

interact

The magazine of **PROGRESSIO**
CHANGING MINDS • CHANGING LIVES

Changing men's minds

Why women's rights should
be every man's concern

Also in this issue:
Strong women in East Timor
livesimply in Africa
Living with HIV in Zimbabwe



editorial

Changing men's minds

The first article in the 'insight' section of this *Interact* looks at work in El Salvador to challenge men's adherence to the code of *machismo*. In the article, John Bayron Ochoa, a Progressio development worker, observes that men in positions of power and influence are most resistant to moving away from the traditional view of male roles and 'what it means to be a man'. He says: 'The higher up and the more power they have, the more difficult it is for them to change. The less power, the more openness there is.'

Power is something that men around the world are reluctant to relinquish – too many men think that controlling other people is what makes them a man. In contrast, women seem to understand that gender equality will help make the world a better place for everyone.

Hidden in here is a deeper contrast in world views: the difference between a concern for your self, and a concern for others. Certainly women are traditionally seen as the caring sex – and Catherine Scott's article on East Timorese women's response to a humanitarian crisis shows the amazing capacity and resourcefulness of women to care for others in difficult circumstances.

This capacity to care for others, as Tina Beattie shows in her article (page 14), is central to the *livesimply* message. People in positions of power, influence and privilege – which mostly means men, but also means, in a global context, people from the rich North – would do well to heed this message. They (we) could start, as this *Interact* shows, by following the example of women transcending self-interest and working for others throughout the world.

Cover picture: A man and his son in Ossorua, East Timor. Photo: Nick Sireau/Progressio

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Bringing stories to the world

I AM THE FIRST DEVELOPMENT WORKER and non-Peruvian to work with my organisation (Guarango Film and Video), and I believe that one of the most important contributions I've made is bringing an 'outsider's' perspective and international contacts to the organisation. The organisation is dedicated to making social justice videos, and when I arrived it was clear that they possessed all the technical skills to make high quality videos. What they lacked was a sense of their international audience – how to convey Peruvian messages and stories in a compelling manner to people in North America and Europe. And, connected with this, how to reach those audiences.

My experience working as a journalist for Canadian, British and American media provided them with this perspective. I brought some pre-existing contacts with me, and through research and the internet, was able to build up a database of broadcasters, film festivals, distribution agents and international solidarity organisations interested in Guarango's advocacy videos. Many of these contacts do not speak Spanish, so my English language skills proved important. In addition, I have translated our advocacy videos into English, which allows them to

be shown in countries where mining companies are based. It is vitally important for Peru's mining communities to win public support in mining companies' 'home towns', in order to pressure companies to make changes in their environmental and social policy.

For example, working with the 'No Dirty Gold' campaign, based in Washington, DC, the Choropampa film has been shown to World Bank officials and Congress members. (*Choropampa: The Price of Gold* tells the story of a community's response to a hazardous mercury spill by a gold mine in Peru's Andean mountains.) A letter signed by numerous Congress reps was sent to Newmont, the US mining company responsible for the mercury spill, mentioning the Choropampa case and other incidents of company mismanagement. A pension fund holding stocks in the company filed a shareholder request, demanding an investigation into the mercury spill and other abuses, and numerous US media have run articles and stories on the case after watching the film.

On the ground, my status as a Canadian and member of Peru's Foreign Press Association has helped during our filming and Peruvian distribution. Unfortunately, Peruvian society can be quite elitist and racist.

This made it difficult for my self-educated counterparts from middle-class backgrounds to make contacts with Peruvian television stations, mining company executives and government officials – all necessary to carry out advocacy campaigns with mining communities. And if this was difficult for my counterparts from Lima, it had proved nearly impossible for most of our beneficiaries in Peru's isolated mining communities. So, as distasteful as it sounds, my white face and Canadian accent helped open doors for my organisation and the indigenous and farming communities whose stories we represent.

Twenty years ago, we still thought 'cooperation' was all about teaching people from the South new skills. Now we realise it is about an exchange of skills, knowledge and experiences – and about providing a link for Southern communities to reach the outside world, whether this be through developing markets for fair trade products, or protesting free trade agreements, or communicating injustices being perpetrated overseas by our own northern companies.

Stephanie Boyd is a Progressio development worker with Guarango. She is pictured above with Ernesto Cabellos, co-founder of Guarango.



Participants in the Somaliland uniformed services HIV and AIDS workshop.

ATTITUDES ABOUT HIV AND AIDS among police, prison and army officers in Somaliland are beginning to change thanks to a pioneering series of workshops organised by Progressio partner organisation the Hargeisa Youth Development Association (HYDA).

The workshops, funded by the United Nations Development Programme, were attended by a variety of army, police and the prison service personnel. The Minister of Defence was present at the first workshop with senior officers.

Somaliland military learn HIV awareness

Worldwide, uniformed services personnel have higher rates of HIV and sexually transmitted infections than civilians. They are young, they have money, and they are away from their family and community for long periods. Their activities impact on the civilian population with whom they interact, notably sex workers.

The overall aim of the project was to encourage a change of behaviour, persuading them to stop risky practices (unprotected sex, drug abuse, tattooing) and promoting positive attitudes towards those living with HIV and AIDS.

At the start of each workshop, participants were very antagonistic towards people living with HIV and AIDS: one said they should be shot. At the end, they said they

would interact with them and encourage them to seek treatment.

The workshops also led to a new strategy being agreed, based around the establishment of a joint task force of all the uniformed services to create awareness on HIV and AIDS. Recommendations included the training of trainers, peer educators and medical personnel in the armed forces, backed by fund raising to set up testing and treatment facilities and produce information material.

Eliezer Wangulu, a Progressio development worker acting as media adviser on HIV and AIDS with partner organisations in Somaliland including HYDA, played a key role in organising the workshops.



Fighting sexism in Ecuador

PEOPLE IN CUENCA, Ecuador, had the opportunity to vote for the least, and most, sexist advertisements in television, radio, the press and on billboards, at an exhibition organised by Progressio partner organisation GAMMA (Grupo de Apoyo al Movimiento de Mujeres del Azuay – Support Group of the Women's Movement of the Azuay Region).

The annual exhibition – now in its third year – aims to raise awareness about images in the media which promote

discrimination, violence and sexism, and to encourage instead messages that build relationships based on social and gender equality

So, for example, the advertisement voted best in the print media category shows a man at home, tying his daughter's shoelaces. This challenges stereotypes about male roles, since he is performing a caring, and therefore traditionally female, task in the private space of his home, seen as the woman's space.

This year, the organisers also asked the public to comment on seven popular television entertainment programmes, including comedies and talk shows. Of the 450 people who did, 98 per cent were not impressed. They criticised the poor quality, the way women, disabled people and minority ethnic groups were represented, and the constant portrayal of violence. Of one programme, someone wrote: 'It portrays women as stupid.'

Responses to the exhibition show that both men and women dislike programmes and advertisements that present racist and sexist stereotypes, and feel that the media companies are not treating them with respect.



Sandra López, coordinator of GAMMA, unveils one of the winning adverts.

East Timorese women's story spreads to Indonesia

PROGRESSIO and Indonesian women's organisation Kalyanamitra have jointly published a translation of Progressio's book *Independent women* which explores the struggles and achievements of the women's movement in East Timor. The Indonesian-language edition aims to bring the story to Indonesian readers and so help bridge the gap that has grown between the East Timor and Indonesian women's movements.

The book, *Perempuan Merdeka*, was launched in Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, in January 2007. This was followed by a launch in Dili, the capital of East Timor, in February. Exchange visits of women as part of the Jakarta and Dili book launches have made a good start towards

re-establishing what were previously strong ties.

Rena Herdiyani, executive director of Kalyanamitra, speaking in Jakarta, stressed the need for women from East Timor and Indonesia to learn from each other and find solidarity in common challenges, a sentiment echoed by representatives of the Timorese women's movement.

Before the book's publication, there was little information available to Indonesian women on the liberation struggles and strategies of East Timorese women. Yet women in Indonesia, particularly in conflict areas such as West Papua, Aceh and Maluku, face many of the same challenges.

At the launches, all agreed that women in both countries share a common interest in pursuing



justice for human rights victims in East Timor and promoting human rights in Indonesia. East Timor is now independent from Indonesia, but women in the two countries know they must join hands to realise shared aspirations.

The launch of Perempuan Merdeka. The authors, Irena Cristalis and Catherine Scott, are pictured front left.

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The English language version of *Independent women: The story of women's activism in East Timor*, by Catherine Scott and Irena Cristalis, is available from Progressio price £11.95. Order from the online Progressio bookshop at www.progressio.org.uk

Archbishop Romero Memorial Lecture

Monsignor Ricardo Urioste, Archbishop Romero's former secretary and vicar general, will be giving a lecture titled 'Oscar Romero – A saint for the 21st century?' in London, Edinburgh and Kent in May.

All are welcome to the lecture, which is being organised by the Archbishop Romero Trust. Dates and venues are:

Wed 16 May, 6.30pm, Crucible Centre, Roehampton University, 80 Roehampton Lane, London SW15 5SL

Thur 17 May, 7.30pm, Sacred Heart Church, Lauriston Street, Edinburgh EH3 9DJ

Fri 18 May, 6.30pm, Westminster Cathedral Hall, Ambrosden Avenue, London SW1

Sat 19 May, 10.30am, Aylesford Priory, Kent ME20 7BX

For more details, see www.romerotruster.org.uk

Progressio ends its work on Angola

PROGRESSIO has reluctantly ended its UK and EU-based work on Angola after 20 years of advocacy for poverty reduction and development.

The decision will enable Progressio to focus on and strengthen its advocacy work in the 12 countries where it has grassroots programmes on the ground.

The two decades of Progressio's involvement with Angola spanned three phases of civil war, external interventions, violated ceasefires and repeated invasions in the 1980s and '90s. This affected 3.7 million Angolan people, who were either killed, displaced or became refugees.

After peace was finally agreed in 2002, Progressio focused on the need for national reconciliation at the grassroots, not merely among the elites; for a truth commission; for an end to corruption; and for the instigation of a transparent and accountable political system based on early free and fair elections.

Steve Kibble, Progressio's advocacy coordinator for Africa, Middle East and Asia, says: 'Angola was and is an extreme example of the politics of disorder, where massive and illegal elite accumulation in wartime conditions set the framework for peacetime conditions.'

Progressio's final advocacy effort was to be among those who briefed the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, before his trip to Angola in March to highlight the arrest of Global Witness activist Dr Sarah Wykes on suspicion of espionage. Following the Archbishop's visit, she has been allowed to leave the country.

Angola still faces great difficulties following three decades of armed conflict. While the country's infrastructure is being rebuilt through Chinese loans and labour, the government spends little on social services. Most are currently being provided by NGOs, despite the country's massive oil and diamond resources.

Building a new world starts with our own lifestyles and actions, writes **Christine Allen**



Reaching out and connecting

WE MAY HAVE CHANGED OUR NAME but Progressio hasn't changed its 'strapline'. *Changing minds, changing lives* still sums up our *raison d'être* and organisational purpose.

The change we seek comes over loud and clear in this edition of *Interact*. It's not an abstract discussion, but a series of clear examples of how we seek to build a new world in small, individual steps. Our vision of a just world, where all live life in its fullness, free from poverty, remains our continued hope.

The development worker approach, so fundamental to our way of working, is based on partnership, dialogue and exchange. Forty years ago, in his encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, Pope Paul VI talked about the need for technical and professional assistance and called for people to be willing to go overseas and serve. He added that such support must be a partnership of people engaged in a shared mission and expertise should be 'tempered with love'.

Today, as we revisit the document, we are reminded of the need for any

relationship with those who are poor to be based on respect, and any professional engagement done with humanity and humility. I believe that our development workers, like Stephanie (page 3) and Anne (page 10), embody that approach. They seek out change in policies, practices and attitudes that prevent people, especially women, from not only using their potential, but even from accessing services and securing the basics. The way that our development workers engage with organisations and communities means that they can help ensure that those who are often excluded, powerless and ignored can be included, taken into account and really influence decisions and decision-making processes. This really does change lives and change minds.

Of course this process of change doesn't only have to happen 'over there'. The *livesimply* project, which seeks to celebrate 40 years of *Populorum Progressio*, reminds us in the rich, consumerist North that we must change. And make a radical change.

Taken seriously this message is not

popular. For us to live sustainably, in solidarity with the poor, and simply, requires a radical revision of our own lifestyles and approach. It is not easy. At Progressio our 'green group' helps us look at policies and practices and suggest ways to reduce our carbon footprint. Of course, placing development workers around the world requires a level of flying, but we believe that the value of development workers to the communities they work with is far beyond and longer lasting than providing financial assistance. Our partners affirm this.

Change starts with each of us, with our own commitment to making a difference. As Tina Beattie reminds us (page 14), change starts with me. But it does not end there – part of *livesimply* also reminds us about our connections with, and responsibility to, our international family. We cannot ignore the structural injustices and policy decisions that keep people poor. That is why, as part of the *livesimply* project, we are making plans for a campaign later in the year which will draw on our work on the issue of seeds and technology and its impact on small-scale farmers, food security and biodiversity.

We are also publishing a Comment, *Live simply: Let others live*, written by Ed Echlin, a well-known writer and campaigner on sustainable living. Ed reminds us of the unpopularity of the message of sustainability within a world that is addicted to a high-carbon lifestyle. Calling for sacrifices is never popular, but 'living in solidarity' with Violet in Zimbabwe or the slum-dwellers in Nairobi could never be easy. Of course we in the rich North will never truly understand what solidarity with those people would be like. We won't pay the full price – the life and death of Romero shows what the real price often is. But that is not to undermine the importance of thinking about our lives, making what changes we can and feeling a sense of connectedness to those around the world.

Time and time again we come across the example and lessons of women engaged in difficult struggles, whether to support extended families in impossible circumstances or build peace amidst chaos and despair. Tina, in her reflections on Nairobi, paints the picture of women 'stretching out their arms across the continent'. Stretch out your arm – find something in your life to change. Join us.

Christine Allen is Progressio's executive director.



Making connections: Progressio development worker Hassina and her counterpart, Muna, a midwife trainer, in Yemen.

UNLEARNING *machismo*

Men in El Salvador are learning to move away from traditional views of masculinity in a programme that challenges *machismo*, writes **Nick Sireau**

get two kinds of reactions, broadly speaking. Some men are very resistant. They know everything and say, "I'm not gay. I don't need to talk about all this." But as we discuss things, their resistance begins to drop and they start asking questions.

'The other type is men who have been living in a different way all along. So they're delighted to go on the programme as they feel that they're not so weird after all for not following the dominant view of men.'

Driving through change

A particularly successful training programme was run with bus drivers, seen as one of the most aggressive sections of Salvadorean society. Bus drivers are extremely competitive, often racing each other. Drivers and conductors mistreat their passengers and are sometimes violent. When they fancy a woman, they have been known not to let her get off the bus. Yet after training staff on one of the bus lines in the capital, San Salvador, complaints registered against them dropped by 75 per cent.

cont...

'The bus staff became more conscious of the violence they make and the violence they receive'

IT'S DIFFICULT to come to El Salvador without coming across the concept of *machismo*. It's a form of masculinity that favours strength, violence, independence and single-mindedness over qualities such as restraint, compassion, responsibility and understanding, seen as more feminine. It's a way of life that young men learn from an early age, yet it's one that can fuel violence, particularly against women.

Few men dare to stray from this dominant idea – yet this is the aim of the Centro Bartolomé de las Casas

(CBC), a Progressio partner organisation affiliated to the Dominicans. It runs a programme on 'masculinities' to encourage men to reflect on what it means to be a man in Salvadorean society.

What is a man?

For instance, the first session of the 'masculinities' training course involves discussing, as a group, 'What is it to be a man?' One member of the group lies down and the rest trace the contours of his body on a large sheet of flipchart paper. They then write on this paper what they associate with manhood. One group wrote the following words: 'drunk, crazy, drug addict, smokes a lot, angry, eats a lot, womaniser, beautiful, badly behaved, big penis, degenerate, psychopath. But I'm still decent.'

The group then discusses concepts of manhood. Bit by bit, group members start to deconstruct their traditional image of masculinity and replace it with a new one. As Larry Madrigal, who set up this masculinities

programme, explains: 'We



'Some men are very resistant. They say: I'm not gay. I don't need to talk about all this'

According to Larry, 'The bus staff became more conscious of the violence they make and the violence they receive.'

Many of the bus conductors and drivers now wear t-shirts to promote the anti-machismo campaign – a brave decision because of the teasing they will get from other men. They also have posters on the backs of seats. Meanwhile, the bus company is happy because the number of passengers has increased as a result.

During one training session, a bus conductor told the rest of the group how he had managed to control his anger. A female passenger had started shouting at him because she

wanted to get out at an unauthorised stop, yet he remained calm and answered politely. While this may not seem like much for other societies, this was a giant step, says Larry, 'particularly since most men would usually never admit to this in front of a group of other men'.

Spreading the word

Walberto Tejeda agrees. He went through the masculinities process himself and now helps organise it. 'Doing the masculinities programme has taught me a lot about myself,' he says. 'It's given me strength and a new perspective.'

Now, he regularly sees the difference the programme makes to men's lives. In one evaluation of the course, a participant said: 'Before, I was violent with my partner. Now I

recognise that was an error.' Another one said: 'In my work, I am willing to support initiatives by women without fear of being called a "fag".'

And it's the poorest and least educated who are the most receptive to the masculinities programme, says John Bayron Ochoa, Progressio's development worker with CBC. They are more in tune with daily life and have less to lose from changing their attitude towards women. Those from the higher classes of society are more resistant – they are generally more socially conservative and believe that a man should be rational and strong rather than open to his emotions and understanding. John says: 'The higher up and the more power they have, the more difficult it is for them to change. The less power, the more openness there is.'

The programme has also encouraged participants to start questioning the religious

'Doing the masculinities programme has taught me a lot about myself... It's given me strength and a new perspective'

argument for patriarchy. Men tend to use interpretations of the Bible that strengthen their position over women. Larry says: 'Their interpretations are linked to their masculinity, so they will choose the story from Genesis that says that God created woman from a man's rib to prove man's superiority.'

Changing views of gender goes to the core of a culture's beliefs. It is not an easy process, yet if anyone can do it, it's definitely the people of Centro Bartolomé de las Casas.

Nick Sireau is the former director of communications for Progressio. He is now director of SolarAid.

Nick Sireau/Progressio



Walberto Tejeda, one of the coordinators of the CBC masculinities programme.

FACING UP TO HIV

Preventing the transmission of HIV and AIDS requires more than information campaigns, writes **John Bayron Ochoa**; it will only succeed if men change their attitudes

MY EXPERIENCES over many years of working on gender and masculinities suggest to me that men's attitudes – or the different ways of being a man – can be a key factor in tackling HIV and AIDS. I believe that if we are to be truly effective in preventing the spread of HIV and AIDS, we must start by reflecting on and transforming the masculinity of each man.

In much of Central and Latin America, the idea that men are physically, intellectually and sexually superior to women is instilled in both boys and girls at an early age. Supposedly 'real men' must constantly reassert their masculinity. Never refusing a challenge is one way of doing this. Risk is not something to be avoided or prevented, but rather confronted and overcome, so that 'there is no doubt that I am a man', as they claim in many gender and masculinities workshops. This is both self-destructive and destructive of others.

This *machismo* culture has serious health implications. The men who never refuse alcohol or drugs will nearly always develop the complaints associated with substance abuse. But it is their sexual behaviour that causes the most widespread damage, to themselves and to others, because it promotes the spread of HIV and AIDS.

Many men believe that they prove their manhood by having multiple sexual encounters. To make matters worse, their idea of their own virility means they insist that

only unprotected sex can provide them with a satisfactory experience. In this way their behaviour is a vector for the transmission of HIV to themselves and to others, women and men, directly and indirectly. This is also true of some men who are homosexual or bisexual.

Information is not enough

There are HIV and AIDS prevention programmes in El Salvador. But the spread of HIV continues. In the last few years the number of cases of men who have infected women with HIV has increased. As we know from work in the Americas and elsewhere, notably Africa, this is a reflection of the powerlessness of women, who have little control over when, or even if, they have sex, and who certainly cannot insist on protected sex.

But men are targeted in the information campaigns, so they 'know' what they need to do to prevent themselves becoming infected. However, many of them seem to put aside everything they have learnt in order to conform to the social norm, the code of *machismo*.

Being a traditional and dominant man is not simply another cause of the spread of HIV and AIDS. It is also a huge obstacle in the way of achieving effective means of prevention. It is men's attitudes and behaviour that need to be changed, and this is where HIV and AIDS prevention work links up with the work on gender and masculinities.

John Bayron Ochoa (black t-shirt) with colleagues at the Centro Bartolomé de las Casas.

Another way of being a man

If traditional attitudes in men increase the chance of them becoming infected and infecting others, men who are more sensitive and less rigid about their definition of 'being a man' are allies in the fight against transmission. Men who acknowledge diversity and accept a degree of equality in gender relations can, and should, make a considerable contribution to HIV and AIDS prevention.

There are men who behave like this without any training. But many others need to escape from their traditional background and upbringing and learn more relaxed and flexible ways of being masculine. Only if men, by actively participating in programmes challenging the stereotypes, learn a new approach to being a 'real' man,

Only if men learn a new approach to being a 'real' man will their sexual behaviour change

will their sexual behaviour change and with it the transmission of the HIV virus.

I believe that fundamental shifts in the practices, myths and beliefs relating to sexuality, and in the violence of masculinity that so many men subscribe to, are essential if we are to open up the path towards effective HIV and AIDS prevention.

John Bayron Ochoa is a Progreso development worker with the Centro Bartolomé de las Casas in El Salvador.



Nick Sireau/Progreso



Lucy Cathcart/Progressio

SIGNS OF HOPE

Now that Namibia has introduced gender equality laws, the time has come to change Namibian men's attitudes, writes

Anne Rimmer

ICANNOT HELP BUT NOTICE that we, African men, whenever it suits us, make a claim on the culture and history,' said Hon Dr Hage Geingob in the Namibian National Assembly in February 2007. 'We make such claims when we want to show that we are superior to women. [...] Yet we have no hesitation when we use the instruments of modernity, such as cars, planes, [...] computers and cell phones.

We don't oppose the use of these instruments of modernity by claiming that in our tradition we used drums to communicate, or used donkey carts to travel, or used only oral tradition to communicate information. Why do we have this duplicity in applying our culture?'

Such statements remain controversial in a country still working through its attitudes to gender equality. When Namibia achieved independence in 1990 it had been shaped by years of colonisation by Germany and then South Africa. The colonial administrations refused to accept women leaders, imposing male leaders in their place, and contributing, with the Christian missions and local male chiefs, to the development of 'an allegedly ancient, immutable tradition which defined authority in the family, the community and the State as exclusively male domains' (Heike Becker, 'Making tradition: A historical perspective on gender in Namibia' in D S LaFont and D Hubbard, eds, *Unravelling*

taboos: Gender and sexuality in Namibia, Legal Assistance Centre, 2007).

Equality in law but not in fact

Until 1996, when the Married Persons Equality Act was passed, following advocacy from the Gender Research & Advocacy Project (GR&AP) of the Legal Assistance Centre, women were treated like children in the eyes of the law. There were many things that women could not do without their husband's permission, such as buying or selling property (even their own), taking out a loan or signing a contract.

The Act legally revoked this 'marital power', but attitudes are harder to change. There are frequent assertions in Namibian communities that the 'man is the head of the household', reinforced by Biblical references to male superiority in this 95 per cent Christian country. There appears to have been a backlash to the discourse on women's rights, with many men

Pausing for reflection: a man and woman in Namibia.

believing a wish for equality is a demand for superiority. 'The woman wants to sit on the head of the man' is a comment I have heard frequently from men at community workshops I have conducted. The benefits of gender equality for men – such as shared financial responsibility and enjoying emotional bonding with children during child-rearing – are never mentioned by participants in discussions about women's rights.

Knowledge of the gender-friendly laws is limited. When I held an informal meeting with a traditional nomadic Himba community at Epupa Falls, I was asked: 'What are women's and children's rights? We have heard of these things but we do not know what they are.'

Patriarchy, polygamy, poverty

Namibia remains a largely patriarchal country. Men generally have the power (socially and economically) to make decisions. It is acceptable in most of the many cultures in Namibia for men to have multiple sexual partners, whilst women are expected to be faithful. Wives who would like their husbands to use condoms in a country with one of the highest HIV positive prevalence rates in the world (because the men are known to be having relationships outside of marriage) are liable to be labeled 'prostitutes' or told they must themselves be being unfaithful.

Polygamy is still practised in some communities. The comment of a man who recently married two sisters on the same day – 'Everybody wants more than one car, house or cattle so why can I not desire more than one wife?' – illustrates a widely-held view that women are the property of men. The practice of paying

lobola (brideprice) in most Namibian communities may contribute to that.

Patriarchy is reinforced by poverty. Some young girls are encouraged or forced by their families to engage in 'sugar daddy' relationships to help pay school fees and buy other necessities. Many girls and young women actively seek out these relationships – they are interested only in men with 'the three Cs' (cash, car and cell phone). And some young men (particularly footballers, apparently) are in 'sugar mummy' relationships.

The clients we advise at the Legal Assistance Centre, and participants at our workshops, list a variety of social ills related to gender inequality: property grabbing from widows; domestic violence; rape (one third of rapes reported in Namibia are of children); and the refusal of fathers to maintain their children. GR&AP campaigned for legislation on these issues – new laws have been passed but are not well understood or well implemented.

At the Legal Assistance Centre we have carried out training on these laws with service providers and communities, and this has been very well received. Many participants have echoed the words of a student: 'nobody told us about these things before'. We back up our training up by simple guides to these laws that we have produced in local languages.

Showing commitment

Although it will take many more years before gender equality is the reality in most women's lives, there are signs of hope. A male participant in a workshop last year on the laws on domestic violence, rape, child maintenance and inheritance told me: 'Since I have been learning about these things I have totally changed. I help my wife at home and our marriage is much happier.'



Winners of the first ever Human Rights Awards in Namibia for combating gender-based violence.

Last year GR&AP initiated the first ever Human Rights Awards in Namibia for combating gender-based violence. There were four categories – overall, media, rural areas and youth. Two of the Award winners were male.

Namibia is a young democracy that has started enacting gender-friendly laws. If a prominent politician (quoted above) and young men from the community (the Award winners) can show their commitment to gender

'Since I have been learning about these things I have totally changed. I help my wife at home and our marriage is much happier'

equality, this is a sign that society is changing.

Discriminatory attitudes and practices are notoriously slow to change. It appears to be part of human nature to cling to power. How long did it take to abolish slavery? How long did it take for women to get the vote in Europe? We should applaud the positive developments in Namibia without ceasing in our efforts to ensure practical gender equality for all women and girls.

Anne Rimmer was a Progressio development worker on gender and equality issues in Namibia for four years. She has stayed on in Namibia to continue working for the Gender Research and Advocacy Project of the Legal Assistance Centre in Namibia.



Women on the front line

As East Timor descended into crisis, the women took charge of humanitarian work, writes **Catherine Scott**

IT WAS A YEAR since my last trip when I visited East Timor this February. When I was last in the capital, Dili, I felt that there was a mood of hope and optimism. People were poor and struggling, the United Nations (UN) had pulled out and there had been some trouble. But independence had been achieved, the people were free.

This time it was different. In April 2006, a demonstration by 600 soldiers protesting at being sacked had turned to violence. This was followed by a massacre of police officers in May. The situation rapidly deteriorated: there were killings and looting, houses and business premises were set on fire, and over 150,000 people were driven from their homes – 15 per cent of the national population. Finally the UN returned in

August 2006, accepting that the security arrangements left in the hands of the local police and the army were not adequate.

The violence spread to a mass of youth gangs with different political affiliations, with the result that thousands of people are still too scared to sleep in their homes at night for fear they will be attacked and even shot. At night they stay somewhere else.

Seeking sanctuary

When the East Timorese are frightened, they often take shelter on ground or in buildings belonging to the church. During the occupation, hunted youths headed for Bishop Belo's house. Those leaving home during this crisis set up camp in the compounds of religious

orders. In February 2007 the Salesians had 8,000 people in their grounds, and the Canossian Sisters had 7,000.

The situation has worsened since then: according to a UN statement in March 2007, some 37,000 internally displaced persons are currently in Dili, a rise of 8,000 in two months.

During my stay, I visited my friend, Sister Guillhermina Marcal at her convent in Balide. Last time I had been there it had been very quiet. This time the grounds were a mass of tarpaulin and standpipes, where thousands of people had taken refuge.

Rod of iron

Sister Guillhermina rules the camp with a rod of iron – it's a case of having to. If fights break out, she is the first to be called in to settle them. And even restive young men armed with guns have a tendency to toe the line when she turns up. Sister Guillhermina is a lioness of a nun. When she addresses the crowd, an atmosphere of obedience descends like a comforting blanket and people quieten down. She has been known to walk out into the street between squads of youths squaring up for battle and persuade the lot to go home.

When Sister Guillhermina is not separating out gangs of marauding youths, she is delivering babies. They

have had several births in the camps – with all the attendant risks and medical shortcomings. As we toured the site, she pointed out children with boils and rashes on their faces, one result of the poor conditions they were living in.

Powered by faith

The camp has its organising committees and a strict regime – one way of keeping things in order. Yet the pressure is taking its toll. When I visited, the government had stopped supplying rice to the camp because it wants the people to go home. They won't because they don't feel safe. The price of rice is rising, and Sister Guilhaermina cannot get either enough supplies or the money to buy what's needed – and the people are getting hungry and malnourished. The food situation is precarious generally, with serious shortages.

Some New Zealand UN soldiers arrived at the camp while I was there, to provide security for a mediation due to take place between disputing gangs – in which Sister Guilhaermina was to be involved. I was forcibly struck by how this incredible woman was expected to do everything. There are only nine sisters in the community at present and some of those are teaching – something else which she does at the camp in her spare time.

Chatting to her over a glass of water, she confessed how tired she was, not entirely a surprise to me. Guilhaermina's deep faith keeps her going, faith not only in God and in the struggle that secured Timor's independence – and she certainly played her part in that – but faith also in the power of women.

Women take action

For while the politicians, gangs, and faction leaders – even the priests for that matter – were all quarrelling about how to sort the political situation, Progressio's partner REDE Feto, the women's umbrella organisation, put politics firmly to one side. They organised themselves and others to bring food and non-food relief to the women and children in 56 refugee camps, linking up with the Ministry of Health, the various UN agencies and other local non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

REDE Feto staff and members worked tirelessly, from dawn to dusk, every day, for over three months, side by side with men, often leading them and supervising them. Some of the women were



Sister Guilhaermina Marcal at her convent in Balide; opposite page: Sister Guilhaermina talks to a UN soldier.

themselves living in camps, but carried on their humanitarian work with smiles on their faces. Edna Tesoro, Progressio's development worker with REDE Feto, said: 'REDE Feto is a strong force that could face any kind of crisis. The women feel proud that they could do something worthy, compared to men who only know how to create violence.'

Speaking at the launch in February of the book *Independent women* (see news, page 5), Guilhaermina affirmed her belief that it was time women were running East Timor. They could not do any worse than the men. As 10

candidates lined up for Presidential elections being held in April/May, there was only one woman among them – Lucia Lobato of the Social Democratic Party – and most Timor analysts agree she is not in with a shout. Meanwhile, despite the contributions of women like Sister Guilhaermina, women continue to struggle for recognition of their role in helping to shape East Timor's future.

Catherine Scott is manager of Progressio's Africa, Middle East and Asia programmes. Additional reporting by Edna Tesoro.

REDE Feto rises to the challenge

REDE FETO is a women's umbrella organisation of 18 members, all local NGOs, formed to give a coherent voice to those working on issues affecting women in East Timor, writes Edna Tesoro. REDE Feto has played a leading role in driving changes to legislation on domestic violence, raising awareness about rape, domestic violence and HIV and AIDS, and working for greater women's representation in local political structures.

During the crisis in May 2006, NGOs were among the worst hit, with their offices burned and looted and many of their staff becoming displaced persons. REDE Feto took up the challenge of helping people in the camps, working with a range of agencies and organisations to implement a coherent strategy.

Among the projects put into operation are: a maternity waiting camp for pregnant women, where they can stay for their final month and benefit from supplies as well as health services; a programme to deal with and prevent violence towards women in the camps, many of whom are vulnerable as they are on their own; and a distribution programme to provide necessities, in particular tents, blankets and cooking equipment. REDE Feto is also helping displaced women to prepare for returning home, working through women's committees in the camps.

A visit to Africa showed **Tina Beattie** that *livesimply's* message of solidarity connects us with the world's poor in a vital process of change

Learning to cherish life

IN JANUARY THIS YEAR, I was part of a Cafod group attending the World Forum on Theology and Liberation (WFTL) followed by the World Social Forum (WSF) in Nairobi, and visiting Cafod projects in Kenya and northern Tanzania. Part of the purpose of our visit was to launch the *livesimply* campaign which has been adopted by a number of Catholic organisations in England and Wales.

I have lived in central Africa for most of my life, but it was interesting to go back in a different context and to see it through new eyes. It was inspiring to see the emergence of a politically aware generation which is looking beyond the humiliation of colonialism and the post-colonial corruption of African politics to

a more hopeful future. But it was also painful to witness firsthand what can seem like insurmountable economic and political obstacles to this optimism, exacerbated by the AIDS pandemic which continues to devastate communities and families.

Inspiration and chaos

The WSF is a network of activists, NGOs and campaigning groups which first met in Porto Alegre in 2001. This year's Forum, at Nairobi's Kasarani stadium, was a colourful jamboree of stalls, events, celebrations and workshops. Initially, the entrance fee had been set beyond the reach of most inhabitants of a city with one of the largest populations

of slum dwellers in the world. When the organisers eventually decided to waive the entrance fee for Kenyan residents, pick-pockets and street children added to the generally amicable if somewhat chaotic spirit of the event.

A striking feature of the WSF was the presence of a large number of Catholic organisations representing a wide range of issues including the Unearth Justice campaign, religious communities working with people living with HIV and AIDS, and campaigns concerned with issues such as the sex trade, refugees, and justice for slum dwellers. In the daily newspaper published during the Forum, Hilmi Toros wrote: 'It is in a multitude of steaming tents run by faith-based groups that crucial issues ranging from good governance to peace building or poverty and HIV/AIDS are being freely debated.' An article in *The Economist* pointed out that Roman Catholics constituted the 'biggest single group of anti-poverty campaigners in Nairobi'.

Energy and creativity

A memorable aspect of the trip was our visit to Kibera, home to 700,000 people and the world's second largest slum. Since I lived in Nairobi in the 1970s, the slums have mushroomed around the perimeters of the city while an affluent minority lives in conspicuous opulence, barricaded behind walls topped with razor wire, with bars on their windows and armed guards at their gates. It is a reminder that injustice imprisons rich and poor alike, for neither can be truly free in a situation where desperation fuels violence, and armed robbery makes Nairobi one of the most dangerous cities in the world.

Yet that is only part of the story, for walking through the stinking alleys of Kibera, what struck me was not the misery but the energy and creativity of the people we encountered. The lanes and alleys were lined with market stalls selling a colourful array of goods, and the slum bustled with a vibrant sense of life. I found myself reflecting on how the



Tina Beattie

A different city: life in the slums of Kibera.

global Market has become a voracious idol which dictates the conditions of existence to us all, yet markets themselves are fundamental to our humanity. They are places of community and enterprise, where people gather together to buy and to sell in a spirit of creative solidarity. In their capacity to create spaces for human flourishing, markets are the opposite of the Market which dominates global economics and crowds out these smaller market economies which sustain communities.

Solidarity and compassion

The other deep memories I carry with me are of our visits to people living with HIV and AIDS and their families in northern Tanzania. Among the most painful realities we encountered were child-headed households, where surviving orphans are left to care for their younger brothers and sisters. Yet here too, the misery is only half the story, for these situations of unimaginable suffering also generate acts of great solidarity and compassion. Everywhere we went, there were groups of women caring for people with AIDS and their families, providing food, building houses, helping people to grow vegetables, and offering solidarity and friendship to those who had been abandoned and left to die alone. I had the sense of Africa being held together by this vast network of women, stretching out their arms across the continent to sustain the vulnerable and the dying within bonds of love and hope.

The *livesimply* campaign continues to form an undercurrent to my reflections on these encounters and experiences. I was initially sceptical about its effectiveness, and I was reluctant to promote the campaign in Nairobi, lest we be misunderstood as preaching simplicity to those who are already poor. But the workshops which we presented at the WFTL and the WSF were well-attended, and they generated excellent discussion and debate. I have come to the realisation that simplicity is neither simple nor meagre. As one Kenyan observed in one of our workshops: 'Simplicity is complex, but it is about love.' It is also, said another, about thankfulness, and that insight has lingered in my mind.

Trust and generosity

Our consumerist culture requires that we live in a constant state of dissatisfaction. Happiness must always be just out of



Alone in the crowd: a child at the World Social Forum in Nairobi.

reach, attainable only with the next purchase, the next bank loan, the next insurance policy, the next commodity; and the more of these we have, the further happiness recedes. Yet to wake up every morning and simply be thankful for all that is, brings a different perspective to life. To train ourselves to be indifferent, in this competitive culture, to the status symbols of houses, cars, holidays, salaries, is not to be indifferent to people but to be liberated from the superficialities which mask our human relationships. Our hoarding and consumption of the earth's resources is symptomatic of the extent to which we have become a culture of fear – afraid to trust the future, afraid to trust our neighbours, afraid to trust anyone at all and therefore totally reliant on a self-sufficiency which makes us want to protect ourselves against every eventuality and every possible risk.

But life is fragile and unpredictable. Beyond the horizon of each new moment lurks the unexpected and the unknown. Everything we do is ultimately borne out of a fundamental trust that life is

meaningful and good, that it is worth being alive, even when life is painful and harsh. This cherishing of life is quite different from the over-investment in self-preservation which currently fuels our terror-stricken culture and justifies ever more violent acts of repression and war in the name of security.

Poverty and affluence alike are enemies of simplicity, for both trap us in unceasing anxiety about our well-being, our security and our survival. The simple life is a life of trust and generosity, of truthfulness and grace, rooted in sufficiency and inter-dependence. Such a life is possible for all the people of this world, but it comes about only through a slow, reflective process of change, and that change has to begin with each and every one of us, wherever and whoever we happen to be.

Tina Beattie is reader in Christian Studies, University of Roehampton, and a senior fellow in Crucible, Roehampton's new centre for excellence for education in human rights, social justice and citizenship.

The four horsemen of the water apocalypse – along with 5,000 people concerned about access to water – marched on El Salvador's capital city San Salvador on World Water Day in March. They demanded better investment in water resources and the protection of people's right to water. Words and pictures: **Marcos Sanjuan.**

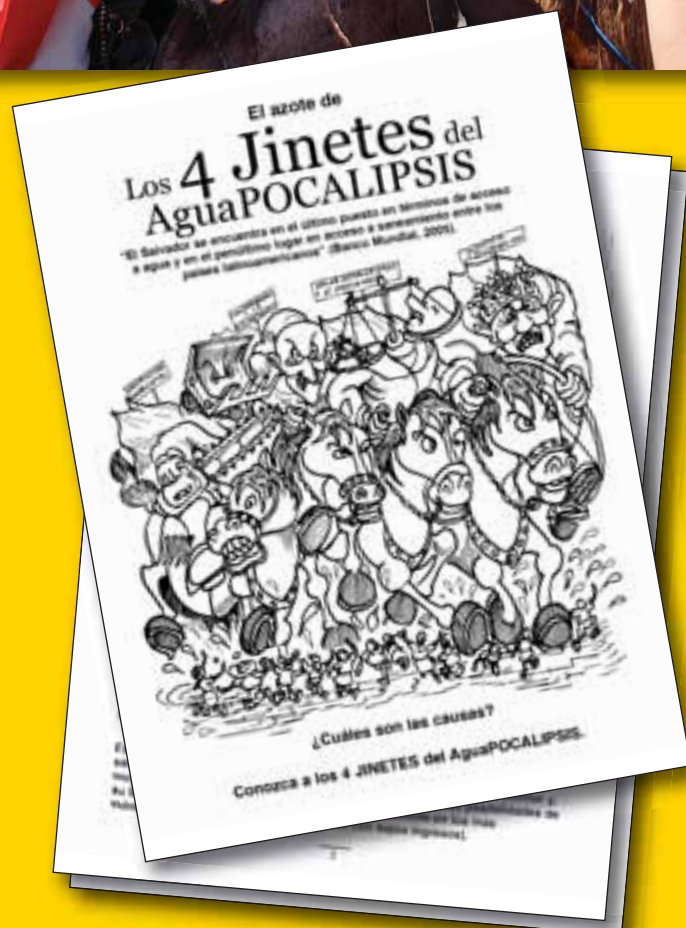
the water apocalypse



'Ha ha ha!' laughs the Horseman of Contamination and Disease. 'I am found almost all over El Salvador: 90 per cent of shallow waters are contaminated. Ha ha! That's what happens when less than two per cent of sewage water is purified. Gastrointestinal illnesses and diarrhoea are one of the three main reasons why people see a doctor in this country. Ha ha ha!'

Accompanied by the other horsemen of the AguaPOCALIPSIS (water-apocalypse), including the Horseman of Environmental Destruction (in red, left), the Horseman of Contamination rode through the streets of San Salvador on 22 March 2007, punctuating his chilling words with icy laughter.

Salvadorean social organisations who organised the demonstration wanted to reflect the water crisis facing the country by using the biblical image of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. In fact, the situation is not very far from such tragedy: according to the World Bank, of all Latin American countries, El Salvador is found in last place in terms of access to water and in penultimate place for access to plumbing.



The cover of a brochure distributed during the march reads: The scourge of the Four Horsemen of the AguaPOCALIPSIS. It asks: What are the causes of the crisis? Each horseman represents an answer:

- The Horseman of Environmental Destruction
- The Horseman of Contamination and Disease
- The Horseman of Unfair Distribution
- The Horseman of Devaluation and Outrageous Prices

Marcos Sanjuan is a Progressio development worker with UNES (Unidad Ecologica Salvadoreña – the Salvadorean Ecological Coalition). For more on UNES's work, see Interact Winter 2006/7.

These terrible beings (below) opened the march that the National Forum for the Defence of Sustainability and the Right to Water (Foro Nacional por la Defensa de la Sustentabilidad y el Derecho al Agua) had called for 22 March. The Water Forum brings together some 100 social organisations. It aims to influence public policy on water as well as supporting and making the population aware of their right to water.

Between 4,000 and 5,000 people (a conservative estimate) participated in the colourful and musical march, a figure that can be considered in El Salvador as a mass demonstration. However, it received little coverage in the media.



The march ended at the Legislative Assembly (above). There the protesters requested that draft bills on water, and water supply and plumbing, presented months ago by social organisations, be debated and approved. The general water law had been presented exactly a year before, but to date, it has not been debated, as the interests of a few economic powers are putting obstacles in the way. This situation was staged satirically through the medium of theatre: 'Justice', blindfolded, gagged and with her ears covered, was chained up and guarded by representatives of certain economic powers. Finally, she was freed by her kidnapers and asked that the laws be approved.

What the participants said

A group of people from Soyapango commented that they have not had water since the source dried up after a new housing development was built in an area where water used to collect and drain through to the aquifers. In addition, the forest that helped retain and conserve water in effect no longer exists. One woman said:

Now, we women have to spend four hours each day looking for water, and this means that our work is put at risk, we face tiredness and a lack of safety on the journey, and do not have time for other things like education.

Passing in front of the Metrocentro shopping centre, a young man became angry at the sight of a sprinkler watering some grass under the blazing midday sun:

Look how they're wasting water! In my community, we only get water for two hours every four days... but the water bills always turn up on time! We are paying for the air in the pipes!

Carlos Flores from UNES explains: *In El Salvador it's not that there is no water – it rains three times more than the world average. The problem is that the State does not invest enough in guaranteeing our right to water, and*

what it does invest, it invests badly. For example, only one fifth of the money invested in water reaches poor areas. The World Bank has estimated that the investment required in El Salvador in order to achieve universal access to water and plumbing by 2015 would represent around 0.4 per cent of the annual GDP, which would currently be equivalent to some US\$65-70 million. In 2004, water use subsidies [state subsidies to the 40% of the population – mostly the urban upper and middle classes – already connected to the national system] represented almost double this total. That says it all.



Janice Flower/Progressio

Violet Tapfuma outside her shop.

Violet's story

Janice Flower describes how Violet Tapfuma, an HIV positive widow in Zimbabwe, has taken control of her life

ON A RECENT TRIP TO ZIMBABWE, I met a remarkable lady. Her name is Violet Tapfuma. She asked me to tell you her story.

Violet has a little shop on the urban outskirts of Chinhoyi, about two hours' drive northwest of Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe. We arrived there around lunchtime on market day. Carts, cars and vans were parked on the side of the roads, selling everything from clothes to carrots, and people were everywhere: some shopping, some looking, others just passing by.

Cathrine Chirima-Jani, Progressio's Zimbabwe Liaison Officer, introduced me to Violet. We shook hands and she greeted me with a timid smile, welcoming me with pride to her little grocery shop. Cathrine spoke to Violet in Shona (the language spoken by 70 per cent of Zimbabwean people), asking her to tell us about herself and the shop. Violet adjusted her blue hat and began to tell us her story.

A survivor

Violet is a widow. Her husband died a few years ago leaving her with nothing, and since then she has had to raise five children by herself. Violet is also HIV positive. In Zimbabwe, where more than half of the population live on less than one dollar a day and unemployment is estimated at 80 per cent, most people

infected with HIV cannot afford anti-retroviral (ARV) therapy and instead rely on free treatment.

As Cathrine interpreted Violet's words, I got the picture that life has not been easy for her, but she is surviving, she is fighting, and she is still smiling: everything she said was in an optimistic light. I could not help but admire her for that.

Violet tells us that she has known of her HIV status for eight years, but only decided to seek help a few years ago. She came across Progressio partner organisation Batsirai which provides a wide range of training and support services to sufferers and carers, works to raise awareness and supports research.

Life-changing

Violet tells us that since she sought help from Batsirai, her life has changed completely. She has not only received support, counselling and ARV treatment, but last year the organisation gave her financial help through its 'Micro-financial support' programme.

Daniel Gapare, director of Batsirai, says: 'This programme helps improve the financial situation of HIV-affected households. It looks at how people can generate income; how they can use their savings for their own benefit and for the community; and helps mobilise funding. The financial assistance strengthens community groups and allows Batsirai to

reach other people affected by HIV and AIDS.'

Financial help was given to Violet and six other members of her community (five women and a man). They received a total of Zimbabwe \$50,000 (around £100) and with this money they set up a small grocery shop and welding workroom. Apart from the funds, Batsirai also gave them training in accountancy, stock control, buying and pricing.

Independence and dignity

Today, the shop is totally independent of Batsirai, and Violet and her business partners can generate a small income to support their families. The shop not only provides an income, but Batsirai and the business have given her freedom, independence and dignity, enabling her to stand up for herself.

'The shop keeps me very busy. I no longer have to sit at home thinking about HIV and about being ill,' she says.

Information about HIV and AIDS is everywhere in Zimbabwe: on the television, on the radio, in the print media. You could argue that this has helped reduce the stigma about being HIV positive. But for Violet, it was the support she received from Batsirai that made her see her status in a different way – no longer as a setback – and she wants everyone to know that. 'I am not scared any more to tell people my status: I want everyone to know I'm HIV positive,' she says, gesticulating in a lively way.

Yeukai – remember

Violet also helps others in her community who are HIV positive, through a self-help group called Yeukai, meaning 'remember' in Shona. The group meets every month to learn more about HIV and AIDS, to talk about their problems and to give support to each other.

Before it's time to say goodbye, Violet shows us some of the items she has for sale in her little shop. She also shows us the account book and tells us that the profit is shared equally with all the members of the group. By now Violet feels comfortable with us, and she shows off her natural smile. We shake hands once again and as we walk out of the shop, she asks Cathrine to tell me to share her story with others back in the UK.

Janice Flower is Progressio's membership and fundraising assistant.

ARCHBISHOP OSCAR ROMERO of San Salvador was assassinated 27 years ago. He is already esteemed and venerated as a contemporary martyr, a champion of human rights, a tireless defender of the poor, and an implacable enemy of the violence and repression that enveloped his country precariously balanced on the verge of civil war.

On the evening of 24 March 1980 Archbishop Romero was shot dead with a single marksman's bullet as he celebrated mass in the chapel of the cancer hospital where he lived. His sermon was a reflection on St John's gospel, chapter 12: 'Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies it remains only a single grain; but if it dies it yields a rich harvest.' He concluded: 'This body broken and this blood shed for human beings encourage us to give our body and blood up to suffering and pain as Christ did – not for self but to bring justice and peace to our people...' The assassin fired. Romero slumped to the floor at the foot of the crucifix. He was taken to the hospital in the back of a pick-up truck but he was dead on arrival.

Romero was a very ordinary priest who did quite extraordinary things. Trained in a traditional environment, he was bookish, shy and self-effacing. Yet he became a great preacher and orator who, with colossal courage, faced up to and denounced the horrible sufferings of his people. He lived a life of great simplicity – indeed austerity. As Archbishop he refused the blandishments of the wealthy and simply could not be co-opted. Instead he continually pointed to the scandal of hunger and malnutrition in a country whose agricultural potential

Living simply for the poor

Julian Filochowski reflects on the life and martyrdom of Oscar Romero

brought fabulous riches to a tiny – Catholic – oligarchy while the landless peasants in the countryside remained in abject misery.

In identifying with the most marginalised Salvadorans, seeing Jesus Christ present in their torture and deprivation, Romero made his fundamental option for the poor. He stood alongside them in word and lifestyle, in prayer and projects of solidarity. He continually urged the rich to share their wealth with the poor. 'Take off your rings and give them to the poor before your fingers are cut off,' he said in a moment of frustration when land reform was sabotaged even though hunger stalked the countryside.

He would not stay silent when the response of the elites to the ensuing unrest was cruelty, killings and disappearances at the hand of their death squads. He would not preach a deferential piety to the church communities, but became 'the voice of the voiceless'. The fury of the military

and landowners was demonstrated in a popular bumper sticker – 'Be a Patriot: Kill a Priest'. And six priests were slaughtered before Romero himself.

The Anglican church has already recognised his sanctity and heroic sacrifice when it placed his statue side by side with Martin Luther King's at Westminster Abbey. One day the Catholic Church will surely acknowledge him as a saint.

He lived simply and begged others to shun greed and materialistic excess so that his people, whom he dearly loved, might simply survive and perhaps one day enjoy a sustainable living in peace. And for that he died.

But Archbishop Romero is alive today in the hearts of millions of Latin Americans. He has inspired Christians across the world. His homilies are full of timeless evangelical wisdom for a Church in pursuit of justice in this globalising world. His example shows that we cannot endlessly talk of 'the option for the poor' and yet avoid engagement in the messy crises of the world.

Archbishop Romero stands out as a great prophet and a Christian witness of towering integrity.

Julian Filochowski has worked for Progressio (then CIIR) and Cafod. He is chair of the Board of Trustees of the Archbishop Romero Trust.

interactnow

A new charity, the Archbishop Romero Trust, has been founded to celebrate Romero's life and death in memorial liturgies, to foster study of his life and teachings, and to raise money to finance projects that continue his work for social justice and human rights in Central America. A brochure for the Trust is enclosed with this edition of Interact and you are warmly invited to sign up as a 'Friend of Romero'.



Archbishop Oscar Romero visiting a poor area of San Salvador.

Who does poverty affect the most?



A woman at the Vino Camchon market in Cusco, Peru.

More than one billion people worldwide live below the poverty line, earning less than \$1 per day (World Bank *World Development Indicators 2006*). And where there is poverty, women are the most affected, especially those caring for children. At Progressio, we believe that without gender equality, poverty cannot be eradicated. This is why we make sure that all our projects are sensitive to issues of gender equality and help promote the empowerment of women.

Our work varies from supporting HIV positive women in Africa to gain access to healthcare, to helping women in Central America generate an income by selling their crops. We work to tackle the root causes of poverty faced by women whether they are economic, social, political, legal or cultural. To help improve the lives of women in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Asia, please make a donation today. Together we can fight the issues that keep women locked in poverty.

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