

spring 2005

interact

A photograph of a man with a beard and short hair, wearing a light-colored shirt and red shorts, sitting on a sandy beach. He is focused on using a hammer with a wooden handle to work on a large piece of wood. The background shows the ocean and some trees under a cloudy sky.

Capacity building

Also in this issue:
HIV and AIDS in Nicaragua
Solidarity in Ecuador
Faith and the tsunami

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editorial

Capacity building

Capacity building is a jargon term that seems to have two meanings, at least so far as international development is concerned.

The first, more specific, meaning is to do with building the organisational capacity of groups in developing countries so that they can more effectively meet the needs of the people they represent or serve.

The second, wider, meaning is to do with building people's capacity – their skills, knowledge, confidence and belief in their ability to bring about change in their own lives.

CIIR/ICD is involved in both types of capacity building. The insight section of this edition of *Interact* looks at some of this experience, examining the achievements and challenges of capacity building with partner organisations and local people in the countries where we work.

Much of CIIR/ICD's capacity building work is done through our development workers. Other articles in this *Interact* – such as the diary column on page 4 – show that this is not just a one-way process, but a mutual exchange of skills, knowledge and understanding.

However, the impact of capacity building will always be limited if people and organisations in developing countries remain shackled by the way the rich north runs the world. Taking our lead from the ethos of the World Social Forum, we need to mobilise for change – including lending our support to the **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** campaign, which is beginning to exert real pressure for decisive steps to improve the prospects for people in the global south.

Editor

Cover picture: A man making a dug-out canoe in East Timor, where CIIR/ICD runs a capacity-building programme. Photo © Nick Sireau/CIIR.



© Pablo Corral Vega/Corbis

San Pablo lake and the sacred mountain Imbabura, at the heart of the region where Fernando works.

Mixed emotions

The rich experience of working in Ecuador makes **Fernando Ruiz** reflect on life in his home country, Colombia

I HAVE BEEN A DEVELOPMENT WORKER (*yanapak* in the Kichwa language) in Ecuador since 2001. I work in an intercultural Andean region, the Imbakucha basin. As I am a forest engineer, I love going out into the countryside to share and work with people who live in contact with nature (*allpamama*), in the woods (*sachayurakuna*), in the mountains (*urkukuna*).

My work takes me to places where I feel as free as air (*wayra shina*); where I feel that I am doing something for the people of this region and for all this beautiful country.

I have a work companion called Agustín. 'Agucho' and I go to the mountains. When we are in the highlands (*hawa allpa*), we sometimes see the condors flying and we feel close to them, as free as air (*samay shina*).

New visions

Agustín and I always share our vision of work and life with the communities (*jipa pachapak kawsay ricuy*). This intercultural sharing has enabled us to construct a new way of thinking about the relationship between people and nature. We no longer think about the 'management of

natural resources'; we are discovering the 'breeding of the *allpamama*'. We do not manage parts of the environment, we create slopes (*pugyukuna*), plateaux (*uksha allpakuna*), woods (*sachakuna*). We haven't got natural resources, we have *allpamama*.

These visions draw us closer to the communities and to mother earth (*pachamama*). With these new visions, it is not only the processes of the project that change, our lives are changing.

It is immensely satisfying to see the smiles of the boys and girls, women and men with whom we share our labour; we share our days of work in the mountains with all the people. I feel I am lucky to be able to work with such a focus on solidarity and friendship towards the people I work with.

My country

They always ask me about Colombia, my country (*mama llakta*). I tell them about people (*runakuna*), the Colombian mountains (*urkukuna*), the great rivers (*mayukuna*), the hot earth (*kunug allpa*), the valleys (*yunga*), the lakes (*kuchakuna*), the indigenous peoples (*ayllu runakuna*).

They ask me about the conflict in Colombia and how safe it is to go into the countryside. It is not

easy to answer these questions. I am happy to be able to work here in the Imbakucha basin where I don't have to worry about being in the countryside. But it saddens me that in my country I can't go into the mountains or share with people in rural zones without protection; work in the countryside is risky.

Here I am a development worker for ICD (International Cooperation for Development – CIIR's operating name in Ecuador). In my country it is thought that cooperation is buying arms for the war. That is why the Plan Colombia has been drawn up.

Shared experience

In Ecuador, at weekends, I can go to the mountains with my family – my wife, my two sons and I. We take warm jackets and food and off we go. We don't worry about anything; we know that nothing will happen.

We are lucky to be sharing this experience. But in our hearts we are nostalgic and sad for our country – Colombia. In the 2003 holidays we went to Bogotá and we couldn't go to an archaeological place called Guatavita because there was an armed confrontation. This place is 40 kilometres from Bogotá. And we couldn't go there.

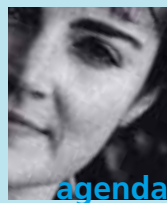
But here, we go to distant places unafraid, with the reassurance of knowing that we will get home again.

I think of the need that my work here serves. With the solidarity of my work companions I feel that I am indeed doing my part. It is a drop of water (*yaku*) in the ocean (*mama kucha*), but it is worthwhile.

It is good to work as a development worker in Ecuador, and it is frustrating not to be able to do this in my own country.

It will happen one day – *wakin punchachari kanka*.

Fernando Ruiz works as an agroforestry engineer with Centro de Estudios Pluriculturales (CEPCU).



Engaging in the process

2005 IS A CRITICAL YEAR for development and as members of the **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** (MPH) coalition, CIIR is pleased to be playing its part. We helped organise a very successful MPH churches event in January which inspired, informed and mobilised over 700 people from across the Christian denominations and from which a number of local events have followed.

The G8 meeting in Gleneagles in July is the main focus for the coalition, as it calls on international leaders to make fundamental and historic changes in debt, aid and most importantly trade for the benefit of the world's poorest.

It is right to focus on the international leaders: after all, their decisions could result in massive changes for so many. Relieving

A strong civil society can hold government and decision makers to account

debt could positively affect the ability of so many countries which now struggle to spend money on health, education and social services. Providing more and better aid could give poor countries the chance to build up their infrastructure and invest in their economies. And making trade rules fairer could help developing countries to compete on the international market without having to face the thinly disguised protectionism or unfair subsidy systems that currently exist. These are decisions that only world leaders can make or force through.

But how effectively the impact of these decisions can be felt by the poorest is not a matter for western leaders, but for the

Capacity building can give people a bigger say in their own future, writes Christine Allen

governments of the countries concerned – and, I would also argue, for the people of those countries. The Africa Commission Report has highlighted corruption as a major stumbling block to development. Corruption isn't only an internal thing, there are external forces too, so it is a responsibility for all governments as well as businesses to consider. Reducing corruption requires a concerted effort from all sides.

One area that can contribute to a reduction in corruption is having a strong and actively engaged civil society. Not only can a strong civil society promote greater engagement of the people in decision-making processes, but it can also hold the government and decision makers to account. Consultation, protest, use of judicial measures and the media are all effective measures in ensuring that governments and decision makers do not ride roughshod over the people.

There are many ways in which civil society can engage, but even where there is the political space, it requires skills and capabilities. This is where building the capacity of local organisations is so important. CIIR sees it as a vital role in development, and promoting greater civil society engagement for change is one of our three strategic aims over the next five years.

Funding alone isn't the answer, especially if that funding provides only what the funder wants to give, rather than what is most needed for the people. Whether it is large scale or small scale aid projects, it is going to be more sustainable – and, I would argue, more effective – if the people are



Raising a chorus at the MPH churches event in January.

engaged in the process, owning it for themselves.

The rhetoric of the World Bank is that national strategies for poverty reduction have to involve the people, and be done in a consultative way. Without skills and knowledge, local organisations may find it difficult to engage in these processes. And without a real commitment on the part of the institutions to ensure that true consultation takes place, then this will remain little more than a cosmetic exercise.

CIIR believes that our role in development is to support the poor in their own process of transformation. We provide the skills and technical support that help people to stand on their own. Whether it's in organisational development, management, fundraising, strategic planning or advocacy, increasing the capacity of local organisations can make a long-lasting difference to their work, and to the processes of development and transformation that they will be engaged in long after we have left.

Christine Allen is CIIR's executive director.

Namibia launches policy on orphans

NAMIBIA HAS LAUNCHED a national policy to address the needs of the country's 150,000 orphans and vulnerable children.

The policy, developed with the support of UNICEF, was launched at the third national conference on orphans and vulnerable children in February. Speaking at the conference, outgoing president Sam Nujoma said the policy would provide a foundation for effective interaction between the government, communities and NGOs to reduce the vulnerability of orphans and other children, and mitigate the impact of HIV and AIDS.

'The high rate of new infections of young Namibians between the ages of 10 and 24 ... at 60 per cent is alarming, and a clarion call

to all of us to fight the spread of HIV and AIDS,' Nujoma said.

The new policy document notes that there will be an estimated 251,055 orphans in Namibia by 2021. It emphasises the need for orphaned children to grow up with the support of their communities and extended families. Communities will receive support to cover the school and health-related expenses of orphans and vulnerable children in their care, including agricultural assistance for increased food production.

The Namibian government has set up a permanent task force on orphans and vulnerable children, and a trust fund to supplement the monthly state grants currently being paid out for 25,000 such children.

Richard Moseley-Williams, 1944-2005

ON 13 FEBRUARY 2005 aid and development campaigners in Latin America and the Caribbean lost a friend when Richard Moseley-Williams died aged 60, *writes Anne Street*.

Richard was born in Chile and lived in Colombia, Argentina and Mexico. From 1976 to 1991 he served as Oxfam's area coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean. Oxfam and CIIR worked closely together throughout his tenure.

After a short stint with Action Aid in London, Richard moved to the Dominican Republic in 1999,

establishing himself as a freelance consultant and writer. Richard became increasingly committed to the defence of the human rights of the thousands of Haitian migrants living under conditions of extreme poverty in the Dominican Republic. In 2004 he co-authored, with his wife Bridget Wooding, the CIIR briefing *Needed but unwanted: Haitian immigrants and their descendants in the Dominican Republic*. On the day he died Richard had just finished an article on the empowerment of Haitian refugees.

Ecuador tackles water issues

CIIR/ICD partner CAMAREN is tackling water distribution problems in Ecuador by making local participation possible, *reports Aline Arroyo Castillo*. The organisation provides training for the sustainable management of natural resources. It also acts as the secretariat for the Water Resources Forum, a space for debate about water-related issues. The posting of a CIIR/ICD worker with the organisation this year is expected to strengthen coordination of the forum.

In Ecuador, water is distributed very unevenly. Public and private institutions develop projects in isolation. With a growing population, the demand for water is outstripping the state's capacity to provide it. Water supply and sanitation provision are among the lowest in Latin America.

Flawed systems of irrigation are a related issue. The amount of land that is irrigated is a very small proportion of the amount that could be cultivated. Better management of irrigation would help to combat poverty.

The Water Resources Forum was formed in 2001 as a platform for open debate, making both local and national decisions. Concrete proposals made by the forum so far include legal reforms, an alternative model for the management of irrigation and a methodological guide for investigation into the state of water resources, their use and management.

University sets out on new path



AMAWTAY WASI Cross-Cultural University in Ecuador, a CIIR/ICD partner organisation, has published its manifesto for an integral, multicultural education system.

The document, *Learning wisdom and the good way to live*,

The cover image from 'Learning wisdom and the good way to live'.

is published in three languages: Kichwa, Spanish and English. It sets out the theoretical principles for higher learning and an education system that reflect different world (or cosmological) visions and promote multiculturalism and diversity. It also sets out a practical structure and framework for the intercultural university that will enable it to begin to put the theory into practice.

Small farmers given a voice

THE VIEWS OF SMALL FARMERS ON issues such as trade, genetically modified organisms and organic agriculture are being canvassed to ensure that their voice can be heard at global forums including the G8 summit in July and the World Trade Organisation meeting in Hong Kong in December.

Small producers from the global north and south are giving their views through an internet conference co-sponsored by CIIR/ICD, the International Institute for Environment and Development, the UK Food Group and the UK Small and Family Farms Alliance.

The conference involves a range of small producers including farmers, rural indigenous communities, fisherfolk, pastoralists and others who make a living from the land. Holding the conference over the internet means that views can be circulated and discussed without the need for participants to gather in one place.

Although many farmers' representatives have access to the internet, most farmers'

communities don't. CIIR/ICD is therefore running workshops in Central America and the Dominican Republic to collect input from partners in those countries to feed into the conference.

The conference aims to explore alternatives to the neoliberal vision of agriculture and examine different forms of production. Findings from the conference, including policy recommendations, will be collated and published in order to ensure that the views of small producers are represented in policy forums.

Meanwhile, a report by ActionAid, *Power hungry: Six reasons to regulate global food corporations*, says that the activities of multinational food companies like Monsanto, Nestlé and Wal-Mart threaten the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of poor farmers. The report says that in Brazil, 50,000 farmers have been forced out of business through a series of aggressive takeovers by multinationals.

Global food companies are also accused of violating human rights.



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A farmer in the Dominican Republic.

In India in 2003 an estimated 12,000 children worked on cotton-seed farms supplying subsidiaries of Bayer, Monsanto, Syngenta and Unilever. Many were exposed to dangerous pesticides.

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Download ActionAid's full report from www.actionaid.org.uk/wps/content/documents/power_hungry.pdf

Theologians promote social change

THE FIRST WORLD FORUM ON Theology and Liberation, titled 'Theology for another possible world', took place in Brazil in January, reports Gerry Proctor. Over 200 theologians from each of the continents were present.

The WFTL was organised to coincide with the World Social Forum (see page 14). It sought to be a positive Christian influence upon the thousands of people gathering to explore issues common to the poor around the globe.

Themes addressed by speakers

included the relationship between ecology and theology, the role of religion in political culture and the need for theologians to be actively involved in the liberation of the marginalised, rather than retreating into academic study of their plight.

Another forum on theology and liberation is planned for 2007, this time with the presence not only of theologians but also activists and others involved in the practice of liberation theology. It will also attempt to include inter-religious dialogue with Muslims as an element of the programme.

NGOs call for more effective aid

CIIR HAS JOINED 34 other NGOs in signing a statement calling on donors to make greater demands on the distribution of aid.

The NGO Statement on Aid Effectiveness was drafted by the European Network for Debt and Development (Eurodad), a network of NGOs who have been campaigning for donors and partner countries to be bolder in their vision and commitments on aid.

CIIR will join Eurodad and other NGOs to continue the push for ambitious targets and effective accountability mechanisms.

Unlocking people's potential

Capacity building is about helping people to achieve their objectives, writes **Lainie Thomas**

I REMEMBER APPLYING for the job of capacity-building adviser with CIIR/ICD in Somaliland in 1998. I didn't exactly know what capacity building was, much less have any idea of where Somaliland was.

At the interview, I was asked questions about different types of work that I had done before: writing an organisational strategic plan, setting up financial systems, and developing management skills. I had never considered them together as a unit, nor had I seen the possibilities of doing them all with a single group.

It was through my orientation with CIIR/ICD that I began to understand how my skills could help a small organisation achieve its own objectives. Fortunately, CIIR/ICD also had a map and was able to show me where Somaliland was.

I was posted with a Somali group called Havoyoco, one of the strongest local organisations in

Somaliland. As their capacity-building adviser, my job was to give the organisation the tools that it needed to be able to carry out the activities that it wanted to do.

Havoyoco ran a street circus, established a vocational training centre, and operated a centre for street children, but I left the design and operation of those activities to them. I helped them set up a solid, transparent accounting system. I worked with the staff to develop a strategic plan for the organisation. Together we rewrote the constitution, made an appropriate organisational structure, filed all of the organisational documents, set up a resource centre, and worked on publicity documents for donors and partners.

Problem solving

Capacity building is about helping people achieve their objectives by giving them the skills that they need. It's not about doing things for people, but about strengthening the ability of local people to solve their own problems for themselves.

One of the first exercises that we did together at Havoyoco was to write a mission statement. We invited all of the founders of the organisation as well as the staff and some of the beneficiaries to articulate the organisation's mission. We talked for a long time about the name: Hargeisa Voluntary Youth Committee (Havoyoco; Hargeisa is the capital of Somaliland). Where did they hope to go? What did they hope to do? The group was so enthusiastic and aspired to such high hopes for their organisation that I remember joking

A young member of Circus Hargeisa, one of the projects run by Havoyoco.



that one day they would have to change their name to Horn of Africa Voluntary Youth Committee to meet them all.

Over the next three years, I worked not only with Havoyoco but with many other Somaliland NGOs, from the youngest and least experienced to the more mature umbrella groups. Working closely with other international agencies who were also interested in building the capacity of local partners – either so that they could implement activities directly or because they were interested in capacity building as an exercise in itself – a group of us formed the Capacity Building Caucus.

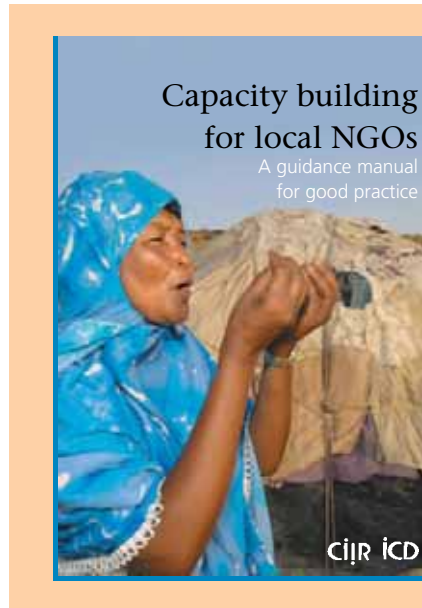
With the mandate of a group of agencies with a common mission, we took coordination to new levels. Together, eight international NGOs worked on developing a common partner assessment so that we could see what levels of support the local group needed before deciding on what intervention to provide. We coordinated training programmes for partners; we shared expenses and resources.

Our final activity before I left Hargeisa was to train eight Somalis as capacity-building trainers. We put them through a rigorous set of training workshops, practice training sessions, and oral examinations before we were confident to hand over the work to Somali trainers. At last the support was being provided in Somali language by local activists who had passed through the same growth process themselves. It was time for me to go.

New places, same tools

After I left Somaliland in 2001, I worked for three years in the former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan. The state of civil society in Azerbaijan was completely different from that of Somaliland. However, I was again drawn to the work of local NGOs and brought them into our project. I used the same training materials and led the same training sessions with groups of Azeri local leaders as I had in Somaliland. I found many of the same questions being raised as well as coming face to face with other issues that were totally unrelated to my Somaliland experience.

Now I'm working in south Sudan,



Capacity building for local NGOs: A guidance manual for good practice collects together the capacity-building training materials and advice originally developed by Lainie Thomas in Somaliland. Chapters of the manual include organisational governance, strategic planning, office administration, publicity and fundraising, and managing finances, people and projects. The entire manual or individual chapters can be downloaded free from the CIIR website www.ciir.org. It is also available in pdf format on CD free on request from CIIR.

continuing to collaborate with local partners and to build the capacity of Sudanese organisations. I use the same assessment questionnaire that I did when I first met Havoyoco, and the Sudanese groups learn from the examples generated by Somaliland groups as they worked through the exercises for the first time.

Despite all of the differences that I have seen among groups with such a wide array of objectives and abilities, the tools they need remain the same: a solid plan for where they are going, skills for getting there, transparent management systems, good ideas, and people who care. Capacity-building advisors can help with the first ones, but the last two have to come from the group itself.

Successful departures

This story has a pretty amazing ending. My phone rang a couple of weeks ago, and when I answered, there was a Somali voice at the other end. It was Mohamed Elmi, who had been my counterpart for three years in Hargeisa. We hadn't spoken in nearly four years.

He came over to my office in Nairobi with a package of Somali goods from Havoyoco, an offer to join their board of directors as an honorary member, and all the news of our old colleagues. We sat for almost an hour, catching up on things and talking about Havoyoco's successes.

We got around to my current work which involves potential work in capacity building in Somaliland.

So I mentioned this idea I had of getting civil society actors from all across the country together with those from Puntland, and he mentioned all of the main agencies who would participate. Most were the usual players, but then he mentioned CBN, a group I hadn't heard of before.

CBN is the Capacity Building Network. It is a local NGO that was formed by the eight trainers we taught and gave training skills to. They have formed a group who work as consultants to provide capacity-building assistance to groups who request it.

They use the same training manuals that we developed while I was working with them, and follow the same organisational capacity process that we established together with the original group of partners. The group has expanded and includes new NGO activists, and has a fully operational office. They are now carrying out the work CIIR brought in a foreigner to do six years ago.

It was not until after Mohamed left that I looked at the Havoyoco brochure he had left on my desk. Across the top it read: Horn of Africa Voluntary Youth Committee. Now that's capacity building!

Lainie Thomas was a CIIR/ICD development worker in Somaliland from 1998-2001. She is now the country representative for Mercy Corps South Sudan, based in Nairobi, Kenya. Lainie is from Maryland, USA.

CIIR/ICD development workers and local counterparts give an inside view of the challenges and achievements of their capacity-building work

Voices of the future

Capacity building with San youth in Namibia gives young people belief in their own abilities, writes **Yvonne Pickering**

I AM FEELING SO PROUD' are words that I often hear from young San on the youth mobilisation and student support programmes. These are young people who have learned to hide their cultural heritage, to fade into the background in the meek and non-assertive style that seems to typify San groups across the region. The aim of both programmes is to raise the capacity of these young people so that they are the active agents of change in San development in the future.

One young Khwe-speaking San teacher from West Caprivi, Victor Borro, attended his graduation recently. When asked how he felt

as he lined up to receive his teaching diploma, his reply was: 'I felt as if I had joined the rest of humanity.' When young people who have hidden their cultural identity or tended to fade into the background say 'I feel so proud' then you know the process of empowerment is working.

Most of the young San on both programmes have a clear vision of how they have to make a difference in San development in the future. Working with them, like with young people the whole world over, is a process of listening, advising when necessary, setting clear guidelines, praising when appropriate, occasionally challenging – and just letting go!

It is hard work, but I feel privileged to be part of the magical process of changing acceptance of what is seen as inevitable to determination to work towards what is possible – changing the words 'There is nothing we can do about it' to 'We must do

something about it'.

For me capacity building is part of what education (formal and non-formal) is all about – empowerment. Being empowered is to believe in what you can achieve; having the courage to risk failure; being determined to do your best. That needs not just skills and knowledge but a sense of self-worth. Supplying the skills is the practical aspect of capacity building, but a healthy self-esteem is what makes it possible to use those skills effectively. Personal development and 'life skills' training play their part, but it is the personal support and mentoring that is the binding agent. It is this that ensures that self-worth and self-belief makes a difference in that person's life and the lives of all those with whom that person comes into contact in the future.

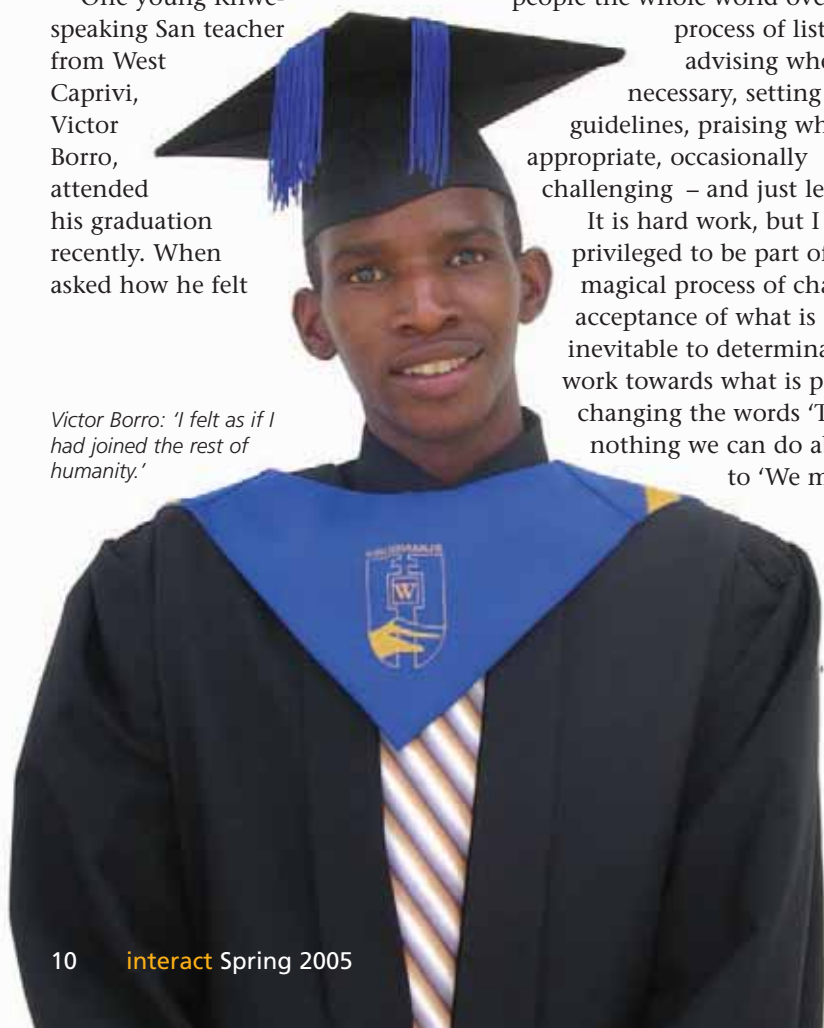
An important aspect of both programmes is for the young San involved to become the voice of San communities in the future. The most powerful voice is that of the oppressed, the marginalised, the abused – when those people become their own advocates.

Recently, a group of young San, part of the youth mobilisation programme, responded to the lack of representation on the politically-appointed traditional authority by organising consultation meetings with their community, putting together a petition requesting that the government allows the Hai||om communities to have free and fair election of the Hai||om Traditional Authority, and organising a peaceful and successful demonstration.

Some elders from Halali in the Etosha National Park attended the demonstration to support the youth. One elder told the young organisers: 'It is a joy to have young Hai||om listen and present our views in a powerful and respectful way. You are our hope for the future.'

Yvonne Pickering is a CIIR/ICD development worker with WIMSA (the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa). She is from the UK.

Victor Borro: 'I felt as if I had joined the rest of humanity.'



© Yvonne Pickering/CIIR

Ideas take hold

Investing in people is the best way to promote development, writes **Claire Gout**

IN PERU, those left on the farms are often only the elderly, or young people dreaming of the city and seeking to leave the countryside behind. They think that without money there is no future.

With the project 'Strengthening ability for the administration of natural resources in the Andean regions of Peru and Ecuador', we want to demonstrate that it is not like that.

In Cuzco, where traditions have not been as despised and forgotten as in other parts of the country, we came across the traditional *kamayoc* technique of irrigation: a system of furrows in geometric designs that shares out water according to the crop, the type of soil, the availability of water and the slope.

We technicians learnt alongside the people. At first the users in Cajamarca region were very sceptical: 'If it was so easy, we would have known it long ago.' But we went on working with the people, until it bore fruit.

In the Payac river valley, we began trying out another technique. Called 'in rings', it allows water to be saved, avoids soil erosion and limits the spread of pests and fungus. It goes perfectly with the organic production of mangoes.

In the beginning the farmers didn't see the advantages, but a small group of young people from the town of Marampampa decided to take part in the practical courses. A



© Claire Gout/CIIR

Skills practice on an irrigation course in Brasil Gallorume.

plot of land was set up, then two and three, until all could see the real advantages of this type of irrigation: it did not need an investment of capital which the people do not have, and it saves water. The four youths have been given the name of 'ringers of Marampampa' and people are calling on them from all over the district to go and build the now famous rings.

The ideas are also taking hold in Magdalena, where leader Dona Ines says: 'The people here are very mistrustful. Until they see results, they don't believe. But with this plot we get the young people to commit themselves and the elders to abandon their doubts, and the women to take part too. We are all content.'

So it seems that what the people needed most was not expensive materials or irrigation installations, but understanding, some trust, the recovery of traditional knowledge

and experience, ideas from other regions, and the search – together, with the people – to mould these into new techniques, cheap, with traditional roots but adaptable to new crops.

The project has regained the trust of the people in the possibilities of agriculture, and most importantly, in themselves. It shows that the principal capital of the region is not money: it is the people themselves. If we invest in them, giving them knowledge, exercising their skills and reflecting with them on their attitudes, we are strengthening what is most valuable: the people.

Claire Gout is a CIIR/ICD development worker with CEDEPAS (El Centro Ecuménico de Promoción y Acción Social) in Cajamarca, Peru. She is from France.

Advocates for change

Disabled people in Zimbabwe are beginning to claim their rights, says **Joyce Matara**

JAIRO'S JIRI ASSOCIATION (JJA) is the oldest and most well-established organisation for people with disabilities in Zimbabwe. In the past, the association's community-based rehabilitation programme relied on interventions such as physiotherapy and referrals to relevant institutions

for assistance and vocational training. These interventions were based on assessment, diagnosis and labelling and ultimately tended to create dependence.

In order to better empower people with disabilities, JJA realised that it needed to adopt a human rights-

based approach. The needs and participation of people with disabilities had to be integrated when planning rehabilitation programmes and resources made accessible to all individuals. Society also needed to play its role by giving people with disabilities equal opportunities and support for them to enjoy these rights.

JJA therefore set out to provide training for staff and clients in

continued overleaf

advocacy and on the rights of people with disabilities. This would then culminate in advocacy campaigns for inclusive programmes in different communities backed by proper legislation.

Gibson Chiguri, the CIIR/ICD development worker, conducted the initial two-week 'training of trainers' workshop. This was meant to create a pool of staff who could cooperate in advocacy training of other staff members and clients – ensuring that continuation of the programme is not dependent on a few key staff.

JJA can now offer services to a larger number of people with disabilities since the emphasis is on clients accessing locally available

resources and being included in all activities that are done in their communities, rather than the association trying to provide resources. Emphasis on community management of the advocacy activities through local committees has also ensured that there is community ownership and hopefully sustainability. My role now involves providing technical support when committees are planning activities and conducting training where there are gaps.

With this programme, the future of both the association and people with disabilities looks bright as the beneficiaries are now actively participating in programmes that are

meant to benefit them and their communities. This has also lessened pressure on JJA to provide services as the project encourages people with disabilities to seek assistance from mainstream programmes that exist in their communities.

My goal when I joined JJA – to help improve the lives of people with disabilities so that they can be viewed first as human beings – now has a meaning because there is genuine empowerment of people with disabilities, as opposed to programmes that perpetuated their dependence.

Joyce Matara is advocacy officer for JJA and the counterpart of CIIR/ICD development worker Gibson Chiguri.

Increasing impact

Institutional strengthening can help organisations with strategic planning and continuity, writes **Veronica Campanile**

BETWEEN 1997 AND 2003 I worked on institutional strengthening with the Nicaraguan organisation Puntos de Encuentro ('meeting points' or 'common ground'). Puntos is widely known for its rights-based work on equalities and diversity. Its work includes media productions, research and training.

Puntos was also a pioneer in institutional strengthening for not-for-profit organisations. This work aimed to help build strong and coherent organisations as a means of strengthening social movements, which in turn would contribute to the fulfilment of human rights.

Our approach was based on the premise that each organisation is like a tree in a forest – a living organism dependent on the skills, potential and energy of the people within it, growing, interacting and coordinating with others to increase impact and strengthen the institutional base in Nicaragua.

Each organisation should aim for a balance between three pillars: the institutional aims, the organisation's structure and management systems, and its resources (human, financial, material, technological, environmental, etc). Our work aimed to provide organisations with tools

to understand the reality in which they operated, clarify their vision for the future and their contribution or role as social actors, plan strategically, develop policies and management systems and mobilise the resources needed to achieve their mission.

By the mid 1990s we were operating in an increasingly unstable national political environment with a government hostile to the NGO sector. In October 1998, much of the country was devastated by Hurricane Mitch, which catapulted development organisations into emergency mode, followed by a phase of reconstruction. This phase was shaped by new policies: poverty reduction packages and regional trade and development plans (such as the Central American Free Trade Agreement). The result was a rapid and marked policy shift in development funding towards short term, sustainable projects based on needs (not rights), and mostly via government. Core funding for institutional work greatly diminished.

In Puntos, it proved impossible to continue with institutional training as before, as most organisations moved back into project-driven working. Meanwhile Puntos itself

suffered from reduced core funding and was beset by cash-flow problems. So we too put aside much of our strategic plan, and cut programmes without funding which included most of the women's programme...

Not only was the institutional project diluted but memory of institutional strengthening and all that goes with it was rapidly lost. However, as finances stabilised, Puntos realised the need to re-instate an institutional focus. In 2004 I was invited to help with this. It was truly energising not only to be able to work with my team again, but also to feel that so many people were desperate to reinstate the policies and procedures that they had once seen as bureaucratic and boring!

In my view, institutional strengthening has to be a permanent feature of development policy for any country and region. This is happening in the UK, where the policy emphasis on promoting democracy and social justice includes capacity building with organisations, their networks and inter-sectoral coordination. Such an approach is even more crucial in institutionally fragile countries and regions such as those of Central America, where the need to promote democracy, fairness and social justice is even greater.

Veronica Campanile worked in Nicaragua for 16 years, including a period as a CIIR/ICD development worker. She is from Scotland. For more on Puntos de Encuentro, see page 16.

Taking stock

Money alone doesn't build capacity – organisations need to take responsibility for solving problems, writes **Yvette Lopez**

TODAY I MET TWO LEADERS OF Gurmad, a women's NGO in Somaliland. Together with other local NGOs they were at the CIIR/ICD office to apply for funding for office furniture.

The women started talking in broken English about their organisation and its activities. I waited for them to finish, smiled and asked them if we could go to their office right away. They were stunned. 'Maya maya berito!' (no, no, tomorrow!), they exclaimed. They pleaded and asked for two hours.

Four hours later, they brought me to Awadan village, a resettlement community. Residents of these communities are returnees who were repatriated to the country from refugee camps in neighbouring Ethiopia. Most of the people are very poor and like the majority of Somaliland's population have no stable jobs.

The women guided me to their office, a small room made of corrugated sheets, with a hastily prepared sign made of cardboard hanging on the door.

Showcase

I have grown used to NGO leaders instantly erecting showcases, complete with women and children weaving or scribbling notes in empty notebooks to project a sewing or literacy class. It is a remarkable picture that automatically folds up as soon as the visitor leaves.

Gurmad's office was no different. 'Forget the papers and documents,' I said. 'Tell me your story. How did you start organising yourselves and why?'

The women started describing their life in the refugee camp and their difficulties when they returned to Somaliland. 'We had everything in the camp: classes where our children could learn, medicines and medical services were provided, we were even taught livelihood skills,' one of them said. The problem started when they arrived in Hargeisa and had to find

ways to earn a living. They had to feed their children. So the women organised themselves and started a weaving class to impart what they had learned in the refugee camps to other women. 'It's a rat race out here, if we don't move we will not survive,' one of them said.

I asked them to take me to the weaving class. They eagerly agreed and guided the way to a nearby village, a cluster of houses in the middle of a sea of plastic trash. From a distance I could see a corrugated sheet structure, the only one of its kind in the village. This must be it, I thought.

The door was locked. A woman who lived in a hut nearby explained that we missed the women. She was the teacher. She was annoyed that we hadn't informed them of our arrival: she would have asked the women to stay a while. I peeked inside and saw scraps of handicraft materials, straw, coloured plastics scattered on a long old wooden table.

Collective activity

I asked the women from Gurmad how a table, shelves and chairs would help their organisation or the women in the community. They could not answer. So I asked, what do you

REALLY NEED? What collective activity will help your organisation and the women in this community? They mentioned a number of things: additional funds to buy materials, provide a loan fund, and pay incentives for teachers who would teach them additional skills.

We agreed that instead of applying for office furniture, they should think of a project that will help the women in the group, plan and initiate the project without outside support, and then make a proposal about it.

Responding to problems

The women of Gurmad applied for a grant to furnish an office that doesn't exist, an office that is not needed by the women of Awadan. They applied because this is the easiest way to get funds.

Yet easy access to grants does not necessarily mean increasing the capacity of the organisation. The maturity and readiness of the organisation to work together, manage initiatives collectively and respond to a common problem is just as important. Financial assistance can make or break an organisation, but it is not just the amount one gives that matters. Just as important is how you give it, for what and to whom.

Yvette Lopez is a development worker with CIIR/ICD's local NGO capacity-building programme in Somaliland. She is from the Philippines.



A mother and child at Ayaha, a returnee resettlement camp similar to Awadan.

The World Social Forum has a message that people in the north must not ignore, writes **Gerry Proctor**

Turning values into action

THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM (WSF) has captured the imagination of millions of people all over the world. It is giving hope, inspiration and energy to people who have been struggling alone and isolated for many years to try and bring about a different world order. For how long can we in the north continue to ignore it?

From Porto Alegre in Brazil – where the fifth WSF was held in January – the north is experienced as rich and powerful, and the south is undeniably poor and oppressed. We in the north don't want another world: the one we have is doing us quite nicely, thank you very much. But in the south they not only want but need another possible world because this present one is killing thousands every day, from hunger, disease, war and poverty.

The WSF grew out of the inspiration of the Base Ecclesial Communities in Brazil. Now it is a worldwide movement of people that continues to create the space for something new and imaginative to be born. All are invited to participate in this open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences, and making of contacts and connections for effective action.

Diversity and plurality

The forum was held on a massive site alongside Lake Guaiba. It was organised into 11 thematic territories or spaces, ranging from social struggles through trade and debt to human rights and religions (ethics, cosmologies and spiritualities). More than 2,000 activities

© Mariana Bazo/Reuters/Corbis



Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez hugs a woman during a visit to landless rural workers near Porto Alegre.

were held during four days of debate and reflection.

The opening March for Peace was incredible. Well over 100,000 marchers walked through the city streets joyfully proclaiming our faith that Another World Is Possible. It felt good being part of such a friendly, diverse and pluralistic portion of humanity.

One of the WSF principles is that the world can only be changed by those who practise change. And so we worked in eco-friendly buildings, encouraged waste recycling and the conscientious use of natural resources, and ate food produced locally and prepared by small family-run businesses and cooperatives. There was no way to buy a Coke or a Big Mac, and somehow we survived!

During the forum I heard many people say, 'This new world starts in each person's life.' Personal behaviour is an essential strategy if we are to gain our objective. We want to transform the world so we start from ideas, then move through strategising to team building and collective alliances, to making change happen. I realised that what they were talking about is what we call spirituality.

Energies of hope

Jose Correa, a sociologist, told how the WSF had created forms of organising, and even of politics, which had captured the energies of hope. It was turning around the tide of despair and helplessness felt by the poor and powerless in the face of the self-proclaimed triumph of neo-liberal capitalism.

The closing event was a speech by Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez. He was fantastic: charismatic, inspirational, poetic, relaxed, close to the people, ordinary, fearless.

He said that people in the south realise the need for change but that is not so with the people of the north. They will resist change. To save the world we will need to raise the consciousness of the peoples of the north – indeed, the very future of the north depends on it.

This felt right. Our way of life in the rich north is not only destroying lives, it is also destroying our earth. It cannot be sustained. And the ones who know this with all their being are those who suffer most the effects of the north's preoccupation with an ever-increasing standard of living, which is only possible at the expense of the continuing impoverishment of those from the south.

But I have seen our salvation and it looks good. The WSF is not only about ideas but is also the incarnation of the values of another possible world, one that we could all happily belong to.

Fr Gerry Proctor is a priest of the archdiocese of Liverpool.

interactnow

Visit the WSF website
www.forumsocialmundial.org.br
 for further information, including
 the Charter of Principles.

JUST OUTSIDE MANILA, the Philippines' bustling capital, lives a cramped and impoverished community. Large families live in wooden and corrugated-iron shacks under a busy overpass. A frail old woman lies on wooden planks outside the remains of her home, which was burnt down by a freak fire. She's so ill she can barely prop herself up on her elbows to watch passers-by.

Children play football beneath a large water tank that holds all the water for the 10,000 people living in the area. But few can afford it. Water used to be a public service in the Philippines. Now, under privatisation plans demanded by international financial institutions, water rates have shot up by 1,000 per cent in this area.

This is the kind of situation that **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** – a UK campaign made up of more than 300 charities, trade unions, churches and other groups – is fighting against.

Aim 1: trade justice

Unfair trade rules mean that poor countries cannot compete in the global marketplace against western multinational corporations. International financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank lend money to developing nations but impose strict conditions, such as the privatisation of basic services, that cripple them.

In Ghana, domestic rice production, a vital source of income for the country's farmers, has collapsed since the IMF and World Bank insisted that Ghana open its agricultural markets as a condition of receiving aid. US rice now floods the country, while Ghanaian farmers struggle to sell their crops.

CIIR is part of **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY**, and we demand trade justice. As the campaign states: 'The UK must fight to ensure that governments, particularly in poor countries, can choose the best solutions to end poverty and protect the environment; end export dumping that damages the livelihoods of poor communities around the world; and make laws that stop big business profiting at the expense of people and the planet.'

Aim 2: drop the debt

Each year Africa faces demands for over US \$10 billion in debt repayments. Despite promises from rich countries,

Fighting talk

The **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** campaign is demanding specific and concrete action to help the world's poor, writes **Nick Sireau**



Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square wears a white band during the MPH speech by Nelson Mandela in February.

little more than 10 per cent of the total debt owed by the world's poorest countries has been cancelled. In Malawi, more is spent on servicing the country's debt than on health, despite nearly one in five Malawians being HIV positive. In Latin America, CIIR's partner organisations report that high debt levels have led to major cuts in health and education spending.

That's why **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** says: 'The unpayable debts of the world's poorest countries should be cancelled in full, by fair and transparent means.'

Aim 3: more & better aid

Rich countries must drastically increase the amount of money they give in aid and take steps to ensure that it is spent helping the poorest people who need it most. Despite the devastating impact of the AIDS epidemic, aid to the 28 countries with the highest rates of HIV has declined by a third from \$12.8 billion in 1995 to \$8.5 billion in 2000.

So it's time for more and better aid. That's why **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** says that: 'Donors must now deliver at least \$50 billion more in aid each year

and set a binding timetable for spending 0.7% of national income on aid. Aid must also be made to work more effectively for poor people.'

Nick Sireau is CIIR's head of communications.

interactnow

Join the campaign and take action! Together, we can make a difference. Here's what you can do:

- Send an email or a postcard to Tony Blair
- Wear a white band, the symbol of **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY**
- Come to Edinburgh on Saturday 2 July: the leaders of the world's richest nations (the G8) will meet in Scotland in July. So join tens of thousands of other campaigners calling on the leaders of the world's richest nations (the G8) to heed our demands.

Find out more about what you can do at www.makepovertyhistory.org

Keep in touch through CIIR's e-news which includes regular MPH updates: go to www.ciir.org and click on the 'subscribe to e-news' link.

A campaign in Nicaragua is enabling young people to talk about the problems they face, writes **Charlotte Weinberg**

Healing words

FOR US IN NICARAGUA, HIV is a taboo, an issue that no-one wants to touch.' So said a youth worker responding to the work of the Nicaraguan organisation Puntos de Encuentro ('meeting points' or 'common ground').

It is a topic that Puntos is tackling head-on through its Necesitamos Poder Hablar campaign ('we need to be able to talk') – part of its wider communications strategy, Somos Diferentes Somos Iguales ('we are different, we are equal'). The campaign deals with the de-stigmatisation of issues such as HIV, drug addiction and sexual abuse.

HIV is a latent explosion in Nicaragua, and knowledge and attitudes about it vary widely. The campaign focuses on HIV prevention and the creation of a favourable environment within which HIV can be dealt with, free from stigma. This stigma in itself increases vulnerability to the virus, as people feel the need to hide their behaviour or be ashamed of it. In Nicaragua, for example, social norms dictate that the purchase of condoms by a woman indicates sexual deviance and by a man, either homosexuality (why else would a man need to protect himself, as only gay

men and prostitutes carry the virus...) or homosexual tendencies – real men do not use condoms.

Real-life TV

Puntos produces the Nicaraguan TV soap opera, *Sexto Sentido*, which has also dealt with the issue of HIV. One young man commented: 'Seeing this programme gives us ideas about how to help our friends when they have these problems...'

One of the scenes that caused most impact in the HIV storyline was when the doctor at the hospital, on finding out that a patient has HIV, refuses to shake hands with him as he diplomatically refuses to treat him, and sends him to another part of the hospital. The scene caused outrage among viewers, who called and wrote to say that the doctor was unethical, rude, prejudiced and that someone with HIV deserves the same rights and treatment as anyone else.

Puntos has produced special thematic editions of episodes from the soap. The HIV special features three different versions of the story of four young men and their responsibility for their sexual behaviour. One of them gets infected,

but which one: the doctor, the gay guy, the playboy or the student who has only ever had one girlfriend?

Other special editions deal with machismo and sexual abuse. The sexual abuse story came about as a result of our observations at camps held for young people, where abuse has always emerged as number one among problems identified by the young people in their own lives. We also found, in work with the project Entreamigas, that fear of sexual abuse was the main fear of the vast majority of around 600 young women interviewed.

The power of talk

The impact of this storyline has been huge. It has been very important for young women to see that it is possible to talk about abuse, receive support and not be judged, blamed or held responsible for what has happened. We have made a story that shows a young woman managing, with the support of her friends and family, to convert a situation of fear and suffering into one of strength and positivity.

The Necesitamos Poder Hablar campaign also involves training sessions and workshops held around the country. The workshops explore discrimination, and ways of creating support networks between young people and adults are discussed and practised, giving young people the tools to challenge discrimination more effectively.

The campaign also includes roadside billboards, radio programmes and adverts, and a list of local services that people can access.

Necesitamos Poder Hablar aims to help create opportunities for people to be able to talk, ask for and receive appropriate support and become increasingly independent and resourceful. The wider message is that we need to be able to talk in general about what affects us, how we feel, and what is happening to us; and we need non-judgemental and integral support services.

Charlotte Weinberg is a CIIR/ICD development worker with Puntos de Encuentro. She is from England.

interactnow

See more about the work of Puntos de Encuentro at www.puntos.org.ni



EACH YEAR THE WORLD BANK issues a World Development Report that ranks countries by GNP per capita (gross national product per person). The ranking is one of the factors used by the World Bank to classify economies and, crucially, 'to determine borrowing eligibility'.

The use of GNP per capita to determine a country's level of poverty may work reasonably well at the extremes of the range. Countries like Ethiopia and Mozambique, which consistently come out bottom, are obviously poor, while Switzerland or the USA – consistently at the top of the list – are clearly very rich in comparison.

Yet for other countries, using a single economic variable such as GNP per capita fails to represent the complex reality of poverty, because it ignores the distribution of income within a country. The rich minority receive (or consume) considerably more than their fair share of the country's aggregate income or consumption. As a result, the average value of GNP per capita overstates the standard of living of the majority of the citizens of a country.

Focus on the poorest

Although this criticism is an obvious one, no standard method of adjusting GNP per capita to allow for income distribution has been developed. Yet the World Development Report contains data on the distribution of income and consumption in many countries. If these are used to calculate the GNP per capita for the poorest 20 per cent of the population, a more accurate picture of poverty, and a better measure and ranking of poverty between countries, emerges.

This is borne out when one examines factors that are often correlated with poverty, such as poor education, high mortality rates for infants and mothers, incidence of diseases (such as tuberculosis), life expectancy, etc. For example, Brazil is ranked 33rd on the World Bank's measure of GNP per capita. Yet Brazil – like many other Latin American countries – has extreme inequality of income distribution. Its rankings in relation to the correlates of poverty are 46th in cases of TB, 50th in under-five infant mortality, 55th in maternal mortality, 56th in life expectancy, 58th in the percentage of the population not expected to reach the age of 60, 47th for female adult

Ironing out inequalities

Estimates of a country's level of poverty need to take into account unequal income distribution, writes **Jim Thomas**



© Nick Sireau/CIIR

Better poverty measures may help target aid in Latin American countries like Nicaragua (pictured) where there is huge inequality of income distribution.

literacy and 52nd for male adult literacy. Using GNP per capita for the poorest 20 per cent of the population, Brazil is ranked 54th, which is clearly more in line with reality than is the World Bank's measure.

Alleviating poverty

Correcting the World Bank's GNP per capita calculations and ranking to allow for inequalities in the distribution of income would have two important effects. Firstly, it would demonstrate that the poor are much poorer than the World Bank figures suggest for *all* countries. To the extent that the World Bank uses its GNP per capita data to determine borrowing eligibility in relation to poverty, the revised figures indicate that the poor in many countries not considered by the World Bank as being eligible for borrowing are very poor indeed.

Secondly, it would produce changes in the ranking, with those countries with particularly unequal distributions of income moving down in relative terms. This is important from the point of view

of poverty alleviation, as having Brazil (for example) ranked as a relatively rich country on GNP per capita makes it difficult to focus on the depths of poverty in that country and the extremes of richness and poverty.

For, as Herbert de Souza has noted: 'Brazil is really three nations in one: a rich country with a population the size of Canada's, a poor country with a population equal to Mexico's and a country of indigents as big as Argentina.' In this context, using GNP per capita to measure poverty reflects the position of rich Mexicans, whereas GNP per capita only for the poorest 20 per cent reflects the position of poor Argentinians.

Jim Thomas is Emeritus Reader in Economics at the London School of Economics and Political Science. For further information, and to receive a copy by email of a comprehensive paper on this topic, readers may contact Jim Thomas at Department of Economics, LSE, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE, UK.

History

Hispaniola is the name used by the Spanish-speaking Dominicans for the island comprising the Dominican Republic in the east and Haiti in the west.

In 1804 Haiti was liberated from the French and took over the whole island. Dominican independence was won 40 years later and, at the invitation of the Dominican government, Spanish sovereignty was restored over this part of the island. The overthrow of Spanish rule in 1865 led to the formation of the Dominican Republic. As a Dominican identity formed, anti-Haitianism became a powerful current.

The US occupied the Dominican Republic from 1916. In 1930, General Trujillo led a military coup. Under Trujillo's brutal dictatorship the slaughter of thousands of Haitians took place. This was part of a policy of 'Dominicanisation of the frontier', based on an ideology of Hispanic superiority. Military coups and fraudulent elections interrupted the path to democracy, achieved in 1996.

© Nick Sireau/CIIR



A woman of Haitian origin in the Dominican Republic.

country profile: Hispaniola

Haiti's history has been mired in violence and confrontation. 'Papa Doc' Duvalier's dictatorship from 1957 onwards was characterised by brutal repression, as was that of his son. When Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a left-wing priest, won a surprise victory in the 1990 election, he was ousted by a violent coup. Aristide returned to power in 1994 but in 2004, the 200th anniversary of the founding of Haiti, he was again deposed following a short military rebellion.

Development issues

In the 1990s the Dominican Republic was the fastest growing economy in Latin America and the Caribbean. Poverty decreased but inequality did not. A massive economic crisis followed, due in part to growing external debt and the breakdown of agreements with the IMF. A new free trade agreement is expected to have major implications for small farmers, opening the market to US-subsidised imports.

Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere, with an economy based on subsistence agriculture. There are some 20,000 jobs in assembly factories around the capital, Port-au-Prince, and in the border region. However, wages in these plants rarely exceed US\$3.50 a day and conditions are poor. Haiti is dependent on foreign aid and remittances.

Haiti is widely deforested. This is due to high population density, a reliance on charcoal for fuel, illegal logging, and the cultivation of mountainous lands. Much of the fertile topsoil has been washed away. Environmental degradation has compounded farmers' problems, as crop yields decrease and they are forced onto marginal lands.

Strained relations between the countries continue. Haitian immigrants and their descendants in the Dominican Republic are the most marginalised and vulnerable community in the country. (For more on this, see the CIIR briefing *Needed but unwanted*; for more on the problems facing Haiti, see the CIIR briefing *Haiti 2004: A nation in crisis*. Available from CIIR price £5 each or as free downloads from www.ciir.org.)

CIIR/ICD in Hispaniola

CIIR/ICD has 11 development workers in the Dominican Republic, focusing on civil society participation, sustainable environment and HIV and AIDS.

CIIR/ICD's office in Haiti closed in 2001, with administration of the Haiti programme – including work in Haiti with partners in sustainable agriculture – transferring to our office in the Dominican Republic. CIIR/ICD also undertakes advocacy on Haiti, and is working for the rights of Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans in the Dominican Republic.

Facts and Figures

	Dominican Republic	Haiti
Total population	8.8m	8.6m
GDP per capita	US\$2,225	US\$372
Probability at birth of not reaching 40	14.6%	37.3%
Population without sustainable access to an improved water source	14%	54%
Infant mortality	32 deaths per 1,000 live births	79 deaths per 1,000 live births
External debt	US\$6.5 billion	US\$43.4 billion

Sources: *Latin America Monitor: Caribbean, Vol 22 No 4, April 2005*;
United Nations Human Development Report: World Development Indicators 2004.



A young girl, Nagarani, who lost her parents to the tsunami, cries at an orphanage in Nagapattinam, India.

Renewed faith

Dr Chandra Muzaffar finds signs of hope in the aftermath of the devastation wreaked by the Indian Ocean tsunami

FROM ANCIENT TIMES, people have sought to explain grave natural disasters as violent expressions of the anger and fury of gods and deities. But the tsunami was not God's punishment. The victims were no more and no less sinful or sinless than those who were not touched by the tsunami. It is not only wrong but utterly immoral to even suggest that the tens of thousands who perished were being punished by God.

Nevertheless, for those of us who believe in a divine power, natural calamities like human tragedies are moments for reflection and introspection. We may reflect, for example, on the relationship between the natural world and the human family; on the importance of understanding the workings of nature in the context of a more integrated concept of knowledge; on the way our neglect of the poor contributed to the scale of the tragedy. In addition, it is worth pondering upon the following points.

One, the tsunami tragedy is a grim reminder of the fragility of human life. As with every other natural calamity before this, we realise once again that

the human species is utterly vulnerable.

Two, our fragility and vulnerability should make us humble. The tragedy should persuade us to cultivate positive values. It should enhance our sense of justice; deepen our compassion for all that lives. The tsunami, which has revealed to all of us how transient life is, should strengthen our desire to do good: for that is the real reason why we are here on earth.

Three, in this regard, human beings everywhere have demonstrated that they are capable of reaching out to each other by contributing their time, their energy and their money. There has never been a humanitarian endeavour of this sort in history which has witnessed such widespread participation by the ordinary citizens of the world in the noble cause of helping fellow human beings who are in dire need.

Four, in the process of helping fellow human beings, individuals and groups in different parts of the world have penetrated ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and national barriers as never before. The tsunami tragedy has brought to the surface a feeling that we are one. This is one of those rare occasions when

our common humanity overwhelms our specific identities. It shows that in spite of everything, the human being is capable of transcending his or her religious or cultural self and discovering the one identity that is perennial – his or her human identity.

Five, at the same time the tsunami tragedy has also revealed the ugly side of the human being. There are reports from affected areas of individuals stealing aid items meant for the victims; of officials siphoning off cash assistance offered to bereaved families. Then there are politicians and governments seeking mileage from the tragedy.

Six, the ugly acts of some in contrast to the beautiful deeds of the many encapsulates the eternal struggle within the human soul to overcome what is base and reach out to the sublime. Distinguishing between right and wrong is a challenge that faces not just individuals but also communities and nations. Against the backdrop of the 26 December catastrophe, it has become even more imperative for the human family as a whole to choose to live in accordance with the values of universal justice, global love and international solidarity.

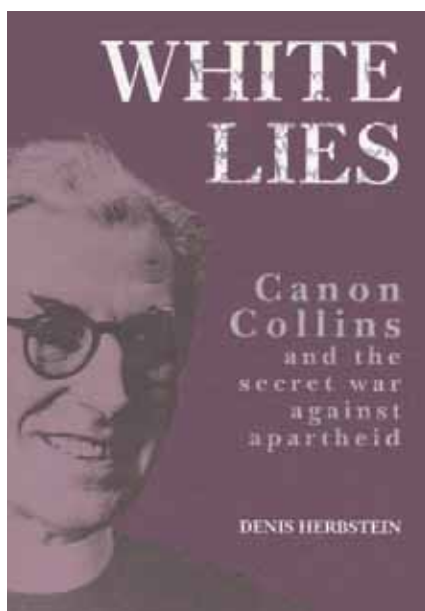
Seven, for those of us who believe in God and whose belief is reflected in a commitment to universal justice and an inclusive humanity, the tsunami tragedy has helped to strengthen rather than weaken our faith.

A potent expression of the power of

The tsunami tragedy has helped to strengthen rather than weaken our faith

faith is in the miraculous way in which some babies survived the tsunami. Through these miracle babies, God is telling us that in spite of all our follies, God has not lost hope in the human race. Indeed, God has renewed God's faith in humanity. And that should inspire us to continue to struggle for a just and compassionate world.

Dr Chandra Muzaffar is president of JUST (International Movement for a Just World – www.just-international.org). He will be a guest speaker at the CIIR AGM to be held in London on Friday 7 October.



White lies
Canon Collins and the secret
war against apartheid

by Denis Herbstein

Reviewed by the Reverend Canon Andrew Deuchar, an Anglican Parish Priest in Nottingham and formerly the Archbishop of Canterbury's Secretary for Anglican Communion Affairs.

When I received a letter, early in 1993, from the Archbishop of Canterbury inviting me to become his representative on the Christian Action Council, I confess I had little idea about the organisation. This book could have filled in many of the gaps.

The heyday of Christian Action and its offshoots, primarily the Defence and Aid Fund (later the International Defence and Aid Fund – IDAF), was undeniably in the darkest days of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Denis Herbstein recounts the story in detail and with great vigour.

Indeed the phrase 'Fact is often stranger than fiction' sprang to mind as I read the book. It is an amazing adventure story with all the ingredients of a classic thriller: cloak and dagger structures, clandestine meetings and visits, secret Swiss bank accounts, heroes known by letters rather than by name. All with one clear aim – to support the liberation of South Africa through ensuring that wherever possible political detainees were able to be defended by the best lawyers, and families were supported throughout the imprisonment of their breadwinner.

There are moments in the book when the author (a journalist) slips back into his natural 'journalese', as though he is trying too hard to make the story flow like a thriller. But this is a true – and remarkable – story, not told before, about a small piece of the complex and terrible history of the suffering of an enormous number of South African people.

Many of those people still bear the

marks of that suffering. Some of them – principally of course Nelson Mandela – have become very famous and have carried South Africa publicly and successfully through the process of liberation, but thousands of others remain completely unknown.

John Collins, Christian Action, IDAF and a number of individuals raised huge sums of money and went to great lengths to circumvent the tight security systems of the South African government to ensure that support was offered to at least some who needed it. But in the end it was the suffering people of South Africa (from all communities) who brought about the end of the injustice. We have to be careful about the trap of assuming it was the white 'liberal elite' both inside and outside the country who really achieved the change.

In fact, Collins fell out with the liberals quite regularly for just that reason, and Herbstein makes that point clearly enough. But he also, towards the end of the book, ruminates on the fact that in none of the accounts coming out of South Africa so far is there significant acknowledgement of the part played by John Collins and Christian Action.

At some point I have no doubt an authoritative history of the years 1948 to 1994 in South Africa will be written. This story will I am sure be a part of it, and it is a story that it was important to tell.

ISBN 0 85255 885 6, published by James Currey Publishers, £14.95 paperback.



African voices on development
and social justice
Editorials from
Pambazuka News 2004

Pambazuka News is a weekly e-mail newsletter on social justice in Africa, provided free to over 15,000 subscribers (see www.pambazuka.org). This collection of commentary and analysis from 2004 gives a detailed and wide-ranging insight into the issues facing this complex and multi-faceted continent. Topics covered range from regional integration to refugees, Rwanda to Darfur, globalisation to 'undevelopment', women's rights to resource exploitation.

Contributors are experts in the field – Africans, people working in Africa, or people with a longstanding interest in Africa. CIIR advocacy coordinator for Africa, Steve Kibble, contributes an

article to the section focusing on Zimbabwe. Each contributor writes personally and passionately, as well as with knowledge and insight.

This collection is worth reading as a document of a year in the life of Africa. And – as there is every week in *Pambazuka News* – there is plenty of food for thought in here for those with an interest in the future of this still troubled continent.

ISBN 9987 417 35 3, published by Mkuki Na Nyota Publishers, £17.95 paperback (distributed in the UK by the African Books Collective, www.africanbookscollective.com).