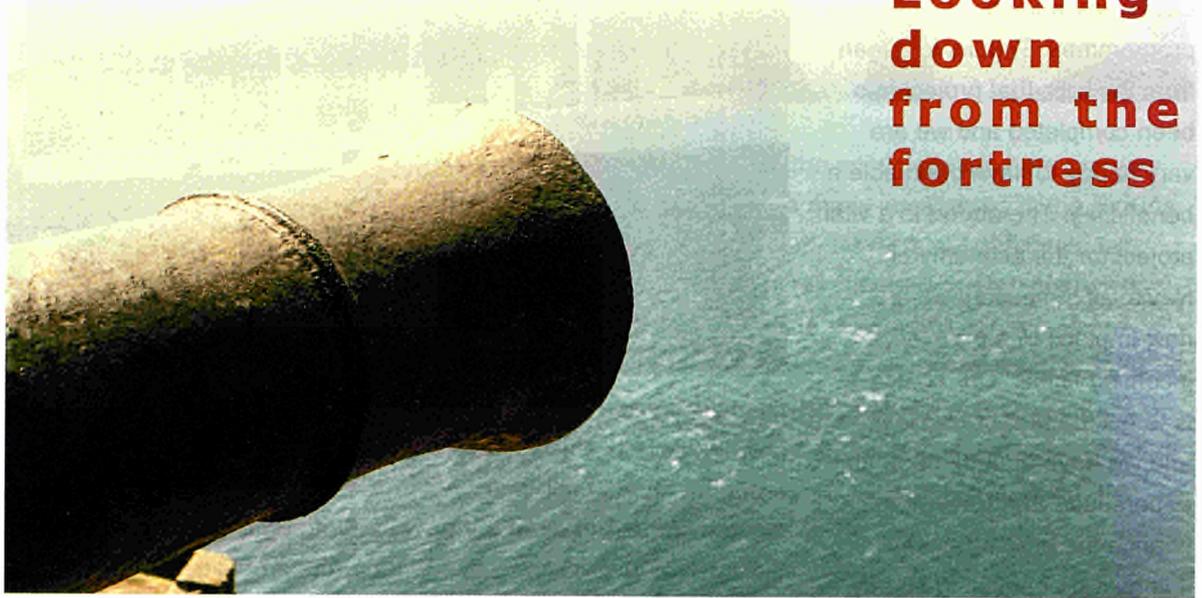
"A reasonable guess would be that 10% of government income comes from this sector," says Vance Amory, "but we estimate that its general contribution to Nevis's economy probably exceeds 20%."

As a tax haven, though, Nevis fears adverse repercussions from its appearance on the blacklist of countries which are likely to facilitate money laundering. "I have to say that we have never encouraged any unlawful activities in our country. We have already been looking at ways of modifying our administration to prevent any criminal activity from escaping our vigilance. We have made changes to the management structure of this industry to ensure that our transactions are transparent and that we attract only the best kind of business. There is enough activity in the market for Nevis to be able to

participate without doing any damage to the European or American economies."

Drug trafficking is another current problem. "On Nevis we are afraid that the authorities are not controlling, and cannot control, our borders.

Sometimes, we do become aware that drugs are passing through the island. In most cases, though, we apply our own policy: zero tolerance of any form of trafficking, crime or money laundering. We do everything we can to cooperate with the United States, the EU and its task force to fight this scourge. My government will be 100% behind this campaign. Internally, we are trying to increase our capacity, especially on the social side, by increasing awareness among young people, but also by strengthening our police force. We need help here. European countries are worried about the effects of drug consumption at home, and they should help us to put an end to it. Maybe our future projects will need to focus on these issues."



Looking down from the fortress

Today, happily, it is no longer used for military purposes, but it still occupies a dominant position and has been recognised by the international community. Black slaves took more than 100 years to finish building it. Unesco's World Heritage Committee recently included Brimstone Hill Fortress in its list of 48 new sites. This is the first site to be chosen in the English-speaking West Indies, and is one of 630 cited of exceptional universal value in 118 countries. This new entry reflects Unesco's desire to improve the geographical balance and also its concern for the concept of the "cultural landscape".

It is very hot. It always is. Violet Wiggley's weaves idly along the half-deserted roads - it is close to midday, and the people of St Kitts are preparing lunch. Suddenly, my guide swings to the right, and the car begins to climb gently: we have just entered the Brimstone Hill National Park. Violet is emphatic, anxious that I should understand: slaves carried the stones up this same hill on their backs, one by one, year after year, to build this jewel of the world heritage.

"No one is probably aware of it, no one says much about it, even my own compatriots don't really know their own history."

On reaching the top, you can turn through 360° and see the same glorious views everywhere: the contrasting colours of the turquoise sea and green of the sugar cane plantations, a green that takes on a deeper tinge as you turn towards the forest. And finally, when you can tear your eyes away from the landscape, you see a building in perfect harmony with it.

The Unesco delegates emphasise that this fortress is important in the historical context of the slave market, which should never be forgotten, and say that this recognition will improve the representation of the Caribbean on the world heritage list.

Brimstone Hill is a striking example of military architecture of the 17th and 18th centuries in a Caribbean context of special interest because it is an example of a peculiarly British solution: the selection of natural outcrops as the site for a fortress, serving as both defence and refuge.

Sulphurous beginnings...

St Kitts, like most Caribbean islands, is volcanic. In the bowels of the earth, centuries of ceaseless activity threw up mountains of lava, including Brimstone Hill, which derives its name from the smell of sulphur rising from the water below. A mass of volcanic rock covered by

limestone, the same stone that the slaves quarried to build this impressive structure. In the fortress museum, a video tells the visitor everything he needs to know. The building of the fortress began in 1690, its purpose to drive the French out of Fort Charles below, and continued for over a century. Strategically located to defend the ports and trading towns, it served as a refuge for planters, merchants and dignitaries in time of war. In 1782, it was encircled and bombarded by 8,000 French troops, compelling the British defenders to surrender after a month-long siege. Nevertheless, St Kitts was restored to the British crown a year after the Versailles Treaty was signed. A massive programme of reconstruction was then undertaken, earning the Brimstone Hill fortress the name of the "Gibraltar of the West Indies". But, in the mid-19th century, British eyes turned elsewhere, and a period of decline began. In the 1930s people began to rediscover the traces of vanished splendour beneath the dense covering of vegetation, but it was only in 1965 that the Brimstone Hill Restoration Society was founded to embark upon a Herculean labour of restoration. The ruins needed to be stabilised, various structures restored and buildings reconstructed: the task of promoting the value of this heritage to the public had begun.

Not to be missed

Brimstone Hill Fortress has become a major tourist attraction. Following Rastamba, a young guide with a passionate interest in history, the visitor begins the tour at the capital, Citadelle, one of the world's best-preserved examples of polygonal fortification. The water supply system and the amazing way in which the barracks, bastions and other parts of the fort are fitted into the hillside are marvels of ingenuity. Although designed by the British, it is still difficult to understand how the massive building and maintenance work could be done by slaves. Archaeological investigations are being carried out to explore the living quarters of the slaves in the surrounding area to find traces of the way they lived and their vital association with the fortress.



In 1987, the Brimstone Hill area was declared a National Park. The administration, preservation and exploitation of the fortress were entrusted to the Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park Society, a non-profit NGO.

Every year, more than 50,000 visitors come to admire the monument's architecture. This outstanding fortress, built by slaves to exacting standards at the peak of Europe's colonial expansion in the Caribbean, is not only an exceptional and well-preserved example of British military architecture. It also stands as but also a memorial to the phenomenal labour of the slaves who contributed to the development of St Kitts & Nevis. And in that spirit the government organised the festivities in October 2000 to mark Brimstone Hill's classification as a World Heritage Site.

Brimstone Hill - the "Gibraltar of the West Indies".
The historic fortress, bristling with bastions and barracks, offers a matchless view of the island from its vantage point atop a 250 metre hill.

Profile

St Kitts and Nevis



General Information

Official Name:	Federation of Saint Christopher and Nevis, popularly known as St Kitts and Nevis. Independent state within the Commonwealth
Independence:	Former British and French colony, independent since 19 September 1983
Area:	261 km ² , (St Kitts 168 km ² and Nevis 93 km ²)
Capital:	Basseterre, on St Kitts
Main towns:	Charlestown, Newcastle, Sandy Point
Population:	45,000, 95% African origin (St Kitts 35,000 and Nevis 10,000)
Official language:	English. Spoken language: Creole
Main religious groups:	Anglican, other Protestant, Roman Catholic

Economy

GDP per capita:	4780 US\$
GDP growth per capita:	4.5% (1990-98)
Inflation rate:	3.3% (1998)
External debt:	43.2% of GDP (1998)
Currency:	EC\$, Eastern Caribbean dollar: fixed at EC\$ 2.70 = \$1 (since 07/07/76) ; €1 = EC\$ 2.290140
Main sectors:	Services (mainly tourism, accounting for 71.1% of GDP), industry (24.3% of GDP), agriculture (4.6% of GDP)
Main exports:	Sugar, electronic goods, clothing, postage stamps
Main imports:	Foodstuffs, machinery, fuel, electronic goods, drinks, tobacco

Politics

Head of State:	British monarch represented by Governor-General Sir Cuthbert Sebastian
Head of Government:	Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs
Political system:	Parliamentary democracy
Executive:	The Prime Minister heads a cabinet of 5 ministers and an Attorney-General
Legislative assembly:	Unicameral Assembly of 14 members. 11 members (8 on St Kitts, 3 on Nevis) elected by direct universal suffrage for 5 years, and 3 members appointed by the Governor (2 at the proposal of the Prime Minister, 1 at the proposal of the Leader of the Opposition)
Regional legislature:	The island of Nevis has its own administrative body, the Nevis Island Assembly, and guaranteed central representation.
Main political parties:	St Kitts: The St Kitts-Nevis Labour Party (SKNLP); The People's Action Movement (PAM) Nevis: The Concerned Citizens' Movement (CCM); The Nevis Reformation Party (NRP)
Next elections:	2005

Social Indicators

Population growth rate:	forecast -0.5% (1998-2015)
Life expectancy at birth:	70 years (1998)
Adult literacy:	90% (1998)
Access to drinking water:	100%
Access to health services:	100%
Human development index rating:	47th out of 175

Press and Democracy



Lorenzo Natali Prize

Winning issues: poverty, gender, environment

The European Commission has awarded the Lorenzo Natali Prize for Journalism 2000 jointly to five journalists from European and developing countries for articles on development and human rights focusing on poverty, women's issues and the environment.

The Developing World category winners are **Atiya Achak Ulwisut** of Thailand's *The Bangkok Post*, and **Fariah Razak Haroon**, freelancing for Pakistan's *Dawn Magazine*.

First prize in the European Union category goes to **Marco Bello** and **Paolo Moiola** writing for Italy's *Mondo e Missione*, and **Astrid Prange**, a freelance contributor to the *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt*.

Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Poul Nielson, congratulated the winners: "The winning articles clearly illustrate that respect for human rights and improving basic social conditions must be the basis of development world-wide."

The Natali Prize, named after the late Commissioner for development and campaigner for human rights, is awarded annually to one journalist from the European Union and one from the South, reporting on democracy and human rights as vital aspects of development. Exceptionally, this year the two €10,000 first prizes are shared between four winning articles.

Over 100 entries were received from leading media organisations in 42 countries. Seven prominent journalists working in the field of development and human rights were invited to act as the jury.

Developing World awards

Atiya Achak Ulwisut reported on Karen villagers in Thailand facing environmental disaster as toxic pollution from an upstream lead mine destroys their fresh water supply. Atiya's well-crafted journalism stirred the Thai authorities into action to address the problem.

Fariha Razak Haroon's lead story in *Dawn Magazine*, "Women are Falling Behind," tackles the issue of women's rights violations in Pakistan.

Jury member Victoria Brittain praised Haroon's brave effort to touch on "what is arguably the most important human rights and development issue there is."

European Union awards

"An exceptional piece of honest development and human rights journalism," was the jury assessment of the work of Marco Bello and Paolo Moiola. They present a powerful picture of Haiti's social and political conditions in a captivating and unassuming journalistic style.

The second winning entry in this category describes the courage of a young Guinean woman who sought refuge in Germany to escape the degradation and torment of female genital mutilation, justified in the name of tradition. Eva Camara, the first African woman to apply for asylum in Germany on the basis of cultural persecution, was the subject of Astrid Prange de Oliveira's "Angst vor dem Blut." Her moving and skilful report persuaded the jury to nominate two winners in this category.

Special commendations

The jury selected three other journalists for special mention: a series on the war against drugs in Colombia, written by **Alain Lallemand** and published in Belgium's *Le Soir*; **Dorette Deutsch** for her article "Die traurigen Braute zer Zadrime," exploring the drama of thousands of young Albanian women forced to join prostitution rings in Western Europe through fake marriages arranged by the mafia, published in Germany's *Suddeutsche Zeitung*; and **John Kunnappally** for a five-part series "Slumbers in the toxic land," highlighting the pollution of fresh water and air resulting from an industrial scandal in Kerala, India.

Finally, the jury decided to commend two news agencies: *Syfia*, based in France, for their laudable efforts to spread information focusing on rural areas of the developing world, and *O Povo*, based in Brazil, for its comprehensive coverage of regional problems in a poor part of Brazil.

The Fear of Blood

Eva Camarà is from Guinea. She decided to leave before she could be circumcised. Will she be allowed to stay in Germany?

by Astrid Prange

one of the four winners of 2000's Lorenzo Natali prize for journalism about development issues

Just for once, she wanted to take control of her own life. In the small West African state of Guinea, though, a woman's life is controlled by family and tradition. And that's what 26-year-old Eva Camarà is running away from. For her, rather than meaning security and respect, family and tradition are by-words for the humiliation of polygamy and the horror of genital mutilation.

Eva has managed to get away from all that.

Last May she landed in Berlin on a flight from Moscow and is now sharing a room with a woman from Rwanda in a hostel for asylum seekers in Freienohl, a suburb of the idyllic Upper Sauerland town of Meschede.

But even now her fate is not in her own hands. Since 16 June 1997, when her application for asylum was refused as "clearly unfounded," she has had to rely on the good will of the regional immigration authorities. They have the power to postpone her deportation - or not.

"I wasn't happy in Guinea," says Eva - this is something of an understatement. She speaks

of being surrounded by whispering voices. She makes a pair of scissors with two fingers and rubs them up and down her body. "This woman's unclean, dirty; she's not circumcised." She still can't get those voices of contempt out of her head.

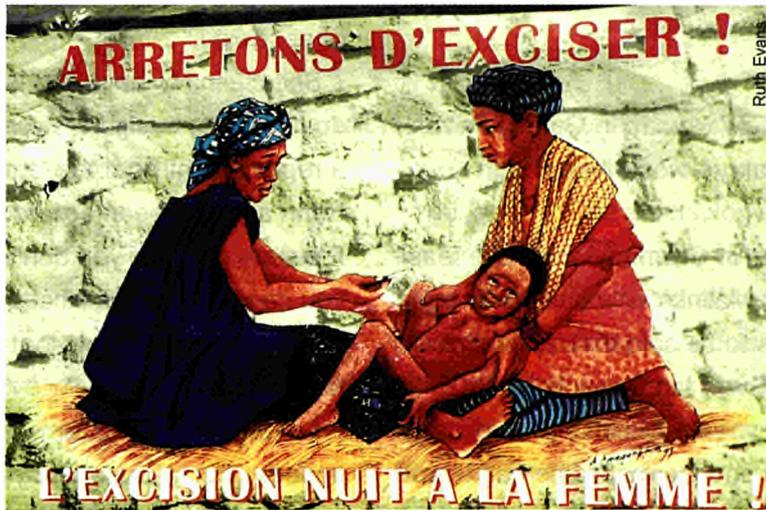
She knows if she ever goes home she will be faced with circumcision, a ceremonial cutting away of all outer sexual organs and sewing up of the vagina, leaving only a small

opening. The stitches are then removed with a knife shortly before marriage.

Her sister Mariam bled to death.

Eva is afraid. At 26

years of age, she refuses to come under the knife of one of the old women who perform village circumcisions. She is afraid she will share the fate of her older sister, Mariam, who bled to death at the age of ten as a result of this ritualised torture. Her mother swore there and then that no one else in the family would be circumcised; she protected her younger daughter Eva with white lies, claiming she had already had the "operation."



When, 10 years later (in 1987), both her parents died in a car accident, the 15 year old Eva was taken in as his own daughter by a family friend. But "I was playing with a friend one day and gave away my secret," she admits, eyes to the ground. When her guardian wanted to marry her off to a 70 year old man who already had three wives, he insisted that she be circumcised. That's when she left. A neighbour had got her a visa and a plane ticket.

She knew: "Even if I found another man who loved me so much he was prepared for me not to go through with the operation, his family would still insist."

There are 130 million victims of female genital mutilation and the number is growing by two million a year.

Living as a single woman in Guinea - even in the capital, Conakry - would have been impossible.

But is life alone in Germany any more feasible for an ethnic Malinke who has never been to school? It has to be said that, considering she is illiterate, Eva's language skills are impressive: she speaks Malinke (her mother tongue), French and German. She has learnt German from a teaching cassette.

"I think I have some talent," she says, "that's why I want to learn at least to write and read."

Every now and then Eva doesn't know which way to turn - then she takes refuge in her tears. Ingrid Schünemann, who works with refugees in and around Meschede for the Diakonisches Werk, takes pity. She arranges contacts with solicitors, fills in applications, writes petitions.

She has taken Eva's case to the Petitions

Committee of the North Rhine-Westphalian Parliament - and to some effect. After their summer break, the committee members will be visiting Eva in Meschede to ask her personally about her reasons for fleeing Guinea. Refugee counsellor Schünemann hopes that deportation will be put off at least until after that visit. At the Meschede immigration office, they are not so sure, however - a letter from the authorities reads as follows: "The submission of a petition may not have the effect of delaying deportation; the existence of a pending petition procedure does not therefore represent a legal obstacle to deportation."

Every week since turning down her application for asylum, the immigration authorities have contacted Eva in this vein, demanding that she leave.

"Only one of the officials says hello," she says, "the others just give me funny looks and I get scared."

She claims to have lost her passport. She doesn't want to sign a sworn statement to get a replacement from the Guinean Embassy in Bonn and has been ordered to pay a DEM 450 fine as a result. If you don't have a passport you can stay longer - that's one of the vagaries of German asylum law that works in her favour.

For the time being, anyway: "In order to impede your deportation, you refused - and continue to refuse - to cooperate in efforts to obtain a substitute passport document" - so runs the ruling of the Meschede District Court.

But Ingrid Schünemann is not giving up.

"If the petition doesn't work, she can always apply for asylum in the USA or Canada," she says. These countries recognise the threat of genital mutilation as grounds for granting asylum. Schünemann has already approached the United Nations' High Commission for Refugees about this. A positive evaluation

ARRETONS D'EXCISER !

Ruth Evans



from the UNHCR would probably get Eva a US residence permit. As a former child refugee from East Prussia, Schönemann has an eye for that all-important "hole in the fence."

Maybe one day Eva will follow in the footsteps of Waris Dirie from Somalia. She too fled from the prospect of marriage to an old man who had bought her from her father. Waris Dirie is now 28, lives as a top model in New York and travels the world as a United Nations goodwill ambassador to fight against the mass circumcision of women.

One last hope

There are 130 million victims of female genital mutilation and the number is growing by two million a year.

"It's just something everyone expects -

young girls have to be circumcised," explains Aboubacar Souar, a sociology lecturer from the University of Conakry currently researching a doctorate at the Free University of Berlin, "opposing it is social suicide."

For the Malinke ethnic group to which Eva belongs, circumcision is a condition of eligibility for marriage.

"Unpleasant consequences are blamed on occult forces of destruction," says Souar.

On 17 June, the Bundestag publicly condemned genital mutilation as a serious breach of human rights. MPs from all sides called for a *de facto* right of residence for all women faced with this prospect. This recommendation is not legally binding, however - Eva Camarà's last hope is that the Upper Sauerland regional immigration authorities will take it up.

Anti-circumcision poster in Mali

Structures for strengthening democracy in Africa

In various African countries, press bodies, centres or watchdogs have been created to promote the profession of journalist, an often difficult career in these young and

sometimes fragile democracies. This is an interview with a Belgian lecturer at the University of Ouagadougou, **Marie Soleil Frère**, a specialist in the media of West Africa.

When and under what circumstances were the press centres, bodies and watchdogs set up in Africa?

You have to understand the difference between press watchdogs and press bodies and centres - they don't have the same structure or function. Watchdogs were set up on the initiative of journalists and publishers as self-regulating bodies. They were created in the wake of the "anything goes" period which existed in the early 1990s after liberalisation of the media, which led to consideration of how the profession could be regulated. The professional corps of journalists, often joined by publishers, concluded that it should not be up to the existing official institutions to take responsibility for matters of ethics and codes of practice on the part of journalists; the profession itself had to take matters in hand. This was why the watchdogs were created, as bodies belonging to civil society and therefore non-institutional, and why they are composed of representatives of both journalists' associations and members coopted from civil society. They deal with codes of practice and ethics, a wide and undefined area. Watchdogs have no official power to impose sanctions against journalists, and they themselves acknowledge that certain breaches of the code fall under the jurisdiction of the courts, for example, in cases of defamation or breaches of state security.

So what is the role of the press bodies or centres?

Press bodies and centres are generally the result of the professions own desire to organise itself, to provide a common response to the needs that everyone has and should take care of individually. One of the first initiatives was the Ghana International Press Centre which was founded by the Ghana Journalists' Association in 1993. It received the support of the IFJ (International Federation of Journalists) through the Media for Democracy in Africa project which was financed by the European Union. These organisations are set up and operated very differently: some are simply meeting places and don't do much; others, however, offer a number of commercial services and are interested primarily in financial autonomy, as is the case of the press body in Togo. The press body in Mali, supported by the Panos Institute, has conducted an interesting and original experiment. It has been supplied with IT equipment, and five small information production and receiving centres have been set up in five provincial towns in order to open up these areas and make them less isolated, thus improving the circulation of information within Mali. Other bodies or centres, however, have become involved in more political struggles for the defence of press freedom. In Brazzaville, for example, the local press body acted as a central point for information and gathered photographic documents during the periods of war - its task is focused much more on current events.

Was that not also the case of the National Press Centre in Burkina Faso, which took a stand at the time of the assassination of the journalist Norbert Zongo, subsequently adopting his name?

Norbert Zongo was one of the founder members of the National Press Centre which got caught up in events involving the protest movement which grew up after Mr Zongo's assassination. Its mission was primarily to report on the development of protest movements. Some people saw this as a desire to campaign against the government but in fact it was more to promote the circulation of information. At the time of Mr Zongo's assassination, the national press remained cautious - the Centre had received a great many applications from outside, not only from the media but also from associations for the defence of human rights, who wanted more information on what was going on in Burkina Faso. In my opinion, the Centre played an important role in getting this information out.

How would you describe the situation of the press in West Africa today?

It varies a great deal. In certain countries, such as Benin, where the press has considerable freedom, there are a whole range of private dailies, some of which are of good quality. The press in Senegal is also excellent; however, in Côte d'Ivoire it has become involved in political upheaval and there has been terrible abuse. The press in Niger has suffered from a lack of political stability.

In Burkina Faso, the press has some degree of freedom, but suffers from a lack of resources and therefore takes refuge in "report-based" journalism. This is, in fact, a problem shared by newspapers in many African countries where, gradually, news coverage becomes a kind of piecemeal. This means that the journalist does not travel

unless he knows he will be paid. In certain editorial teams this procedure is definitely official, and editors provide estimates to journalists who request them. This dysfunctional set-up exists in nearly all countries and arises from the generally precarious situation, poor circulation figures, and the absence of advertising markets.

In your book,* you examine Benin and Niger, addressing the situation of the press during the transition to democracy in French-speaking Africa. Is the period you have studied very different from the current situation?

The book begins with the national conferences and tries to describe how journalists wrote about political developments and democracy itself during the transition period, that is the period between the national conferences and the first free and democratic elections. These were times of great freedom, when everyone said just what they thought, and the media scene was not well organised. Given that audio-visual freedom did not exist, the written press was the essential forum for pluralist debate on events. My interest was examining what journalists said at that time and how they made use of press freedom.

You say in your book that the media were an essential element in the political game. Is this still the case today?

In certain countries, journalists have played an essential role in the political game! Nevertheless, it's difficult to evaluate how far this went. During the transitional period the press was very political, its first aim being to take sides in the national debate. A journalist would belong to one of the fringes of a population globally engaged in the democratic struggle. They were teachers, trades unionists, etc. This sector of the population was engaged in a political struggle and, it fought it out

An honourable code of practice

Some African countries are struggling against the corruption which is grawing away at the professions. Journalists in Benin have therefore just adopted a code of practice which lays down the rules for exercising the profession of journalist. Two provisions relate in particular to current payment practices. They have been vigorously contested by certain journalists who felt that they were unrealistic. The response of Jérôme Badou, Chairman of the Media Code of Practice Watchdog, in his speech at the launch of the Code, was clear that to reject integrity was to place oneself on the fringes of the profession. He added that a certain level of pay does not lead automatically to membership of the profession, as there are other aspects involved which do not appear in any text. In his view, everyone is aware of the values to which they adhere in their own life.

Article 5:

Professional integrity, donations and gifts.

Apart from the remuneration due to a journalist from his employer in the context of his professional services, every journalist must refuse to accept money or any advantage in kind from the beneficiaries of or persons concerned by the services he renders, irrespective of value and motive.

He shall not yield to pressure and shall accept editorial guidance only from editorial team managers. A journalist shall reject any type of blackmail based on the publication or non-publication of information against being paid.

Article 18:

Incompatibility of the functions of journalist and press attaché.

The post of press attaché, public relations officer and other similar posts shall be incompatible with a simultaneous career as a professional journalist.

M-A Leplaideur/InfoSud

using the press as one of its means. Nowadays, I believe most countries have a pluralist press, although, sometimes, the dividing lines between the various media closely follow political divisions. The press is thus very political, very much involved in politicking, and often too ideological or propagandist. This highly politicised press reflects a certain diversity of opinion, but continues to ignore a whole sector of civil society not involved in the political struggle and which has other things to say. However, this is not the case everywhere. In Burkina Faso, for example, the press is neutral; apart from a few identifiable titles which are known to be close to one politician or another, the press is not in the pay of political parties as in other countries.

Why did you choose Benin and Niger for your analysis?

I chose Benin because that country was regarded as the prototype for the transition to democracy in the French-speaking African countries. The country had experienced a far-reaching peaceful revolution. Niger, on the other hand, is one of those countries which, two years later, tried simply to imitate the transition

as it had taken place in Benin. Failure was practically total! All that Benin had been able to achieve fell apart in Niger for a variety of reasons. In my opinion, the transition in Niger was a bungled imitation of the Benin experience! The ongoing instability which Niger has known since its transition is also reflected in its press, which is still extremely underdeveloped. Niger's context is one in which the intellectual elite is more restricted, where French speakers are less numerous, and where the standard of living is lower. The potential market for the press in Niger is thus more limited.

Valérie Michaux

Presse et démocratie en Afrique francophone. Les mots et les maux de la transition au Niger et au Benin [Press and Democracy in French-speaking Africa. Words and Woes of the transition in Niger and Benin], has just been published by Karthala.

Looking out for a responsible press

by Emmanuel Vidjinnagni Adjovi

Since 1995, media professionals in French-speaking West Africa have been setting up press watchdogs in order to promote codes of ethics and ensure that they are observed.

"Our institutions function as the conscience of journalists: our aim is to encourage people to respect the rules of their profession and to reconcile press freedom and responsibility."

Appolinaire Mewenemessè, the Chairman of the Togolese media watchdog committee (OTM) describes the aims of the media self-regulation bodies that have emerged in West Africa over the past few years.

Côte d'Ivoire set the tone by setting up the Press Freedom Ethics and Code of Practice Watchdog Committee (OLPED) in 1995. The movement accelerated during 1999 with the birth of the Media Code of Practice and Ethics Watchdog Committee (ODEM) in Benin, the Independent Media Ethics and Code of Practice Centre in Niger (CIMED), the Ethics and Code of Practice Observance Committee (CRED) in Senegal, OTM in Togo and the National Press Watchdog Committee (ONAP) in Burkina Faso. Other countries, such as Mali, Guinea-Conakry and Cameroon are preparing to join this movement.

Inspired by the example in English-speaking countries, self-regulating bodies are institutions made up of mainly media professionals and a number of well-known public figures. Their role is to ensure the promotion and observance of professional codes of ethics and to defend the freedom of the press.

This internal policy was created to prevent the media becoming discredited and to reconcile press freedom with responsibility.

"The creation in Africa of these peer appraisal bodies arose from the need to restore the reputation of the profession, which has been tarnished over the past few years by the corruption of certain journalists, the extreme politicisation of the press and a preoccupation with the sensational," emphasises Jérémie Sigué Bouréma, chairman of the National Press Watchdog Committee in Burkina Faso.

Liberalised as part of the wave of democratisation that has been breaking over Africa since 1990, the African press is nonetheless subject to all kinds of malpractice. For example, a Nigerian journalist wrote that the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the General Chief of Staff of the Army all originated from the western region, and he called on the other regions to mobilise in order to fight against the control of profitable and strategic positions by "the Western forces." In Mali, the mother of the President of the Republic was even insulted on a private radio station.

A court of honour

In most countries, politicians use journalists to settle private quarrels. This leads to a vicious circle of defamation, which discredits the African press, whose freedom is tending to pose a threat to democracy instead of being its standard bearer. "The media professionals have decided to respond to these undesirable practices by putting their own house in order, to prevent the political authorities from casting doubt on the advances that have been made," explains

Panos Pictures/ Betty Press



Nairobi, Kenya:
Peter Nyamora
and his father own
and edit a monthly
magazine

Moussa Massalatchi, the Chairman of CIMED in Niger.

To carry out their work, self-regulating bodies are setting up tribunals to rule on complaints against the press from the public, complaints by organs of the press against other organs, and complaints by journalists against the media. They can also speak out against their own kind, as did ODEM in Benin. In September 1999, it condemned three Benin journalists who had been bribed by the Togolese government to spread misinformation in Benin about the corpses affair revealed by Amnesty International.

Unlike the rulings of state courts, the penalties levied by state watchdog committees are not monetary fines or prison sentences, but rather moral sanctions indicating whether the journalist in question has behaved ethically or professionally. Their decisions are published in newspapers and audio-visual media and will soon be published more widely, since the watchdog committees which met in Cotonou in July 2000 have set up a network, one of whose objectives is to publish the rulings of self-regulation bodies in all the countries in question.

Discrediting criticised journalists

Many journalists consider that the absence of coercive force is a weakness of self-regulation

bodies. Soulé Issiaka, the Director of the Africa Office of Radio Nederland replies by pointing out that condemnations by ODEM in Benin "had a devastating effect on the titles and journalists criticised."

"The damage reveals itself over time," explains Robert Maltais, from the Quebec Press Council, before going on to ask: "What is the point of a journalist who is continually described by his peers as someone who does not know his profession?"

The watchdog committees are not content with pronouncing sanctions.

They are also helping to professionalise media personnel by organising meetings, sessions and workshops to provide training in and information on ethics and the problems of the profession, and raising awareness. This applies to CIMED in Niger, which initiated a series of conferences on basic documents relating to the press and the rules of the profession.

"Undesirable practices arise partly because the media were overwhelmed by men and women who had no professional training or knowledge of codes of practice or ethics applicable to press occupations," concludes Jérôme Carlos in the general report on the Cotonou conference on self-regulation bodies.

Self-regulation bodies also act as mediators. For example, as a result of a request by Togo's OTM to the Ministry of Justice, the latter abandoned its action against the Director of *Le Scorpion* newspaper, accused of having defamed magistrates.

"Our main difficulty is due to the fact that we are defending ethics and the freedom of the press. If you hit out at journalists, you are helping to destroy freedom. This is the tightrope on which we are too frequently obliged to walk," explains Zio Moussa of Côte d'Ivoire.

Playing with fire: the Congolese press

by Blanche Nkouka

Financed by the political parties, devoid of any professional code of ethics, the Congolese press has got itself a bad name. Some even accuse it of being partly responsible for the wars which have ravaged the country.

“No reprieve for the warmongers!” This unequivocal headline is splashed in huge print across the front page of a pro-government newspaper, next to photographs of Lissouba, Kolelas, Yhombi and Mougounga, all crossed through in red.... The paper is well known for its hostility towards the Lari-speaking populations from the region which is home to Bernard Kolelas, Lissouba's former prime minister.

At a time when the Congolese are increasingly talking of the possibility of a dialogue with nobody excluded, allowing the leaders of the civil wars to come and sort out the obstacles to peace, this particular newspaper obviously does not intend to see the exiles taking part in any such dialogue. At the other extreme, another newspaper, which opposes the government, recently ran the following headline: "Bernard Kolelas could be President of the Republic at the end of the next presidential election." The newspapers from the south of the capital are past masters in the art of exploiting rumours that the 'Katangans' (originating from Likouala, Northern Congo - editor's note) are fomenting a *coup d'état* against the current regime.

These headlines are just two of many examples of newspapers taking either pro- or anti-government stances. The front pages of Congolese newspapers are aggressive and provocative. Their articles are contentious, if not downright tribalist.

As they admit at *The Observer* in Brazzaville, "the Congolese press is partly to blame for the civil wars which have shaken the country." It is not over yet, either. "Incapable of learning from the past, the Congolese media are behaving

more and more irresponsibly," adds the newspaper. "The tragedy is that journalists, irrespective of which side they are on, write articles without first weighing up or even considering the consequences. Their main sources of information are rumours, leaflets and communiqués from trade unionists trying to start a strike." laments Alain Shungu, correspondent in the Congo for Radio-France Internationale and *Reporters sans frontières* (Reporters Without Borders).

Fuelling the flames

This university professor agrees: "You only have to look at what some journalists are writing about the end of the transition... you'd think, from what they have to say, that the Republic of 24 October is coming to an end and that the President is going to organise new elections. Nowhere is it explained what would happen according to the founding Act should the transition come to an end under the terms of the law. All the journalists are interested in doing is fuelling the flames."

Last April, the Minister of Communication, François Ibovi, accused several newspapers of very nearly starting a new war between the two Congos. After the munitions depot was blown up at Kinshasa airport, *The Observer* wrote, *inter alia*, that this had "revived the suspicions and fears of Kabila's government concerning the Right Bank Congo." In the same edition, it also stated: "It's an open secret that Congo Brazzaville plays an important role as a country of transit in the war in the DRC (Democratic Republic of the Congo), if only by dint of its geographical location, which gives an advantage to the Equateur rebels led by Bemba junior."

Panos Pictures/Martin Adler



In the wake of this statement, the newspaper then went on to accuse Bemba junior of having recruited men from Brazzaville to transport weapons up the Congo river to Equateur province. This news was refuted by the Brazzaville authorities, which are forever admonishing 'reckless' journalists (ie those who support the opposition - editor's note). The Minister of Information never fails to conclude his press briefings by denouncing these newspapers for their "incitements to hatred."

Trained in the East

The ethnic and partisan nature of the Congolese press is not a recent phenomenon. It dates back to the start of the democratic revolution and the resulting explosion of privately run newspapers. "At the time, it

was sheer euphoria. After Communism, all the newspapers were eager for change," remembers Roger Owokou-Bouka, spokesman for the Congolese Human Rights Observatory. "Unfortunately, however, the editorial lines of these papers were dictated by the political parties and ethnic governments," he adds. Thus, right from the start of the violence in the Congo, in 1992, newspapers such as *La rue meurt*, *Le choc* and *Aujourd'hui* became organs of propaganda, supporting the private militia which were armed by the parties. The journalists are generally trained in the Eastern countries and line up very easily behind the politicians, especially if they belong to the same ethnic group. Neither is there any question of objectivity when

it comes to State radio and television. These remain instruments of pro-government propaganda. The directors and editors, appointed by the administrative staff of the government coalition parties, systematically criticise those who oppose the regime. This sometimes results in pitched battles breaking out between colleagues in the editorial offices.

As one sociologist and observer of Congolese political affairs tells us, "some journalists, anxious to exercise their profession independently, find themselves quite simply taken off the air." During the war of 1997, the State media broadcast false reports with truncated statements by Lissouba. In response, the united democratic forces set up their own radio and television, enabling them, too, to wallow in hatred.

Is it possible that the Congolese press might one day be independent and objective? The outlook is somewhat bleak. Bernard Mackiza, president of the Congolese press association, believes that "the absence of an organised corporation motivated purely by a love for the profession means that the press will remain vulnerable for a long time to come." He adds: "As long as politicians continue to be the newspapers' principal financial backers, it will never be possible to have a responsible press."

Informing democracy

Panos Institute distributes stories to media outlets worldwide on environment, health and development. It provides vital support to journalists, particularly in the South. Panos aims to encourage informed debate amongst communities and decision-makers and to support democracy within the press.

Panos Institute's Executive Director, James Deane explains how it all works.



How does Panos influence the press and its effect on democracy?

Panos aims to put information into the public arena on a range of development issues. Our main purpose is to increase informed debate within society, especially in those sectors of society which don't normally receive information or have opportunities to put forward their views, and they are marginalised from the media. We do this through providing information to the media, which then disseminates it to the wider public. For the vast majority of people on the planet the media is the main source of information about topics not discussed in their own communities. We catalyse debate on topical and important issues that affect people, which can include subjects like genetically modified food, AIDS, globalisation, climate change or the transformation in the communications industry. We believe that unless the media report intelligently on issues that affect people's lives democracy is seriously undermined.

How do you provide information to journalists in the South?

We have a news feature syndication service called *Gemini News* and produce news briefing documents on topical development issues. These are designed to brief journalists on both sides of

an argument about a topic and provide them with the spark to follow up and interview people in the region they work in. Panos also provides support to journalists to help them get out into rural areas - so they don't just report the views of the urban elite - by supporting media organisations in their regions. We produce Interworld Radio which provides radio stories from correspondents in the South that are syndicated via the Internet and broadcast by radio stations world-wide. We also publish books, written by journalists with a high degree of authority, research and accessibility - these are designed to inform policy-makers. The point of our work is to create independent spaces from which people can take part in reasoned debate about global and local issues.

How do journalists manage in areas where there are restrictions on press freedom?

Independent journalism provides the lifeblood of plural and democratic societies, and it is journalists who have taken much of the lead in transforming societies the world over since the collapse of the Berlin wall. Clearly, many journalists are working in dictatorial regimes or one-party states where free and fair reporting is extremely difficult. Media organisations are often

controlled and owned by the state. In these cases journalists have two options. Either they can try and work in that environment and push out the boundaries of the official media. The other option is for them to publish independently, and the opportunities for doing that have increased greatly during recent years, not least because of the internet. It has become increasingly difficult for governments to close down the press, and there are numerous examples of the media continuing to publish on the internet while their presses are closed down. Increasingly, of course, the source of censorship and restrictions is not the state but the less visible and more difficult to confront problem area of ever greater concentration of media ownership.

Is there a benchmark for achieving democracy in the press?

We are looking for an environment where there is both a global commitment to, and a practice of, genuine freedom of expression. The commitment must be explicit rather than journalists continually having to push out the boundaries themselves. But freedom of expression is not enough - there is a difference between freedom of expression and genuine media pluralism. You can have freedom of expression where it's legally possible to say what you want, but where a whole set of

voices and perspectives are simply not heard or reflected in mainstream reporting. Media pluralism implies having a variety of means to get information from and to all parts of society using language that people can understand. People cannot take control of their lives without information, and most still depend on the media for that information. For example,

Independent journalism is the lifeblood of plural and democratic societies and it is journalists who have taken much of the lead in transforming societies the world over since the collapse of the Berlin wall.

one of the downsides of the global liberalisation of the media we've seen in the last decade is the general failure of old monopoly state-run broadcasting systems to transform themselves into public broadcasting systems. For all their many faults, these systems still had the capacity to broadcast in many languages and to reach all their peoples. Increasingly, local language programming is under threat and radio broadcasting is becoming an increasingly urban medium. That is surely divisive for society and undermines democracy.

How have things changed in recent years?

There has been a huge communications transformation over the last decade. Much of the debate around information in recent years has been focused on the potential of the internet and other new communication technologies. Quite rightly so, but there is a whole other information revolution taking place, particularly in the developing world, which is equally - if not more - important and which is a maelstrom of often exciting and contradictory trends. We have seen an unprecedented global flowering of press, radio and television; new, more dynamic, more entertaining, more outspoken and more difficult to control. This is leading to rapid transformation of politics and society. Broadcasting has been revolutionised - thousands of new FM radio stations, a reinvigoration of community radio, the increasing spread of television which is increasingly (but far from universally) accessible to all sections of society. There has also been an explosion in print titles over the last decade. A lot of people argue that the print media is still elitist as it goes to a relatively small number of people, and the number of readers has probably not expanded dramatically. However, its expansion is a key indicator of media pluralism and of the quality of political and

public debate. It is often the burgeoning independent press which is really driving democratic change - look at what's happening in Zimbabwe.

Is there a downside to these changes?

Of course - the media is becoming more consumer orientated, advertising driven, business focused, and focused on the urban and middle classes. This means there is often simply no "market" for issues of concern to poor or marginalised people and their perspectives are being squeezed out of national and international dialogue more and more. Africa for instance, faces contradictory forces. On the one hand there is huge liberalisation of broadcasting - both political, as governments cede control of the stations, and commercial, as broadcasters become more commercially driven. But the growing pressure to attract advertising means that stations are no longer interested in the needs of the poor. Many people feel that this would lead to a complete dumbing down of radio and media in general. Indeed, many FM stations are now very music focused - often playing Western music and importing their news from services such as the BBC. Having said that, we are also seeing a real explosion in talk radio - phone-ins, and talk shows are now some of the most popular programmes on commercial and state radio. In a recent Panos publication, *Up in the air?: The state of broadcasting in East Africa*, media expert Lynne Wanyeki suggests that this explosion is leading to a reinvention of the African oral tradition. These changes, and the potential they offer for more informed and inclusive public debate, are unprecedented and exciting.

Has a code of conduct for democracy in the press been established?

There's a whole set of international standards, such as Article 19. But in terms of a blueprint of how to liberalise and democratise the media, no, there isn't, nor should there be. When opening

up the media there's often a lot of old legislation that's inappropriate or imported from other countries. So there's a real problem in terms of policy-making. Establishing proper regulation is also critical.

What are your expectations about democracy in the media in the next decade?

Like many, I'm both optimistic and pessimistic. But there is a new recognition of the importance of information and communications in development and the role of the media in that. The international community must take a more urgent stance on issues of information exclusion and in a much broader way than the current technology-focused debates. Many old problem issues of North/South information flows still exist: domination of information and communications in the hands of a small number of transnational companies and agencies, the information available to the poor and the capacity of the poor to have their voices heard, the capacity of media in the South to report effectively on issues of globalisation - they are all urgent. Some people seem concerned about resurrecting tired old debates about the New World Information and Communications Order - too bad we can't avoid this. North/South, rich/poor information inequities are growing rapidly, not diminishing. But we don't need a new information order. What we need is a more plural and inclusive disorder which draws on and acknowledges the realities at work. There are few visions of what the world "should" look like in information terms, and we should be very suspicious of such visions - they usually turn into nightmares of control. But there can be a lot of agreement on what it should not look like, and I don't think those issues are getting anything like the attention they deserve."

Sue Wheat

Freedom of expression is not enough - there is a difference between freedom of expression and genuine media pluralism ... having a variety of means to get information from and to all parts of society using language that people can understand

Local radio: grass roots of democracy

by Meline Rahelimalala

There are 127 local radio stations in Madagascar, bringing pleasure to avid listeners who tune in for practical information and

Now that wheat no longer pays, what should the farmers of Betafo, a region 150 km south-west of the capital Antananarivo, plant instead? By listening carefully to local radio broadcasts, one housewife knows the answer. Another listener is having problems in his love life. He turns to his radio for advice on how to mend his broken heart...

In the space of a few years, the FM waveband has swept through Madagascar with a freedom of tone and content hitherto unheard of on the Great Island. "Before, my workshop was very rarely open because there were so few customers. Now that FM radio has arrived, I have a handful of customers coming in every day, asking me to tinker with their sets so that they can get better reception of their local radio stations," recounts Nicolas Rakotoniriana, a repairman who mends radio cassette players in Befato, where he lives.

Madagascar now has 127 local or community radio stations, together covering the whole country. It all started in 1991 with the birth of radio *Feon 'ny Vahoaka* (Voice of the People), which was used by the opposition during the great strike when, faced with the silence of national radio, it gave out information about the people's movement. Since then, competition between FM stations has become fierce and the State monopoly is just a sad and distant memory.

Getting people interested in public affairs

Local stations generally broadcast within a 50-km radius, vying with each other to attract listeners who tune in wanting to hear practical information and debates. On air, the topics for discussion range from politics to business and from education to religion. To set themselves apart from the others, some stations even go so far as to

democratic debates. Local radio is even starting to have an influence on the public services so often taken to task in its broadcasts.

broadcast the time according to old Malagasy custom instead of standard time... The content varies, but one thing remains constant: local news takes absolute priority, with a generous amount of airtime given over to politics and discussion, something previously unheard of in Madagascar. "Radio stations don't just want to broadcast in the traditional way. More and more of them are making time in their schedule for the listeners to have their say. The idea is to get people interested in public affairs," explains one radio controller.

Haja, a Catholic radio station broadcasting in Antsirabé, some 130 km outside the capital, is one such radio station, giving country folk the chance to voice their opinions by letter, by telephone or in the studio. "There's just one rule: no insults or slander, and the speaker must take full responsibility for what he or she is saying," explains Faratiana, a radio executive. Thus, for 90 minutes every Tuesday night, listeners' comments set the air waves alight.

Callers complain about what is wrong with their area, their favourite gripe being the state of the roads. "All we have are rough tracks, yet there are several quarries in the area around Antsirabé. Why can't we use all these natural resources to resurface the roads?" asks one farmer from Belazao. The listeners also keep a close eye on what is going on in politics. "At the last council of decentralised government, which was held in Antsirabé, a lot of people thought that the amount spent by the town hall on entertaining its guests was a waste of money. It should have used all these millions for the good of the community," grumbles one unhappy listener.

Each week the programme broadcasts a total of 15 letters, five recorded interviews and a few

telephone calls. As Father Jean-Marie Rakotosolofo, who runs the station, explains, "We would need much more air-time to be able to do justice to all the comments." Of all the programmes broadcast by the station, this one has the highest rating after the one devoted to prayer... This type of programme is not without influence, either. "The public services, at which most of these comments are aimed, are starting to react," remarks Faratiana with a smile of satisfaction.

Until recently, most of the radio stations were broadcasting illegally. "In September '98, there were 70 stations in Madagascar, 90% of which were not legal. We found out about them when they began to broadcast," remembers Louis Rasamoelina, director of information at the Ministry of Information, Culture and Communication. The law on audio-visual broadcasting in Madagascar had no effect whatsoever. It took a plan backing the media by the French Cooperation, new regulations and American financing to make these radio stations official. "We have seen a clear improvement. Many stations are regularising their situation," continues Mr Rasamoelina. However, in what is perhaps a sign of the government's fear of the people's infatuation with radio, the Minister of Communications does not rule out closing down any stations which do not abide by the regulations.

As for the listeners, they are getting a taste for debate and nothing in the world would stop them catching their favourite programmes. In Mangatany-Arivorimamo, some 50 km from the capital, a young craftsman has rigged up his radio set so that it runs off wind power - a tip he heard on a programme about bicycles. "All I need is a propeller and a dynamo.... Now I can listen to the radio for hours without worrying about having to buy batteries..." he explains gleefully.

Some information sources

Inter Press Service: a leading provider of information on global issues, is backed by a network of journalists in more than 100 countries, with satellite communication links to 1,200 outlets.

InterWorld Radio: a daily source of independent, ready-to-broadcast global stories delivered free to radio stations via the Internet.

The Communication Initiative: a partnership of organisations seeking to support advances in the effectiveness of communication interventions for international development.

ID21 Online: a fast-track reporting service on the latest results of British development research.

Caribbean Environmental Reporters Network (CERN): launched in March 1993 to help raise the standard of environmental journalism in the Caribbean and create a better awareness of environmental issues among Caribbean peoples.

Eldis: resources on development research hosted by the British Library for Development Studies, University of Sussex.

Euforic: site on European cooperation for non governmental organisations and policy-makers

European Centre for Development Policy Management: ECDPM specialises in development policy management, aiming to improve cooperation between Europe and countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Himal: South Asian magazine which spots trends and offers analyses from a non-nationalist, regionwide perspective. Published in Kathmandu, Nepal.

ReliefWeb: resources on disasters, emergencies and humanitarian issues hosted by UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

Pacific Institute for Studies in Development,

Environment & Security: an independent, non-profit centre created in 1987 to conduct research and policy analysis in the areas of environment, sustainable development, and international security.

Sri Lankan Environmental Journalists Forum (SLEJF): the secretariat for the Asia-Pacific Forum of Environmental Journalists (AFEJ), which represents the national forums of environmental journalists in 21 countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

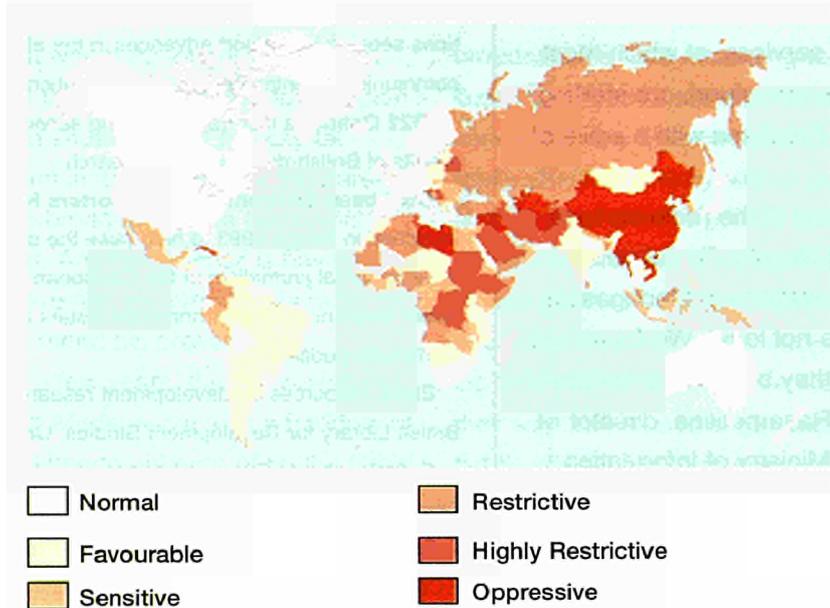
Television Trust for the Environment (TVE): produces films for broadcast television plus audio-visual resources aimed at raising environmental awareness worldwide.

The Media Channel: a non-profit online news and features site about the world's media.

The hidden Web

by Laurent Duvillier

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD



Some regimes are denying or restricting free access to cyber-information. According to *Reporters Sans Frontières* (Reporters Without Borders), 20 countries qualify as enemies of the Internet.

The Internet is the symbol *par excellence* of freedom of expression and openness to the world, but might it be on the way to becoming a victim of its own success? At several points on the globe, political regimes, religious persuasions or military juntas exist which manage totally or partially to prevent their own citizens from surfing the Internet, and deny them access to a tool deemed "subversive." Obviously those who have become accustomed to fighting for the right to information are - once again - raising the alarm. We were already familiar with their annual shot across the bows in the form of a report detailing attacks perpetrated on newspaper journalists and radio and television reporters. However, the last three or four years have witnessed the proliferation of a different sort of infringement. No coherent charge sheet has been drawn up, aimed at nailing these countries which are all, to a greater or lesser degree, thumbing their noses at the free flow of

ideas on the Information Superhighway. Now it has been done. *Reporters sans Frontières* (RSF), a state-approved French organisation, has rectified this omission by publishing a study on the 20 countries it describes as "enemies of the Internet." Belarus, Burma, China, Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Vietnam and several countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus all have the dubious honour of being named. A grim list, which could easily be extended to 25 other states, all of which are openly hostile to this new means of communication.

The right to receive and impart information

For RSF, this new battlefield does not signify any change of direction or renunciation of its original struggle to defend the citizen's right to information. Not just the right to receive it, but also to produce it, since, on the Web, everyone can re-appropriate the content of the message as he/she sees fit. A fact which strikes fear into the hearts of certain regimes where it is not always wise to tell the whole truth. "Our role has expanded," admits Jean-François Julliard of the research department in Paris,

"we had no other choice. We had to follow as the media evolved. On the Internet, each person becomes an actor and a vehicle for information, not just a passive receiver, reader or viewer." Jean-François Julliard coordinates surveys across a whole range of subjects affecting not one but several geographical zones. Is there any area of investigation less respectful of national boundaries than the Internet? Are there any subjects of investigation who share a stronger sense than web surfers that they belong, not to one country, but to an international community, a very close-knit family, firmly rooted in civil society? "Almost everyone can now create their own website. Those people get very concerned when a surfer encounters problems, when a site is closed down, even if this happens in a country they have never heard of. Compared with the press or radio and television, there is enormous solidarity between Internet surfers. They have wasted no time in joining forces to denounce any kind of censorship."

Thanks to the solidarity of these surfers, and thanks to the sites relaying details of such infringements, RSF has been able to flesh out the facts gathered by its main source of information - a network of some one hundred correspondents around the world. For ten years or so, they have been hunting down instances of press freedom violations, until now concerning themselves with newspapers, radio and television. They have had no problem gathering the information. Their problem is confirming this information, verifying it, separating the wheat from the chaff in a medium where truth and falsehood sit side by side. Perfectly innocuous details are often blown out of all proportion and invested with huge importance, while major events get minimised. "This tendency is one of our biggest problems. The fact that everybody can express themselves through the "discussion forums," these sorts of "letters to the Editor" airing the views of 10 people, gives rise to all sorts of rumours and false information. It is often claimed that in China, for example, all e-mails are monitored by the authorities. Talking to experts in communication technology, however, it appears that this sort of total control would be impossible from a strictly technical point of view, because the volume of information is so great."

What are the criteria used to judge which countries rate among the top 20 enemies of the Internet?

In Asia or Africa, repression comes in various guises and can take many different forms. Website operators are arrested, as in China. Access to private Internet Service Providers (ISPs) is blocked, leading to a state monopoly on Internet access. Cybercafés are closed, which severely restricts access of the poorest populations, unable to go online at home. Some sites are banned, with users in those countries denied access to certain web pages.

How the Internet is censored

One of the most widely-used stratagems consists of banning all privately-owned ISPs from operating in the country concerned and authorising only one, all-powerful, state-run server. This monopoly, in the pay of the current regime, means that access can be simply blocked to certain "undesirable" sites, using a system of encoders and filters. In Saudi Arabia, all information is filtered through the server of the Science and Technology Centre, a public body which keeps a close eye on the Internet, officially regarded as "a harmful force for westernising people's minds." Similar measures are taken in Sudan, Cuba and Tunisia. Under the Tunisian regime, President Ben Ali indirectly controls the two privately-owned ISPs. One is run by his daughter, the other by one of his close aides. In November 1998, following publication by Amnesty International of a damning report on human rights violations, access to the NGO's official site was blocked by the authorities. Tunisian Internet users could, however, visit another website with a strangely similar address (www.amnesty-tunisia.org), which praised the President's superhuman efforts on behalf of human rights.

Net surfers sometimes have to pay a very high price to quench their thirst for unlimited access to the world. In China, Burma, Vietnam or Sierra Leone, Internet users are forced to register with the authorities and may risk ending up behind bars. Just before the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Tiananmen massacre, the closure of 300 cybercafés in Shanghai meant that a whole swathe of the Chinese population, unable to afford their own PCs, were denied all access to this means of communication. The top prize, however, for censorship of "cyber-information" is awarded equally to North Korea, Syria, Iraq, Libya and Turkmenistan, all of which simply prevent their entire population from accessing the Internet to keep them in the dark. Such autocratic inclinations can lead to absurd

situations, as in the example of the Iranian medical students who are denied access to web pages dealing with anatomy.

Politically threatening as it might be to certain regimes, economically the Internet is also extremely attractive. Not only does it open the door to an incalculable mass of information, it also generates the flow of capital through e-business, online trade and the exchange of technical and scientific information. Most non-democratic regimes are aware of this fact. Torn between the wish to stifle what they perceive as an intolerable freedom of speech on the one hand, and the desire to have their slice of the cake on the other, some countries are yielding to the economic argument. Countries such as Malaysia and Singapore are loath to deprive themselves of these resources and so, reluctantly, they have decided not to stand in the way of progress.

Despite the hostile climate in which some web surfers operate, the craftiest among them compete to find ingenious ways round censorship: encoding, going through servers that offer anonymity when consulting banned sites or sending e-mail, connecting via international, cellular and satellite links, and so on. In Cuba and China, censored web pages are distributed by e-mail, which is reminiscent of the days when underground newspapers were duplicated and passed around clandestinely.

As yet, not one of the countries in the dock, singled out for blame by RSF, has denied the accusations levelled at it. Jean-François Julliard is appalled. "They seem

to think that we'll just let this go, that they can get away with it because it concerns the Internet rather than professional journalists. But it's a medium like any other." RSF's report on this problem is also intended to be an interpellation of the governments of the countries it incriminates. It therefore includes recommendations for the attention of these governments, calling on them to: abolish the state monopoly granted to single Internet Service Providers; cancel the obligation for Internet users to register with the government; put an end to all censorship; respect the confidentiality of electronic exchanges and call off all legal proceedings undertaken against users. The legal instrument which RSF uses as the basis for its argument is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which stipulates that "everyone shall have the right ... to receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers ..." The French organisation urges those states which have signed the covenant to respect their undertakings, and those which have not yet done so, to ratify it.

What about us?

We would, however, be wrong in thinking that when it comes to cyber-information, totalitarian countries have a monopoly on censorship. Are we to oppose censorship in all its forms, even in reputedly democratic countries? In France, there is talk of the authorities wanting to set up a sort of board regulating the Internet. In our opinion, that might constitute an infringement. We would need more details of this

particular case. If taking a stand against the Chinese regime's orchestrated muzzling seems only too legitimate and easy to understand, then why should the attempt to thwart recent legislation seeking to restrict Internet freedom for ethical reasons seem any less so? Is there not a risk that any such measures might be grist to the mill of those regimes which simply want to keep their people away from using electronic communication? To what extent do Internet service providers have ethical responsibility for the content of their websites? The case of Yahoo, taken to court over the sale of Nazi memorabilia on the Internet, has rekindled debate on this issue in several western countries.

Clearly aware of the limited scope of its present study, RSF has decided to pursue its investigations further in collaboration with the editors of the French Web magazine *Transfert*. The next study, scheduled for the first weekend of March 2001, will have more in common with RSF's annual report, giving a more exhaustive overview of the situation worldwide (<http://www.transfert.net>). It will contain details of the situation as it stands and the problems posed by the free flow of information on the Net in the hundred or so countries covered, both democratic and non-democratic. Possibly one day we might have an Internet without borders. Or at least without border patrols.

Report on the worldwide circulation of information on the Internet, out at the beginning of March. Available in French and English, it can be downloaded at a reasonable price from the *Reporters sans Frontières* website (<http://www.rsf.fr>).

Caribbean communication

by Mark Wilson

From a desk in Trinidad I can watch 58 cable and three terrestrial television channels, or listen to 18 local radio stations. In a country with 1.3 million people I can read three daily newspapers and half a dozen weeklies. And access news, information and music from other Caribbean countries and the rest of the world over the internet.

Since 1990

Spoilt for choice? Maybe. Until 1990, television meant one state-owned channel; there was no internet access, and government kept a tight rein on radio licences. International and Caribbean news was whatever snippets the local media found room for, and scratchy short wave channels, such as the BBC World Service. Information-gathering was possible on a comparatively large island, with a University of the West Indies campus and a network of United Nations libraries, but could be slow and frustrating. On the smaller islands, the resources for research simply weren't there. Going further back, some Bahamian islands had to wait two weeks before the mailboat brought news of the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914.

Technology has made it easier for individuals and companies to develop new media businesses. *Newsday*, established only in 1993, is now Trinidad and Tobago's largest-selling daily.

The Caribbean Communications Network (CCN) group, has invested heavily in terrestrial and satellite television. There have been startups in radio, internet service, and print.

Foreign ownership is no longer an issue. Forty years ago, the main dailies in Barbados, Trinidad, Guyana were owned by Lord Thompson's London-based media group. Today, all Caribbean media houses are locally-owned.

But there are problems. Entertainment is there, but does it provide an outlet for regional culture, and encourage its development? Does news and current affairs coverage allow informed discussion of the issues?

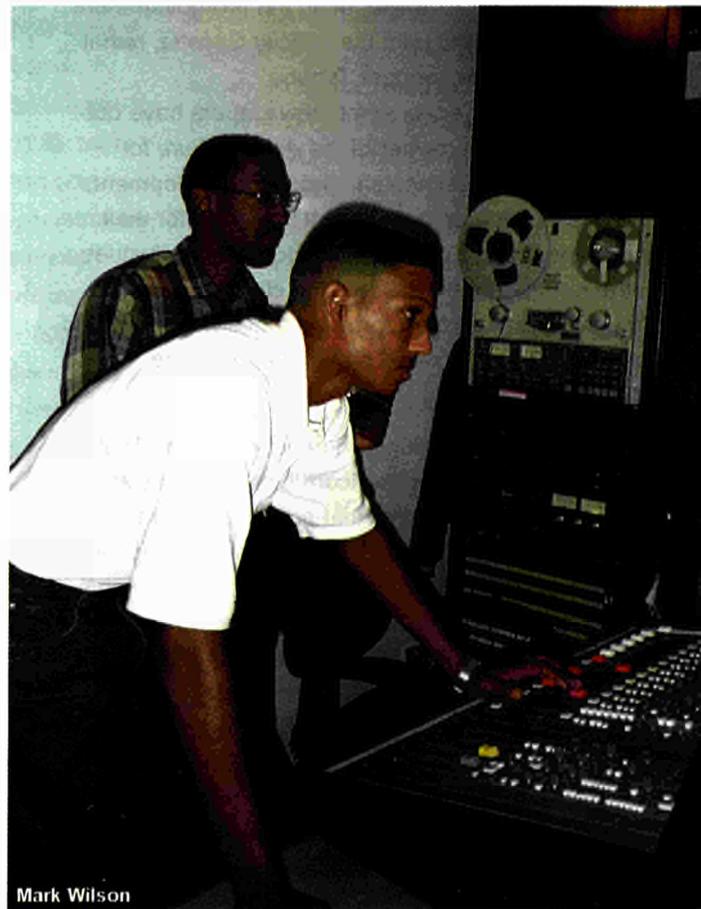
Television

It is far, far cheaper to buy programmes from overseas - nearly always from the United States, occasionally from Britain - than to make them locally. Local production is generally limited to news programmes, some sports broadcasts, and a few talk shows - plus advertisements. News broadcasting, however, is very much more professional, and is often innovative. Trinidad's TV6, for example, is good at community outreach, and provides a daily slot for viewers' opinions, both children's and adults'. But Caribbean soaps, dramas, sitcoms are a rarity. Jamaica, with a larger

audience, has more local programmes. But they do not always travel well between islands - dialect, humour and cultural references vary across the region. With cable and satellite competition, it is the local and Caribbean content that enables the existing channels to keep their audiences.

Cable

Cable TV, of course, runs almost entirely imported content. But not always in the same way. On Trinidad, unfortunately, an unresponsive monopoly has been allowed to emerge. In Jamaica, wildcat operators at the start, simply ran wires where they could.



Mark Wilson

Concerns

Most Caribbean constitutions include specific clauses protecting press freedom. But, as in most other parts of the world, journalists have serious concerns.

- Investigative reporting is limited by practical constraints. Newsrooms are understaffed. Journalists have to spend time on routine stories, and have little time for background research. Where wrongdoing is suspected, but cannot easily be proved, the lack of resources can result in a "safe" editorial position.

- Journalists' salaries are low. Experienced staff are easily attracted into competing professions, such as public relations.

- Libel laws follow the restrictive British model. Grenada has attempted to introduce further restrictions, with up to two years' imprisonment for "intentional libel." However, the local high court ruled in November 2000 that this was in conflict with Section 10 of the constitution, which protects freedom of speech.

- Media houses are often reluctant to offend advertisers. Stories highlighting consumer issues can be hard to run. Even film reviews which run short of breathless admiration can run into trouble.

- Governments, too, can exercise influence through the use of advertising; the Pindling regime in the Bahamas, for example, used the pro-government *Nassau Guardian* to print the *Official Gazette*, rather than the more independent *Tribune*.

- The owners of some newspapers have outside interests. The owner of the *Antigua Sun*, for example, has investments in property development, offshore banking, and airlines. It is difficult for their journalists to write objectively about these industries. In the run-up to the 1999 general election, a senior *Sun* journalist was fired for writing an article which did not take a strong enough pro-government line.

On the upside

- The Privy Council in London, still the final court of appeal in most Caricom countries, has several times given judgements that protect press freedom - most notably in Antigua. On November 14, it upheld the right of an independent newspaper, *The Observer*, to open a radio station. Until now, the only radio stations on the island have been Sun FM and ZDK, both run by a brother of Prime Minister Lester Bird, state-owned ABS and a religious station, *Lighthouse*.

- Some newspapers have a strong record of independence under governments of contrasting political complexion - for example, the *Nassau Tribune*, *Stabroek News*, and Suriname's *De Ware Tijd*.

Since 1998, there have been 38 regulated cable companies. While some rural areas remain out of reach, in most parts of the country customers can choose between three competing providers. Entertainment Systems in Kingston, for example, provides more than 100 channels. Besides standard US programming, ES carries two Chinese channels, TV5 from France, TV Azteca from Mexico, Deutsche Welle and BBC World. There are eight community channels, with sports and other local content, though no large production budget. Subscription rates are generally below US\$20 per month.

Radio

Radio's lower production costs provide more scope for local programming. Talk shows and phone-ins are cheap, often lively, and good listening. On the larger islands, there is ample scope for niche marketing. Five different stations in Trinidad play predominantly Indian music, each with a slightly different style - younger listeners, film soundtracks, "Chutney" fusion music, classical and traditional. Several islands have evangelistic Gospel stations.

With a strong regional music industry the "local Vs imported" issue can be a sore point, even in radio. In Jamaica, Irie FM operates a successful radio station with local content. In Trinidad, the Recording Industry Artistes of Trinidad and Tobago (RIATT) is lobbying for radio stations to give at least 50% of airtime to local music - and local,

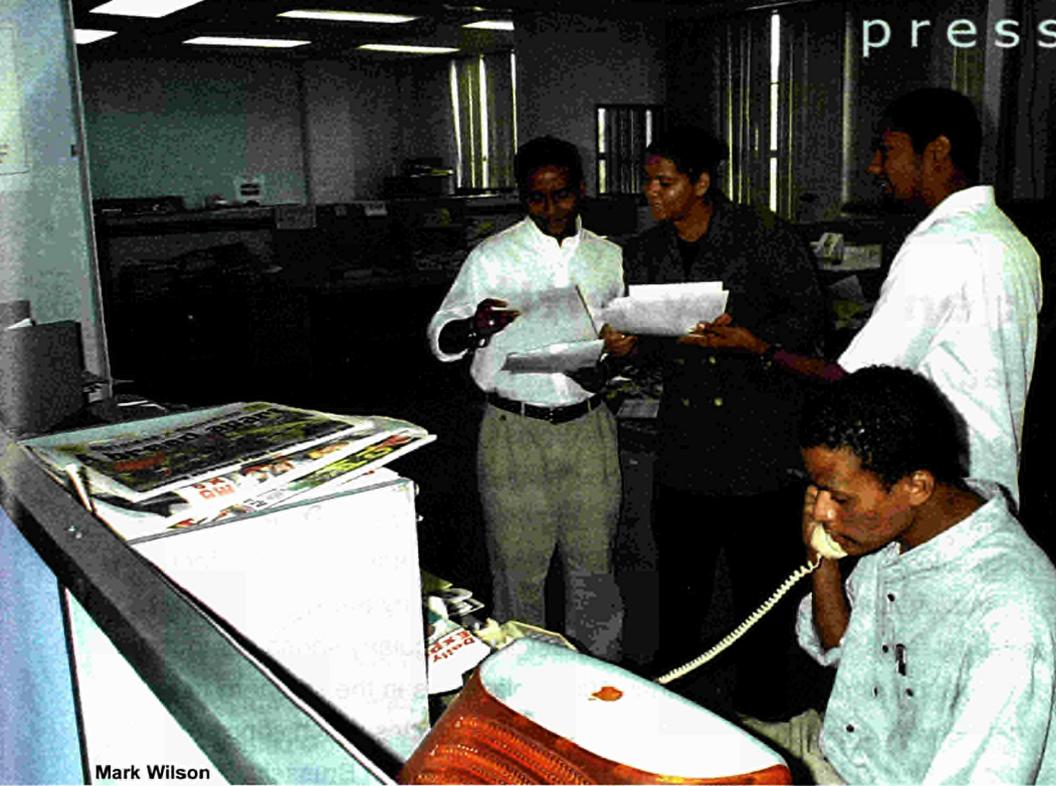
for them, doesn't include music from Barbados, Jamaica or elsewhere in the Caribbean.

"This may not be the right solution for the local market," says Brandon Khan of the Trinidad Broadcasting Company, President of the Trinidad and Tobago Publishers' and Broadcasters' Association.

Entertainment is there, but does it provide an outlet for regional culture, and encourage its development? Does news and current affairs coverage allow informed discussion of the issues?

He has run a radio station with a mainly local playlist which struggled to get audience share - and was forced to increase North American content and sports programming. In Trinidad, demand for local soca and calypso music peaks in the December-to-February pre-Carnival season, and dips for the rest of the year.

For Khan, the next challenge is satellite radio. High quality satellite sound is already available locally through the DirecTV-Galaxy Caribbean network, although high subscription rates limit listener penetration. But soon enough, satellite radio will increasingly be an affordable add-on for car owners, a substantial radio audience segment. Low-cost portable receivers will also be on the market. To maintain audience, Caribbean stations will have to improve sound quality, and provide local content



Mark Wilson

- information, news, weather, sports, listener feedback and for some stations, a dose of Caribbean music.

Smaller islands

In the smaller islands, with populations of 150,000 or less, life is harder. Circulation potential is smaller and advertising revenue is thin; on one island, the leading newspaper has a print run of only 3,500. Paying for a press and attracting professional newsroom staff is a tough proposition. Countries such as Grenada or Dominica have weeklies, many of them printed in Trinidad or Barbados, but no daily newspaper. Page layouts can now be transmitted electronically, but the time-lag before hitting the streets is days, not hours.

News can be transmitted faster by radio - or through the rumour mill. Neither fills the role of print. One possibility may be a shared press for the Windward Islands - Grenada, St Vincent, St Lucia and Dominica. Some publishers have approached international agencies for financial assistance or soft loans.

Internet

The internet provides a basis for low-cost locally-orientated material. Hosting is not expensive. Chat rooms offer interactivity. The problem is that

quality editorial content still costs money to put together and update, while few users are prepared to pay for access. Information sites are patchy in quality, and sometimes seriously out of date. News sites depend on their parent newspaper for editorial content. Most commercial uses are hamstrung by the inability of most Caribbean banks to invest in online credit card verification. Internet access costs are relatively low - around US\$20 for 70 hours per month from one typical provider. Up to date numbers are hard to come by, but one operator estimates market penetration at around 10-15% of households. School use is spreading. Barbados is furthest ahead; its *EduTech 2000* programme aims to bring the internet into every classroom, from primary to tertiary. Until now, the domestic telecoms monopoly has been a problem, with inadequate bandwidth and high wholesale charges, but most Caribbean countries are now liberalising telecommunications. However, in countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, telephone connections, whether for voice or internet, are not available to new customers, even in urban and suburban areas.

Photographs by the author

Media battles in Trinidad

Basdeo Panday's United National Congress government in Trinidad and Tobago has had a stormy relationship with the local media. In opposition until 1995, Mr Panday felt that his party, with its rural, Indo-Trinidadian roots, was given a raw deal by media houses in the capital, Port-of-Spain. Since taking office in 1995, his attempts to rectify this imbalance have sometimes been clumsy and counter-productive.

In May 1997, at an Indian Arrival Day celebration on the east coast of Trinidad, Mr Panday commented on racial prejudice:

"I call them pseudo racists because they are not real racists. Real racists are people who look after their race. These fella use race only to look after they self, so they are pseudo racists. So I say the pseudo racists who have divided the society to maintain political power, and even now are doing so in the hope of political survival. Look at Ken Gordon who wants to maintain monopolistic advantage over his competitors in the media."

Ken Gordon is Chairman of the Caribbean Communications Network, which owns the Trinidad Express newspaper and the TV6 television station. At the time, he was also chairman of the national airline, BWIA, and of a Caribbean conglomerate, Neal and Massy Holdings, and President of the Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce.

Hurt by Mr Panday's remarks, he sued. In October 2000, the courts awarded him damages of TT\$600,000 (US\$95,000), plus interest and costs.

Mr Panday reacted strongly to the judgement. "I'll go to prison instead," he said, "I will fight all the way up to the Privy Council, all the way up to the (proposed) Caribbean Court of Justice, all the way up to high heaven." Mr Gordon says he will be satisfied if the Prime Minister apologises by November 18, pays court costs, and gives US\$16,000 to charity. An election is due in Trinidad and Tobago on December 11. Whatever the outcome, this acrimonious dispute bodes ill for future relations between politicians and media.

InfoSud : an agency with a difference

By Valérie Michaux* and André Linard

InfoSud-Belgique is a press agency specialising in North/South relations.

It provides the media - both the major press and specialist publications - with articles on "local aspects of international news and international aspects of local news."

Located in Brussels, InfoSud-Belgique is part of the Syfia International network which is composed of nine agencies, four of which are in northern-hemisphere countries (France, Switzerland, Canada and Belgium) and five of which are in southern-hemisphere countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Madagascar and Senegal). The network has a total of approximately 70 correspondents in nearly 30 countries.

InfoSud is neither AFP nor a Reuters Mark 2. The information it circulates is different from and complementary to the news obtained by the media from their own correspondents or from the large agencies. Via its local correspondents, who are directly involved in the social fabric of the country, InfoSud offers information on the daily lives of the inhabitants, the way in which they are affected by major developments and current situations, (rather than one-off events) and the views of civil society. It does this on a regular basis, but sometimes puts together special dossiers on current topics. Recently these included the life of women (on the occasion of the Beijing + 5 meeting in New York), education (at the Dakar Forum), sustainable tourism and human rights in Africa.

North to South

In Switzerland and Belgium, InfoSud's offices also fulfil a special role in connection with the international status of Geneva and Brussels. Because of the European Union, a number of institutions, associations and other inter-

national bodies (governmental or non-governmental) are present in the Belgian capital and they are a rich source of information of interest to countries in the southern hemisphere, particularly the ACP countries. InfoSud-Belgique regularly sends out to more than 100 publications in the southern hemisphere countries articles which concern them but whose sources are in Brussels. Their aim is always to provide the link between major players and people's specific concerns, to make the views of the silent heard. During the recent negotiations on the new ACP-EU Agreement, an article on a delegation of ACP-country peasant farmers to the European Union, was therefore a great hit in the African media.

Now partly financed by the Agence Internationale de la Francophonie, InfoSud-Belgique is a press agency. It does not follow any official party line and works in accordance with the journalist profession's own code of practice and criteria, not those from communication. Within these limits, the agency from time to time, conducts studies or publishes for associations, NGOs, institutions etc. on North/South issues. It supplies news to the media in these countries on international economic issues without bias, ensuring the autonomy which is necessary to a journalist's credibility. It also requires the same of its correspondents in other countries. When all is said and done, whether dealing with the big media players or specialist development journals, InfoSud does not claim to be a better source than others, but to be a complementary source. What makes it different in its independent approach to the subjects treated, and this adds credibility and allows an accurate presentation North/South picture as a whole.

* Director of InfoSud

Disease and poverty: breaking the vicious circle

by Pénélope Aral

Round table on HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and poverty reduction

Every day, communicable diseases kill some 10,000 people in Africa. A few years ago, malaria seemed close to being eliminated, yet today it is still the most common cause of death in sub-Saharan Africa, and statistics show that it is affecting more and more people. Tuberculosis is still the most widespread disease in the world, while AIDS is far from being eradicated. All these health problems are closely linked to poverty.

The time has come to summarise the advances achieved until now in the field of development cooperation, and to identify the outstanding problems concerning research into and prevention and treatment of communicable diseases. It was this that prompted the European Commission, in conjunction with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS, to organise a summit conference on HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and poverty reduction. The round table also offered the participating health professionals

an opportunity to develop a consistent Europe-wide policy and to set up an action framework for the struggle against AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

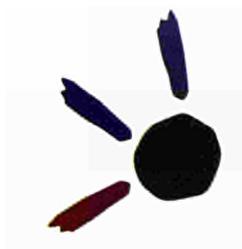
Poor people most at risk

These diseases are still slowing down human progress, and adversely influencing mortality rates and life expectancy in developing countries.

Communicable diseases are paralyzing not only the health sector but also the overall economic development of the regions concerned.

Dr Peter Piot, Director of the United Nations Joint Programme on AIDS, believes that "disease produces a negative synergistic effect with poverty, either causing it or making it worse." The epidemic has had tragic repercussions on education and the entire economic sector, and so has compromised all the advances achieved on the development front.

The Commission has therefore undertaken to support the acceleration of the campaign against communicable diseases. Since 1990, more than



100 developing countries have benefited from the €3.4 billion which the Commission has invested in its Health, AIDS and Population (HAP) programmes. The Commission will increase its level of support to the health sector, with emphasis on disease prevention, health promotion and improving care systems.

Three main lines of action

The first vital step will be to optimise the impact of the activities, services and basic products already available by establishing partnerships. The diseases in question can to a large extent be prevented and/or rapidly treated by effective and inexpensive means. The problem is that help does not always reach the most vulnerable people. It is thus essential to develop new and more effective partnerships in every sector of development to reinforce the aid provided. In his opening address, Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, emphasised that, despite the substantial aid provided by Europe in the campaign against poverty and



A young mother in a DRC maternity ward "Illness comes with poverty; it causes it, or makes it worse"

disease, results have been inadequate. As he sees it, there is only one remedy for this situation: the development of new partnerships and the setting up of a comprehensive worldwide action policy.

The second line of action will be to increase the availability of pharmaceutical products to those who need them most. At present, poor countries are still being denied access to essential services and affordable medicines. The European Commission is becoming more and more involved in the international debate on improving this access to healthcare.

European industry is supplying over 60% of the vaccines used in developing countries and is among the leading producers of medicines for the prevention of infection. Europe can play an important role by reducing the prices of medicines.

Development Commissioner Poul Nielson believes that the private sector and the NGOs must work more closely together, and that price reductions for pharmaceutical products are indispensable.

Possible options for making essential medicines more accessible and affordable include resorting to differential price fixing, voluntary licensing agreements, a parallel trade system, transfer of technologies associated with the development of local production capacities, combined use of generic and patented products, and a study of tariff and tax options at national level.

Banking on research

The third option is to redirect the results of research.

The pharmaceutical industry gears its research activities to demand from the industrialised countries. As a result, it is neglecting research into those diseases that are most widespread in developing countries, where the market is considered too restricted. In future, incentives must be designed to direct

research towards the diseases that hit poor countries. Efforts should also be made to intensify investment in the resources of the scientific and technological institutions of developing countries and their personnel.

The cost of programmes like these may be high, but so is the price of failure to eradicate these diseases. Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director-General of WHO, believes that these diseases both generate and perpetuate poverty.

Health and poverty are closely linked, and the repercussions of these on diseases are incalculable. It is essential to consider aid in a global context, looking beyond the boundaries between different sectors. The international environment is favourable, and the new partnership with the WHO, with closer collaboration between the parties concerned - the World Bank and UNAIDS - offers an opportunity that must be seized. The Community intends to make a substantial contribution to this international initiative, using the various instruments available to it. The round table organised in Brussels last September provided the framework for this contribution. It must be properly directed and a more effective campaign waged against the problems of health and poverty.

Uganda - an impact on AIDS

by Ruth Evans

With an estimated 34 million people worldwide now living with HIV/AIDS, two thirds of them in sub-Saharan Africa, the need for effective action against this devastating epidemic becomes even more pressing. One of the first countries to be open about the extent of the epidemic,

Uganda, has now amassed a great deal of experience in preventing infection, caring for those infected and mitigating the socio-economic effects of the epidemic. A few of the lessons learned there might usefully be applied elsewhere.

In the shade of the mango tree, Yudis feeds scraps to a litter of piglets that squeal and shove excitedly as they try to get to the food. Here in the Ugandan village of Katalamura, the pigs are part of an income-generating project set up to help HIV-positive women like Yudis.

Yudis tells me she doesn't know exactly when she became HIV positive, but only four of the nine children she's given birth to have survived. Three of them are thought to have died because they too were HIV positive, and two died of measles. She has now separated from her husband, and supports herself by frying fish and selling it to the community and helping to feed the pigs. When they are sold, she will have her share of the women's profits.

Stories like this are all too common. Since the first case was reported in Uganda in the early 1980s, at least half a million people have died from AIDS and about seven per cent of the population are currently living with HIV/AIDS, according to Ministry of Health statistics.

Impact among women

The socio-economic impact of HIV/AIDS has been enormous, especially amongst women in Uganda, who have been disproportionately affected by the epidemic. Women constitute 51% of the total population in Uganda, but the demographic figures indicate that women get exposed to HIV infection much earlier than men. The spread of the infection is facilitated by gender

and social inequalities and, in turn, reflects and reinforces these inequalities. As wives and mothers, women are at higher risk of sexual transmission and as mothers they are left to deal with the implications of HIV infection for unborn babies and children. As primary carers, women bear the main burden of caring for the sick and dying while trying to hold the family unit together.

Making an impact on the disease

Despite the enormity of the problems, there is no doubt that Uganda has made an impact against the AIDS epidemic since it was first detected in the 1980s. There is now evidence of increased awareness and knowledge about HIV/AIDS in the entire country among adults, even though awareness doesn't always lead to behavioural change. However, here in Uganda the demand for and use of condoms and preventative control services has also risen. There has also been a reported decline in casual sexual relationships. More strikingly, HIV prevalence in pregnant women has declined in five areas surveyed between 1992 and 1998.

These are major achievements in the face of apparently insurmountable odds. From early on in the epidemic, one of the most striking things about Uganda's approach was a high degree of political commitment, with President Museveni working alongside religious leaders, traditional elders, the private sector and community initiatives to try and ensure maximum success. This,

Panos Pictures/Chris Sattlberger



New help for AIDS sufferers, no longer shunned by society

says Janat Mukwaya, Uganda's Minister for Gender, Labour and Social Development, has been the main lesson learned. "One of the things that has made Uganda a success story in handling HIV/AIDS has been the high level of political commitment from early on, especially from our President. So one of the strategies effective for other countries would entail being really open about this disease."

"We must be open"

It was a strategy that initially came at a price. Uganda

became known as the epicentre of the AIDS epidemic and initially suffered from a certain degree of stigma because of this openness. Tourism suffered. But Mrs Mukwaya is absolutely convinced that it was still the right strategy for the government to adopt.

"Whatever we do we must be open," she says. "Because we have been open, AIDS in Uganda is now considered just like any other disease such as malaria and typhoid. And for your information, malaria in Uganda kills far more people than AIDS. But being open has helped us break down the culture of silence."

That culture of silence means that in many other countries, especially in southern Africa where the rates of infection are now much higher than in Uganda, people with HIV/AIDS suffer isolation, stigma and trauma as well as the disease. That was true in Uganda too in the early days, so I asked Janat Mukwaya how they tackled breaking down that stigma.

"We have sensitised and educated people and focused on how the disease is transmitted. We have ensured the safety of blood supplies and insist on using a new syringe each time. We are also saying that drinking from the same cup doesn't transmit the disease, neither does shaking hands. How the disease is transmitted must be clear to the people. When you

break the culture of silence, infected people will come forward and talk openly about their experiences. They are the best advocates."

Some countries have not yet seen the full effect of HIV/AIDS on the economy and the community. AIDS is seen as a new emerging concern, and many countries have been slow to identify it. "We are at a different stage," says Mrs Mukwaya. "In Uganda now it has become a health issue like any other, but recently we had a delegation from South Africa, Zambia and Namibia and one of the delegates asked me what does an AIDS patient look like? So I had to take her to Ward Six of our national hospital, to look AIDS in the face."

Time the best teacher.

"Southern Africa is now facing a bigger problem, and some countries are still denying there ever was one. By being open we were able to bring in outside partners and money to do research and build a very strong AIDS commission. All blood in our hospitals is now safe. And I think we are proud of our decision. The stigma was short-lived, but in the end we have won."

Presenting a paper on Uganda's experiences at a Commonwealth Ministerial meeting in Delhi a few months ago, Mrs Mukwaya encountered a degree of political denial amongst other delegates

claiming that HIV/AIDS was not a particular problem in their respective countries. To make her point that AIDS is a global epidemic that transcends national and political boundaries, Janat Mukwaya uses a mathematical equation. "Suppose you have one naughty, sadistic man going around with 10 women a day," she says. "In a month he will have contacted 300 women, and if they each have another contact it comes to 600. And that's just from one man."

Uganda can rightly be proud of what it has achieved in the past few years, but there's certainly no room for complacency. The achievements are merely scratching the surface of the epidemic, a Band-aid on a gaping wound. The government is now trying to address the issue of the human rights of the people who are infected, and this involves having to deal with those who deliberately or knowingly go out to spread the disease. "The legal framework must be the same for both," says Minister Mukwaya. "Those who are not infected must be protected, but there must be some way of making people realise it isn't the other person's fault that they are sick."

Why women?

AIDS has no cure yet in sight. Because levels of transmission remain high, the main strategy will be to continue to emphasise behavioural change. "But it isn't enough to have statistics and know how this disease is transmitted," says Janat Mukwaya. "We also need to know why women are disproportionately affected. I think what is important is to look at the gender impact of HIV/AIDS in Uganda. Women are more prone to infection...but they also carry the main burden of care even when they are sick themselves. But we have also seen food security being affected because women can no longer tend the fields. Children are also suffering."

Having an effective gender strategy against AIDS means giving women more control over their lives, says Minister Mukwaya. "In Uganda, we are saying there is a need to popularise the

female condom because this strengthens women's control by giving them the tool for HIV/AIDS prevention. But the female condom is neither affordable nor accessible, especially in rural areas. The next strategy is to empower communities economically. Through the National Action Plan we are trying to increase the income of the homestead in order to reduce the dependency of women on men. Poverty is one of the issues facilitating HIV and it's widespread, so addressing homestead incomes is the long-term strategy because that will give women the economic power to make the choice about protection."

Perhaps Yudis will choose to use some of her share of the profits from the pig project on prophylactic devices such as the female condom. Perhaps it's already too late for her and her children.

Sharing strategies

AIDS is, of course, a global problem and there's only so much any national government can do alone. Until research produces a vaccine or cure, sharing strategies that have worked will be crucial if we are to continue to fight the local battles that make up the global war. In the future, developed nations will need to look at how they can help empower the developing nations who have been affected by this disease and the vacuum it has left, argues Janat Mukwaya. "We are such a small village, but we are also such a big village. The information flow is not readily available, but this is the information age. Let all those people who have information put it on the web. I think that would be a big contribution. But then I also think it's important that we are all open in order to break this culture of silence. HIV/AIDS is a normal disease like any other disease and what people living with HIV/AIDS need most is love, appreciation and assistance. This disease erodes the human resource and that's the saddest thing of all."

Biodiversity conservation - can it succeed?

by John Waithaka*



Kenya is a country with many different ecosystems, from tropical rainforests, dry forests, mangrove forests, savannah grasslands, fresh and salty lakes, coral reefs, deserts and semi-deserts.

These hold biological resources of enormous economic, social and cultural value: over 25,000 known species, including 21,575 species of insects, 314 mammals, 88 amphibians, 1067 birds, 191 reptiles, 180 fresh-water fish and approximately 7,500 plants. There are 265 and 485 endemic species of animals and plants respectively. Kenya is probably one of the few countries in the world with large and beautiful mammalian species that migrate annually in large herds.

Importance of biodiversity

Kenya is largely dependent on its biological resources for its social and economic development. Agriculture, livestock, forestry, nature-based tourism, fisheries and other biodiversity resources account for nearly all the employment, economic output, export earnings and fuel energy requirements. Biodiversity is inseparable

from human needs; its conservation is crucial to political stability, economic development and national security.

Parks and reserves as safeguards

Kenya has designated 7.5% of the country as protected areas. These consist of 59 parks and reserves. Tsavo National Park, the largest of them all, covers 47% of the total protected area system. Over 80% of biodiversity exists outside protected areas, many of which are becoming ecological islands surrounded by human settlements. Parks and reserves do not necessarily cover all the biodiversity-rich areas; in fact, over 97% of aquatic biodiversity and a large portion of terrestrial ecosystems lie outside them. They are, therefore, inadequate safeguards as they are too small to meet species' habitat needs or sustain important ecological processes.

Landowners have the final say on how to use their land outside protected areas. Their highest priority is usually to earn money from it, from livestock production, agriculture, and urban development. These activities often require land to be cleared of wild animals. The national campaign

to increase and diversify food production in the rural areas has made people less tolerant of wildlife, and land-use conflicts escalate while conservation policies do not help resolve them.

Policies

There are about 80 legal statutes relating to conservation and management of biodiversity resources in the country. Most of them concentrate on biodiversity conservation for economic, social, scientific, and cultural purposes, but fail to reconcile and integrate conservation goals with human needs. Farms, forests, grazing areas, fisheries, protected areas and villages have been treated in isolation to the detriment of all. Sectoral policies, conflicts, lack of political support, poverty and inadequate budgetary allocations all contribute to the decline in biological resources. The interests of stakeholders are often ignored, and the available human capacity is not effectively used. Policies which recognise the full value of biodiversity are hampered by poor governance, political patronage and widespread corruption.

Threats

Biodiversity conservation is currently threatened by mismanagement brought about by demographic, economic and technological changes. The population has increased from 5 million in 1950 to 30 million today. Many biodiversity-rich

ecosystems have been degraded or destroyed.

Most of the forests have been destroyed through excisions, charcoal burning, fires, logging and criminal practices such as the growing of bhang (*Cannabis sativa*). Only 15% of the forests inherited from the colonial government in 1964 exist today. Over 160,000 hectares of protected forest and many more unprotected groves have been converted to other uses.

Water pollution, particularly in areas with intensive industrial, agricultural or human settlements, is widespread. Horticultural and floricultural development for European markets has put great demand on water, so many rivers fail to flow their entire courses during the dry season. Drainage basins have attracted intensive multiple land uses which have resulted in environmental degradation, siltation, water pollution and changes in flooding frequency. Swamps that are important refuges for rare antelopes, primates, wetland birds, fish and other aquatic species are under intense threat from reclamation for agricultural purposes. Others are drying up because of over-extraction upstream. Widespread water abstraction, sedimentation, agrochemical residues, industrial waste and domestic sewage are destroying biodiversity in many of the Kenyan lakes.

Many animal populations

have been eroded because of the above activities. Some species have disappeared while many others are at the verge of extinction. There are only a handful of Sitatunga antelopes left, fewer than 10 lammegeyers, a dozen dugongs, about 30 roan antelope and 150 sable antelope. The elephant population declined from 170,000 to 20,000 during the catastrophic poaching of the 1970s and 1980s, while rhinos dropped from 20,000 to 300 within the same period. In the recent past, the population of the endemic Hunter's antelope has declined from 12,000 to about 350, mainly due to poaching for the pot. More than 200 Kenyan species appear in the IUCN list of endangered species but this is a gross underestimation.

Many populations are threatened by genetic isolation due to habitat fragmentation and blockage of migratory routes. Alien invasive introduced species such as water hyacinth, *Lantana camara*, *Salvinia molesta*, and Nile perch have become a serious threat to indigenous biodiversity. Efforts to eradicate some of them have been fruitless, even with international assistance.

Tourism

Uncontrolled tourism is also taking its toll on biodiversity in the popular parks and reserves. Overcrowding, off-road driving, animal harassment, speeding and inappropriate waste



Wildebeeste migration,
Maasai Mara, Kenya

disposal mechanisms are some of the activities that are impacting heavily on biodiversity. Popular species (lions, leopards, cheetah, rhino) are not reproducing successfully under the tourist gaze.

Human-wildlife conflict

Past problems have affected the attitudes of rural communities towards conservation. To many Kenyans, conservation is synonymous with excluding local people from protected areas. The rift between the government and local people over the control of resources is usually characterised by open hostility.

Lack of access to the resources they have historically relied upon for their existence, coupled with increasing competition with wildlife outside the parks, has resulted in bitter conflicts between people and wildlife. Crop depredation, killing of people and livestock, competition for water, destruction of buildings, damage to water

installations, fences and other facilities by wildlife does not help, and the usual response is to kill animals in self-defence or to protect property. Poaching is minimal in areas where local people benefit from wildlife through direct or indirect uses. The involvement of local communities in planning, management and sharing benefits accruing from biodiversity-related initiatives forms an essential part of a strong anti-poaching strategy.

It has taken many decades for the country to accept that protected areas cannot co-exist with communities that are hostile to them and to recognise that social, cultural, economic and political issues are not peripheral to conservation, but central to every successful effort. It has now been demonstrated that raising the quality of human life creates positive support for protected areas.

The various attempts to develop national strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity have been unsuccessful due to lack of support by critical stakeholders. So has the attempt to develop criteria for conservation based on biological priorities and their potential for sustainable use. Conservation education and community conservation campaigns and projects have been on the increase within the last few years but have largely been carried out through donor support. The concept of biodiversity conservation for sustainable development is still viewed with suspicion.

Way forward

The long-term survival of biodiversity will largely depend on how quickly and effectively human-wildlife conflicts are addressed. It is becoming increasingly clear that much depends on what will happen outside protected parks. This being the case, the support of local people on whose land over 80% of wildlife live cannot continue to be ignored. The more they are allowed to benefit from wildlife within their landscapes, the more reasons they will find to justify conservation. Unless this is achieved, there will be no room for wildlife in a world where even more people suffer from poverty, natural and man-made disasters, malnutrition and disease. If non-domesticated biodiversity is to compete effectively with other land uses, it must not be stripped of its economic value, as the competitive playing ground is already heavily tilted against it.

EU support

To thwart the looming biodiversity crises, the EU has invested heavily in biodiversity conservation in Kenya within the last decade. Biodiversity support projects have included the Mara Conservation Project, Conservation of Indigenous Forest Projects, the Elephant Conservation and Community Wildlife Conservation Project and the Arabuko Sokoke Indigenous Forest Conservation Project. Community projects have been funded through the Community Development Trust Fund (CDTF). The European Commission has also been actively involved in supporting the tourism sector.

A new € 5,550,000 Biodiversity Conservation Programme (BCP) to enhance sustainable biodiversity conservation in the country for the next five years has been established. It will be implemented within the existing CDTF framework. This demand-driven, multi-window funding mechanism is a partnership approach that targets local biodiversity conservation initiatives in the areas of education and awareness, conservation-based revenue generation, conflict reduction and threat alleviation. Among the beneficiaries of the project will be the tourism industry, community and private game ranches and other organized groups that support long-term biodiversity conservation initiatives. It started in September 2000.

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The road to peace

A coalition government took power in Solomon Islands in July 2000. Its top priority, says Minister Michael Maina, during a visit to the EU in Brussels, is to "bring back law and order, and normality. Without peace there cannot be any development."

A positive note is that a Peace Agreement - the Townsville Peace Agreement - was signed on 15 October. Peace talks began in early September aboard the New Zealand frigate, *Te Kaha*.

The Agreement is wide-ranging, including an amnesty arrangement, a commitment to surrender arms, compensation arrangements for those who suffered during the tensions, and a restructuring of the police force.

"When the new government took office back in July, it established a Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace. To underline the importance of its task, the Deputy Prime Minister Allan Kemakeza was put in charge of it. The two rival factions, the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF) and

Michael Maina Solomon Islands Minister for National Planning and Human Resource Development

Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM) were fully consulted, and came to agree with the new government that there must be a road to peace."

The first stop on this road to peace was the signing of a ceasefire agreement, followed by initial peace talks between the government and the two militant groups.

"The purpose of the initial discussions on the peace process was to agree on common issues, and for the government to inform the two warring parties of its position and how it wants to deal with the issues. This paved the way for the peace talks proper, where the three parties fully discussed all the sensitive issues such as land, movement of people, the constitution of the country, and how it should be tailored to address these issues."

No peacekeeping force was sent to the country, despite requests by the previous Government.

"The last executive government requested a Peacekeeping Force from Australia and New Zealand, but there was no positive response." During the ceasefire, a Ceasefire Monitoring Council was set up. Church groups, especially the Melanesian Brothers, played a key role in monitoring the ceasefire and patrolled the borders of the warring zones. Under the Townsville Agreement, unarmed peace monitors are expected from Australia, New Zealand, and Tonga.

Police force

The restructuring of the police force was one of the issues put forward by the Guadalcanal province. They, along with the IFM, felt that the police force was dominated by the Malaita police and people, and therefore they wished to see it restructured.

"It is a big issue in the country, and it is our hope that we can resolve it. We do not know what the police force will look like at the end of the day. But we do hope that police officers will be drawn from all ethnic groupings in society, so that at least it will be a police force that we can trust. We do not want mistrust of our police officers. Although one ethnic group is already saying this, we still believe that the police force of our country is a force that you can trust."

The Townsville Agreement foresees a reintegration of the militant police officers into the regular police force, and a restructuring of the force to have a more balanced representation.

Shattered economy

The economy has been shattered by the crisis, during which investment and foreign exchange earnings ground to a halt. Government revenue is now 20% below budget. External financial assistance is crucial if the country is to get back on its feet and keep tension from boiling over again. What can be done to restore the confidence needed for businesses to rebuild the economy?

"The priority must be peace. We believe that when you bring normality back to the community, the rest will follow. The government has decided to cut down its expenditure, for example, to reduce the size of

the public service. The ongoing cost of the government is being assessed, so that it can keep functioning with minimal number of staff. When normality returns, tax-paying businesses will return. Then we will be able to employ more public officers."

We must take advice on preserving our resources. We can't overexploit just because of the current situation. We have a role to play to survive."

Compensation

One of the government's policies in restoring peace was paying compensation to those who had suffered loss or displacement during the conflict. Compensation is a traditional concept, usually used to solve small-scale, neighbourly disputes. "It involves a lot of cost for the government, but we have seen the situation. Australia and New Zealand criticised us to the point where they said they could not give any help. But the achievements we have made are because of the large payouts to the people. It is viable, and the money involved comes back to create economic activity and development within the society. The money is not wasted as far as we are concerned. It is still held

within the central bank, within the system. It must have its limits, but where nothing else worked, I think it has had an important role."

Avoiding desperate measures

In the past, Solomon Islands forestry resources were dangerously over-exploited. Nowadays, international partners stress the importance of protecting these resources, and often make assistance conditional on this. Now that the country is in such a vulnerable position, being strapped for cash and needing to keep unrest and ethnic tension at bay, there was an obvious temptation to use these resources as a ready source of income.

"Our international partners will help us to survive. None of us in the government today can refuse their strict rules. We would be fools not to listen to their sentiments about exploiting our resources to ensure the survival of future generations. It is important that we take advice on preserving our resources. We can't overexploit just because of the current situation. We will continue to abide by instructions. We have a role to play to survive. Our responsibility is to society, and also to our friends outside."

The international community will wholeheartedly support this approach.

Dorothy Morrissey

Against all odds - EDF project implementation in Malaita

by Dave Russell

Working with Solomon Islands engineers and VSO volunteers on the implementation of an EDF-

Beautiful islands, sleepy lagoons with friendly and hard-working people. A fair description of the Solomon Islands until recently, when they have been troubled with ethnic tensions. The unrest has led to the displacement of over 20,000 people, and resulted in armed rival militia groups warring with each other. Over 100 people have been reported killed in the conflict and there has been a virtual collapse of law and order since June last year.

Peace

We are all hopeful that the recent signing of a Peace Agreement in Australia between the warring factions means that the Solomon Islands are headed toward a restoration of law and order and peaceful development. Much has been damaged and much has to be restored, including a shattered economy. There is now however an air of confidence and a will among the people to work together to secure a lasting peace and a period of reconciliation and reconstruction. With some

funded infrastructure project in the Solomon Islands during difficult times

assistance from friendly aid donors, and given a few years, they will.

The Malaita Rural Infrastructure Project

Malaita is one of nine island Provinces that make up the independent state of Solomon Islands. It is the most densely-populated, and suffers from a shortage of arable land.

I have worked in developing countries for over 30 years as a civil engineer involved with many rural development projects. Since April 1995, and throughout the recent troubled times, I have been working with dedicated Solomon Island engineers and VSO volunteers as the Project Manager of a team engaged in the implementation of the Malaita Rural Infrastructure Project (MRIP).

The project was conceived in 1991 and following two feasibility studies in 1992 and 1993 a budget of 6 million Euros was secured from the 7th EDF.

The scope of the project includes the construction of about 120 km of gravel roads and three wharfs. Construction is about 65% complete. Some of the roads give access to coastal areas with a potential for development of cash cropping. Other roads penetrate inland to areas once traditionally farmed, but since the arrival of missionaries and Mission Stations along the coast, are now largely abandoned. The reason for such roads is to attract the traditional inland land-owners back from the overpopulated coastal strips. The sudden arrival of many thousands of displaced people from Guadalcanal has undoubtedly heightened the relevance of the project.

It was decided that the construction would be carried out using a mixture of labour-intensive

Triple span log bridge built entirely by hand



methods and more traditional machine-based methods.

Delays

Almost from the start of the implementation phase a series of external events conspired to delay progress and to increase cost. In July 1995 an unfortunate deterioration of the relationship between the EU and the Solomon Islands Government developed (now happily resolved). This delayed for about three years the procurement of the heavy plant and bridging materials needed for the project. Everything had to be done by hand. We renovated several dilapidated government tractors and purchased hundreds of wheelbarrows and other light equipment and hand tools. The work was very heavy and slow going. Access was very difficult. Having vehicles of our own meant we had to hire or borrow, and these vehicles were often old and unreliable, needing extensive repairs. Getting to the construction sites involved a three-hour drive over some pretty rough roads; breakdowns were frequent.

Throughout the first 12 months, despite a vigorous advertising campaign, the project had failed to identify any suitable Solomon Islands civil engineers. Fortunately this problem had been foreseen, and when I arrived there were already three VSO volunteer civil engineers on site. Ambrose, the first Solomon Islands engineer, was engaged. He has remained loyally with the project and is currently the Counterpart Project Manager. Up to this point the three volunteers had carried out all field supervision.

We now have four Solomon Islands engineers and one volunteer employed in the capacity of mechanical adviser.

Perseverance pays

Perseverance pays off eventually. I am rather proud of our team. It has never been easy for any of them. There have been constant problems on site to be overcome and hardships to be endured. They are the ones who must be given the credit for the physical achievements that the project can claim to date.



Before...

Roughly when Ambrose joined us, the labour-based activities were beginning to make an impression and the labour force had been built up to its full strength of about 500 workers. Then national minimum wage was increased by 85%. It began to feel as if there was a hex on the project! Were it not for the constant encouragement and support from individuals in both the National and Provincial Governments and the obvious commitment of the rural communities where we were working, I might have been tempted to throw in the towel and recommend that the project be suspended.

...and after





country. When we need a spare part it has to be ordered from overseas. This means repair-down times of several weeks.

Good relations

Our project relies heavily on good management / worker relation-

non-existent services. VSO suspended operations and evacuated all volunteers (including two working for MRIP) and many businesses in Honiara have either closed down or continue to operate with reduced staff.

During the height of the troubles I shared a concern with some of the non-Malaitan staff that they might become victims of resentment by Malaitans themselves displaced from Guadalcanal Province not wanting to see non-Malaitans allowed to work in their Province. Reason appears to have prevailed and no serious incidents have occurred.

The future

We are all now looking forward to a successful conclusion to our project. The roads and wharfs being constructed here will play a major role in the future development of Malaita. The challenge for the future beyond MRIP will be to ensure that the infrastructure is maintained. The EU is already working with the Government to create new assistance projects aimed at structural strengthening and rebuilding the Ministry responsible for the maintenance.

Finally, I am very grateful to the Solomon Islanders for being so welcoming and dedicated, and for allowing me to spend some time in their beautiful province.

At last...

The heavy machines and the beautiful shining new Landrovers finally did arrive in March and August last year and the bridging materials followed in December. There have been initial teething problems but in general the machines are working well. But, because they are of European origin and because the European manufacturers have not as far as I can tell targeted the Pacific Region as a sales destination, they are the only ones of their type in the

ships and I am proud to say that the violent events which followed the June 5 coup have had only minimal impact on our schedules; the workers, engineers and office support staff have all carried on regardless of the dangerous situation surrounding them. We have suffered increased difficulties of communication and of ordering spare parts and other project supplies. Security has been a nightmare particularly in the capital city Honiara, where we maintain a support office. For a time in Honiara looting was

rife. All telephone communications between Malaita and Honiara were severed in May and the service has not yet been restored. International passenger flights were for a time suspended. Air freighted supplies are suffering long delays due to erratic and for a time

Transporting labour based equipment

The Original Team 1998 - Ambrose middle back (white shirt), me middle front



COMESA - Africa's first Free Trade Area

by Shapi Shacinda

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) has created Africa's first Free Trade Area, which guarantees the free movement of goods and services and the removal of all tariff and non-tariff barriers.

African leaders praised the launch as the first step towards the creation of an African Economic Community.

Nine of COMESA's 20 members — Djibouti, Egypt, Mauritius, Madagascar, Malawi, Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Sudan — were in the first wave of countries entering the FTA when it was formally launched in the Zambian capital of Lusaka on October 31 2000.

Namibia and Swaziland have had their derogations to apply reciprocal tariffs extended for a limited time, until technical issues relating to their membership of the Southern African Customs Union have been resolved.

Six other COMESA states — Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Rwanda, Uganda — have all reduced their tariffs by between 60% and 80% and will enjoy market access on a reciprocal basis.

COMESA has a combined population of 380 million, and covers 12,886,591 km². Its gross domestic product is \$166 billion. Intra-COMESA trade stands at just \$4.2 billion from a total annual trade of \$63 billion.

A Customs Union by 2004?

COMESA hopes to become a Customs Union by 2004. Then it will launch efforts towards a common monetary union with a common central bank by 2025.

African leaders at the launch agreed to uphold democratic principles, good governance, peace and stability to attract direct foreign investment and increase intra-regional trade.

"There are many challenges posed by globali-

sation. We should realise that it is time we got our priorities right and served our people. We must reduce poverty and increase trade within the region," said Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi.

Zambian President Frederick Chiluba views the FTA as an impetus for job creation, and as a way of attracting direct foreign investment.

Chiluba said the region, although the worst-affected by HIV/AIDS, poverty and conflict, has the potential to improve the lives of its people.

Many COMESA states are in the throes of, or just emerging from, conflict. They include the former Zaire, Sudan, Angola, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe. Kenya's President Moi and Malawi's President Bakili Muluzi are among the sternest critics of war in the region, saying they cannot understand why governments spend millions of dollars on war instead of improving the lives of their impoverished citizens.

Problems

A huge external debt (\$124 billion for COMESA states, with a debt to exports ratio of 396%), the flight of professionals to better-paying Western countries, the slow pace of technology improvement and slow training of skilled technical professionals are some of the other hurdles the COMESA FTA will have to overcome.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Mauritian Prime Minister and chairman of the COMESA Authority of Heads of State and Government, feels that COMESA will encourage members to upgrade their road and railway networks and improve telecommunication and facilities for efficient transportation of goods.

COMESA started off as the Preferential Trade Area in 1981 and its goal has always been to enhance intra-African trade and improve the lives of the continent's citizens.

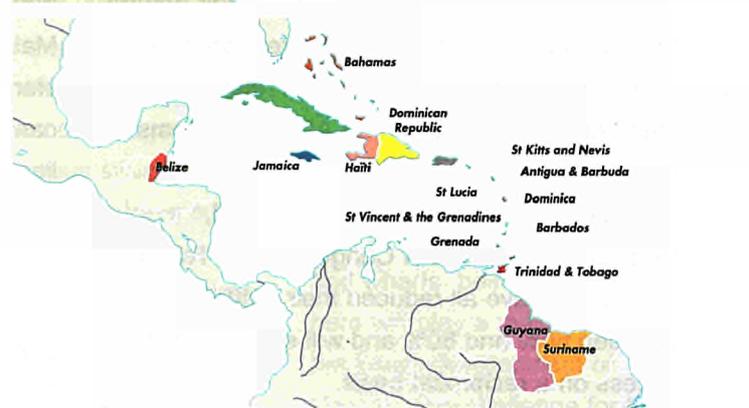
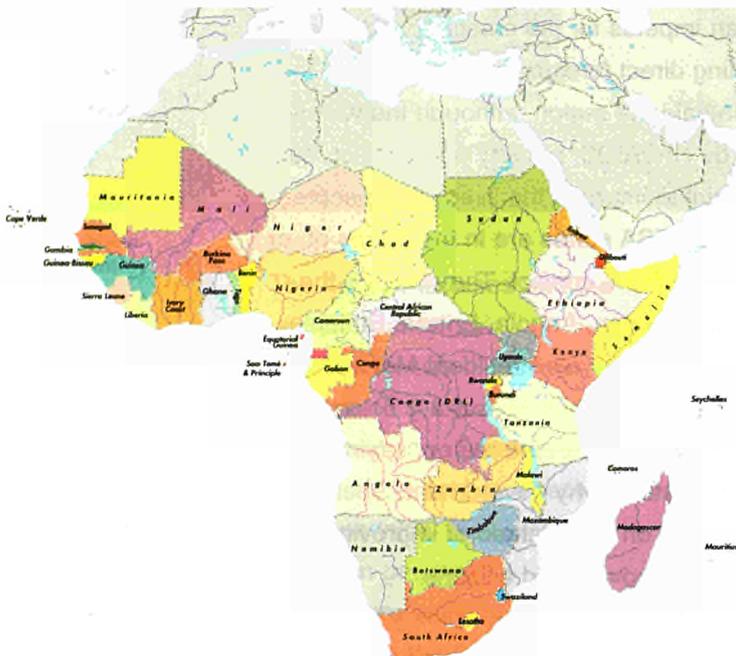


Austria
 Belgium
 Denmark
 Finland
 France
 Germany
 Greece
 Ireland
 Italy
 Luxembourg
 Netherlands
 Portugal
 Spain
 Sweden
 United Kingdom
France
Territorial collectivities
 Mayotte

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

United Kingdom
Overseas countries and territories
 Anguilla
 British Antarctic Territory
 British Indian Ocean Territory
 British Virgin Islands
 Cayman Islands
 Falkland Islands
 Southern Sandwich Islands
 and dependencies
 Montserrat
 Pitcairn Island
 St Helena and dependencies
 Turks and Caicos Islands

The European Union



ACP States

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 Barbados
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 Benin
 Botswana
 Burkina Faso
 Burundi
 Cameroon
 Cape Verde
 Central African Republic
 Chad
 Comoros
 Congo
 Cook Islands
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 Djibouti
 Dominica
 Dominican Republic

Equatorial Guinea
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 Ethiopia
 Fiji
 Gabon
 Gambia
 Ghana
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 Guinea
 Guinea Bissau
 Guyana
 Haiti
 Ivory Coast
 Jamaica
 Kenya
 Kiribati
 Lesotho
 Liberia
 Madagascar
 Malawi

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 Marshall Islands
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 Samoa
 São Tomé and Príncipe
 Senegal

Seychelles
 Sierra Leone
 Solomon Islands
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 Suriname
 Swaziland
 Tanzania
 Togo
 Tonga
 Trinidad & Tobago
 Tuvalu
 Uganda
 Vanuatu
 Zambia
 Zimbabwe

visionary and artist



Rosey Cameron Smith

Over 20 years have passed since the "monkey lady" settled on St Kitts. "It was pure chance that brought me here and I've stayed in the country ever since."

Rosey, a visionary artist, does all she can to ensure that the visual arts are taught and gain recognition on the island of St Kitts.

"There's plenty of local talent here, but it needs to be nurtured, establish more depth and become known abroad."

She has acquired a local reputation for her pictures which capture the spirit of the islanders' daily life, for her clowns (see cover) as well as carnival figures that look as if they might have come straight out of Sierra Leone. She is particularly known for the descendants of the African green monkeys she has tamed and which now follow her up to the doorstep of her home. According to current estimates some 50,000 of them live in the tropical forests and arid peninsula of the Federation of St Kitts and Nevis.



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