

winter 2003/04

interact



Which way for democracy?

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Books worth reading

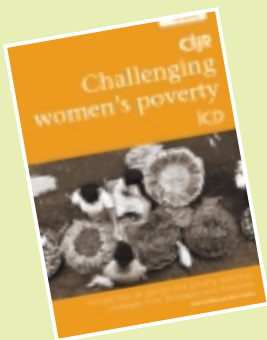
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Sarah Bradshaw and Brian Linneker

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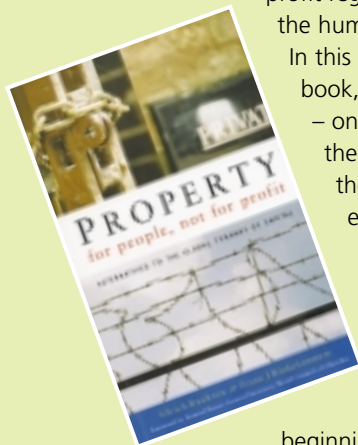
*Ulrich Duchrow and Franz J
Hinkelammert*

The issue of private property lies at the heart of a global economic system

geared to maximising profit regardless of the human impact. In this powerful book, the authors – one a theologian and the other an economist – trace the history of private property from its earliest beginnings to its

nemesis in neoliberalism and globalisation. They argue that the only hope of overcoming the destructiveness of our current way of living is to reshape our notions of private property.

- co-published by CIIR and Zed Books
- £14.00 + free postage (price includes CIIR member's discount)



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CIIR Briefing: Haitian immigrants and their descendants in the Dominican Republic

*Bridget Wooding and Richard
Moseley-Williams*

Over the last century, many thousands of Haitians have settled in the Dominican Republic – yet still today they face systematic discrimination from the Dominican government and people. This CIIR briefing examines the origins and changing nature of Haitian immigration, and describes the efforts being made to establish and protect the rights of Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans in the Dominican Republic. It is a fascinating story, superbly told by authors with many years' experience of social development, migration and human rights in the Dominican Republic.

- Publication date February 2004

CIIR Briefing: Haiti 2004

Published to coincide with the 200th anniversary of the founding of independent Haiti, this briefing examines the political, economic and social problems affecting the country, and argues that without international aid the people of Haiti could face a disastrous humanitarian crisis.

- Publication date February 2004

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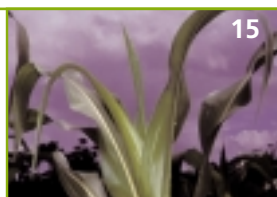
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editorial

Which way for democracy?

Democracy is, in many ways, like a religion (or a god). People believe implicitly in its supernatural powers. They take for granted that it is a force for good. They trust it to frame and guide their lives. Those who believe in it embark on crusades to bring their version of it to the rest of the world; those who are denied it, seek it like the holy grail.

And maybe, like a religion, many people are tempted to defer to its high priests – politicians, governments – to interpret and explain it; to run it on their behalf. But of course, like religion, democracy is something that only has real meaning for us if we engage with it personally.

This issue of **Interact** focuses on what democracy means, and how it can work, for people in the developing world. The Insight section features three articles taken from papers delivered at a CIIR seminar titled 'Roadmaps to democracy'. In chairing the seminar, journalist John Crabtree asked the question: Do such maps exist? Democracy, he suggested, should not be prescribed or imposed, but should come from below; and it may mean different things in different places to different people.

The articles in this **Interact** show that there are different routes to democracy, and that democracy works at many levels in people's lives. The developed nations of the global north behave as if democracy is something that they have the power to bestow on the rest of the world. But democracy is not theirs to give: it is something that people must build for themselves.

Editor

Alastair@ciir.org

Cover picture: A woman casts her vote in a Nairobi polling station during Kenya's 2002 national elections. Photo by Sven Torfinn/Panos.



Riding high: Soazig Rouillard's son Alan (top, on shoulders) with other children from his neighbourhood.

Soazig Rouillard writes about her unique experiences as a CIIR/ICD development worker in Ecuador

Sharing & caring

I AM A YOUNG, ACTIVE MOTHER who tries to reconcile, like many other mothers in Europe, work and family life. But my work is a little unusual. I am an agro-economist in a rural development organisation in the province of Esmeraldas in the north of Ecuador.

It is a lovely green province, crossed by rivers on whose banks Afro-Ecuadorian communities have settled. The mangrove trees there are among the highest in the world; some people have managed to settle among their branches.

My work involves supporting the producers, men and women, of these zones. I often have to shoulder my rucksack, without forgetting my mosquito net, my super-chemical repellent and my boots; then I catch the bus (or a truck), then a boat or a few hours

walking. It is an adventure, but for the mother of a one-year-old baby, it isn't always easy to organise oneself.

Helping hands

Once, when my son Alan was three months old, I took him with me to a community on the Onzole river. As we had to go in a small boat and it began to rain, I put his seat on a big rubbish bin lid, and I thought: if my mother saw me, she would kill me.

In the community the women helped me to look after him; there is always a helping hand in these places. We washed him in rain water, because the river water was very contaminated: people wash clothes and throw rubbish in it.

When I am working, the family of a friend looks after Alan for me, and we are already part of that family. It is a very poor family, but they have a big, open heart. When I go on a trip somewhere and take Alan with me, they feel sad. When I have to go and stay away overnight, I can leave him

with the family of my friend, and have no worries.

Alan is the little gringo of the neighbourhood. All the children know him, and the girls come to take him out. He is more an Esmeraldan than French; he loves to eat greens and shrimps.

Growing up

I would like my experience in Esmeralda to help my son to grow up tolerant and aware of what poverty is, living it from within, because many Europeans hear the word but are not aware of the living conditions of people in developing countries.

For example, my mother has already come to visit me several times, but it has been a difficult experience for her to go to the communities and see that sometimes the people are still living in extremely poor conditions. She doesn't understand why the houses are not clean from the floor to the roof, why the rubbish is thrown in the river and the women continue washing clothes beside the dirty nappies floating around. I think that I understand.

But beyond poverty, it is unbelievable that the people are so happy, more than many people I know in my country. You can be in any community, even the most isolated in the province, and every weekend the disco is open and the dancing begins.

Now I also dance the salsa, and it could be one of the biggest learning experiences I have had in my time as a development worker – plus that of sharing and opening up to others trustingly. And my son is already following the steps of the best salsa dancers.

Soazig Rouillard is a CIIR/ICD development worker with the regional office in Esmeraldas of Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progressio (FEPP), a rural development organisation in Ecuador. Soazig is from France.

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Visit the website of Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progressio at www.fepp.org.ec (in Spanish)



agenda

The journey to democracy must be open to the marginalised and the poor, writes **Christine Allen**

Signposts to democracy

DEMOCRACY is one of those words used very often as a metaphor rather than a description. Yet it has so many different meanings. Parliamentary democracy? Representative democracy? Liberal democracy? Participative democracy?

In so many places in the world, different models exist. There is all too often in the West an assumption that we mean *our* kind of democracy. Whoever we happen to be.

It can be a dangerous kind of perception, especially in the current context of global upheaval. In a post-cold-war world, not only are conflicts changing, but notions of the state are changing too.

At CIIR, we think that it's a matter of being on a journey rather than having an off-the-peg solution. That's why, at our October 2003 seminar titled 'Roadmaps to Democracy', we sought ideas for the sort of signposts to look out for on this journey. (See 'Insight', pages 8-12, for some of the contributions.) The lessons we heard from Latin America, Africa and Asia told us that democracy is something to be worked at.

The poverty gap

People talk about participation, but how can this be effective when there is such a gap between rich and poor? The inequalities between nations pose problems for international relations, as is evident on issues such as trade. The degree to which any country can effectively negotiate trade or other agreements depends largely on their economic power or strategic position.

Within countries, our experience is that democracy is a process. We know, from our partners and the engagement of our development workers, that this process is made richer when people, especially women and those who are

marginalised or poor, can more fully engage with it.

Democracy is not a model that can simply be replicated without reference to social, cultural and economic factors. It has to be based on the local and historical situation, using local institutions and responding to real needs.

Making connections

It's an issue that reveals some of the connections in our globalised world. The apathy or disillusionment experienced here in the UK may be a surprise to many people overseas for whom electoral processes are new. But there are also shared concerns at the inability of political processes to respond to people's needs, especially those who are poor, marginalised or disenfranchised.

At the local level, new forms of solidarity, or of social movements between peoples, are posing new challenges to existing democratic processes. Through these local organisations, people begin to get an experience of participation. It is no wonder, then, that they look to the political processes and feel disillusioned.

But the very fact that people seek effective participation in formal political structures should be welcomed and valued. The jargon of participation is everywhere, but the practice is not. The participation and inclusion of women is one clear example.

The World Bank and International Monetary Fund now require poor countries seeking debt relief to outline their plans for reducing poverty in poverty reduction strategy papers. CIIR's briefing *Challenging women's poverty*, based on experience in

Nicaragua and Honduras, looks at the degree to which this process has included and responded to the needs of women – and finds the process wanting.

Of course, democracy is not something that religions are

If there is a chance to act to support the poor and powerless, it must be taken



Mark Bradbury

Your vote counts: votes are tallied during Somaliland's local elections in December 2002.

particularly known for. In *Challenging women's poverty*, it is disappointing to read that the Catholic church in Nicaragua was not able to play a more supportive role in this process because of its conservative attitude towards women's organisations.

While religious structures are beyond our remit, it is important to remind all of us of the potential for good that faiths and faith-based organisations can have in supporting the participation of the people at the grassroots level. If there is a chance to act to support the poor and powerless, it must be taken; because there is no space to sit on the fence.

Christine Allen is CIIR's executive director.

Angola aims to build on fragile peace

THE WAR-RAVAGED COUNTRY of Angola has a long way to go before it can begin to see the benefits of peace, according to participants at the annual conference of the British-Angola Forum, held in London in November 2003.

'Angola is attempting a triple transition – from war to peace, a centrally-planned to a market economy, and devastated infrastructure to reconstruction,' said Steve Kibble, CIIR's advocacy officer for Africa and Yemen.

Immediate issues are assisting

the internally displaced, providing humanitarian assistance including food for those in inaccessible areas, and landmine clearance. Major long term issues include overcoming desperate poverty, resolving land conflicts, tackling HIV, combating endemic corruption and enshrining democratisation.

However, elections are not planned until at least 2005, while the government seems determined to crack down on critics and activists, according to David Mendes from the Angolan

NGO *Maos Libres*. Another participant at the conference described Angola as 'a monarchy supported by a republic of oil companies'.

In meeting the challenges it faces, Angola has been hindered by a lack of international confidence in its willingness or capacity to overcome its many problems. However, Hilary Benn, the UK secretary of state for international development, who was present at the conference, sees positive signs in the country's draft poverty reduction strategy, draft laws on land reform and investment, and draft constitution.

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Find out more about Angola at the website of the British-Angola Forum: www.britishangolaforum.org

Film scoops awards

A FILM made with CIIR support has won two awards for its hard-hitting examination of the impact on villagers of a mercury spill by a US-owned gold mine in Peru.

Choropampa: The Price of Gold won second prize in Spain's most prestigious international documentary competition at the Valladolid Film Festival in November 2003. It was also voted audience favourite by nearly 8,000 people at Barcelona's Film and Human Rights Festival in October.

Produced by CIIR partner Guarango Cine y Video and directed by Ernesto Cabellos and CIIR/ICD development worker



Ernesto Cabellos/Guarango Cine y Video

A still from the video.

Stephanie Boyd, the film was chosen by the Valladolid jury 'for its courage in revealing the battle of the weak against the strong and the contradictions of this struggle'.

An article by Stephanie Boyd about the film's role in giving a voice to the villagers affected by the mercury spill appeared in the last issue of *Interact* (Autumn 2003).

University given formal recognition

A CIIR PARTNER in Ecuador has had a landmark victory after a three year struggle for the legal recognition of an intercultural university.

The Intercultural University of Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities (UINPI) was founded in October 2000 and has been struggling for official recognition since its inception. Sustained pressure on the government from the indigenous movement has finally paid off with the unanimous approval of the university.

CIIR partner Ecuvarunari (the Confederation of Kichwa Peoples of Ecuador) represents the indigenous peoples of the highlands of Ecuador and has been fighting for access to education for Kichwa people in their native tongue since 1972.

Bilingual education at primary and secondary school levels has been established for over 15 years now. But the official approval of the UINPI represents a huge triumph for Ecuvarunari and the indigenous movement as a whole.

As well as being an important step towards equality for indigenous peoples, the university will create a space for intercultural reflection, deepening mutual understanding and sharing of knowledge between the different peoples of Ecuador.

Somalia Book launch



THE LAUNCH of *Somalia – The Untold Story: the war through the eyes of Somali women* by Judith Gardner and Judy El Bushra will take place on Friday 20 February from 6pm to 8pm at the Africa Centre, 38 King Street, Covent Garden, London.

The launch will include a guest speaker and contributors from the book, which is published by CIIR and Pluto Press. All welcome.

Open to debate

A LUNCHTIME DEBATE ON 'Globalisation – Is Capital Tyranny or Opportunity?' will take place on Tuesday 17 February at St Mary Le Bow, Cheapside, London (tube: St Paul's) from 1pm to 2pm. The debate is organised by Justshare, a coalition of churches and Christian organisations of which CIIR is a member. Ulrich Duchrow, co-author of *Property for people, not for profit; Alternatives to the global tyranny of capital* (see advert, page 2) will be debating with Clive Crook, deputy editor of *The Economist*. All welcome.

Dominican Republic targets Haitian immigrants

DOMINICAN AUTHORITIES took advantage of the disarray caused by severe floods in the country's north-west region in late 2003 to detain and repatriate more than 500 Haitian immigrants, according to the Solidaridad Fronteriza and Solidarite Fwontalye teams at the Jesuit Refugee Service.

Weeks of torrential rains and floods left at least nine people dead and forced almost 50,000 from their homes. Dominican police and military authorities moved through areas affected by the floods, detaining large numbers of Haitians, including flood victims who had gathered at refuge centres after seeing their homes destroyed by the flooding.

The detainees were imprisoned in poor conditions, some of them for up to 17 days, before being escorted to the border and deported to Haiti.

Among a group repatriated in November were two Dominicans thought by the authorities to be Haitian because of their darker skin colour. Human rights groups believe that this confirms that the Dominican authorities are contravening international and domestic laws by not carrying out detailed investigations about



Haitian-Dominican children: many Haitian-Dominicans face discrimination from the Dominican authorities.

individuals before deportation.

Many Haitian flood victims are now afraid to go to refuge centres, preferring to stay away and cope as best they can to avoid repatriation.

The repatriations are the latest in a long history of such deportations. Haitian migrant workers have contributed to the workforce in the Dominican Republic for decades, but they and their descendants continue to face systematic discrimination and denial of their rights – including the denial of birth certificates to children born in the Dominican Republic to Haitian parents.

CIIR will be publishing in February 2004 a report on Haitian immigrants and their descendants in the Dominican Republic. See the advert on page 2 for details.

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CIIR is holding a photo exhibition to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Haiti's independence in 2004. The exhibition features many striking pictures illustrating the lives of Haitians in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Date: 19 to 26 April 2004. Launch night: Thursday 22 April from 6-9pm. All welcome. Venue: the Spitz Gallery, 109 Commercial Street, London (near Old Spitalfields Market; nearest tubes Liverpool Street or Aldgate East).

Somaliland celebrates World AIDS Day

WORLD AIDS DAY ON 1 December 2003 was commemorated in Somaliland like never before, with events held around the country including a football match, a circus, marathon runs and night ceremonies to help raise awareness about HIV and AIDS.

The events were organised by the Somaliland government in collaboration with UN agencies and other non-governmental organisations. At public speeches, leading government figures pledged their commitment to fighting the epidemic.

Among these was Edna Adan Ismail, the minister for foreign affairs, who urged the international community and the Somaliland government to consider the availability of anti-retroviral drugs as a human rights issue. She said that Somaliland's children deserved the same rights as others around the world.

The events were backed by radio and television coverage in an attempt to raise awareness among the general population. Listeners were encouraged to participate by creating a 'patchwork panel' with their own personal message

about HIV and AIDS.

Saa'da Abdi Ahmed, CIIR/ICD's HIV/AIDS development advisor in Somaliland, said: 'HIV is not a virus that happens to someone else or to other communities – it is tragically present everywhere.

'We are all affected in one way or another, but discrimination against people living with HIV and AIDS is the most significant barrier to overcoming the epidemic. Decreasing this stigma can literally save lives.'

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Join the fight to stop AIDS – visit the website of the Stop AIDS Campaign (CIIR is a member of the campaign, which is an initiative of the UK Consortium on AIDS & International Development) at: www.stopaidscampaign.org.uk

The Dominican Republic, Somaliland, Namibia and the UK are worlds apart – but united in their need to provide a meaningful democratic role for their people. *Interact's Insight* section looks at some of the 'maps to democracy' that are being drawn to meet this need.

The road to a better life

Opening up routes to participation at a local level gives poor people hope that democracy and development are not just for the rich, writes **Jorge Cela** from the Dominican Republic

IF PEOPLE WERE ASKED to describe what constitutes 'the good life', few of them would include democracy in the list. But they may mention freedom, acceptance, access to goods and services, love, and basic rights, including participation. There is no good life if we feel discriminated against or excluded.

This does not mean that we want to make decisions about every issue. We know that it is impossible for everybody to discuss and participate in all the decisions of modern societies. We do not want to be at a meeting every single day. That is why we created representative democratic systems. We elect other people to represent us on the big issues of our time.

In our complex, plural, technological and global society, however, the distance between the big issues of society and ourselves is so great that we feel totally devoid of power even within democratic

systems. This is the 21st century question for democracy. How can our leaders represent us if we are such a plural society? Do they represent us, the citizens, or do they represent the ideologies of political parties, the financial interests of corporate business, and the opinions and agendas of the mass media?

How do we respond?

There are three main ways of responding to this situation. The first is pragmatic acceptance of the facts: this is the way it is. We accept our limited role, our limited knowledge and our limited participation. We accept simplistic answers to complicated problems. We blame the poor for their poverty, and we support a system that fails to give the good life for all, but permits us not to care. We accept ourselves as objects of the decisions of others.

The second is pessimistic

resignation: there are many things in our society that we do not accept, but we feel powerless. So we give up politics and big issues, and concentrate on our small, private world. We look for friends, small celebrations, intimate relations; we search for immediate satisfaction and let the world fall apart. We look at ourselves as isolated individuals fighting for our personal rights.

The third is hopeful engagement with the future: we feel the need for a meaning bigger than our own life. We look around and feel history as a call forward; then we look for ways of participating, of becoming part of the process of history. We engage in politics – though frequently we do not see ourselves as leaders of government, but as subjects who want to be well governed, who believe that the good life is possible for all.

Finding our way

In the last decade in Latin America we have insisted upon the formal mechanisms of representative democracy, with elections, parliament, and so on. The idea is to institutionalise democracy by strengthening democratic institutions and processes.

For this to succeed, a parallel process must occur in economic and cultural institutions.

But we live in plural societies in which not everyone is part of the same world. More than half of the

Going with the flow: people in the Dominican Republic in the aftermath of Hurricane George, September 1998.

population in the Dominican Republic lives in poverty. The global world demands growth, but it is growth without distribution. It promotes development, but development means one thing for the rich and another for the poor, who are left demanding their rights to jobs, education, health, cultural diversity, even life.

We are even confused about the meaning of development. We have the feeling that it means more than technological and economic growth. We have the feeling that it has something to do with rights, cultures and values; with self-respect, acceptance of the other, dialogue, quality of life.

We still live with the temptation of selling our future for a plate of beans, but we also find ourselves struggling to enter history, to have our own word, to open our own road. For us, democracy means more than just formal elections and political institutions: it means participation in decisions, goods and services.

The web of relations

This is where civil society finds its role. Civil society is not a substitute for local government. It is not a group of non-governmental organisations, or a group of strong institutions that can replace the weakness of the state with a more democratic and modern view. Civil society is simply society itself, considered from the point of view of its social subjects.

A strong civil society is a symptom of democracy. It is a web of relations that constitutes the system of forces that maintain society: not just political and economic, but social, built of gender, cultural, generational, ecological, territorial relations and many more. We may talk about democracy when the poor have the strength to enter this web with their own proposals, put them on the discussion table and make their voice heard.

At the Centro Juan Montalvo in the Dominican Republic, we have been working to strengthen civil

society, and give a political space to the poor and their organisations (see box below). In this work, we have observed that interest in participation increases when the poor see it as a way of improving the quality of their lives. For them, democratic participation in the community becomes a way of transforming their own lives.

Understanding their role in democracy gives people a map to know how to move in society. They come to understand the importance of participation to development. They are in a better position to gain access to and begin to influence the agenda. For poor people, participation in public policies becomes a way of reaching the good life.

Modernity, in its early stages, talked about the individual subject and his or her rights and duties. But we have come to understand that we are not isolated subjects. We are

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Read more about the work of the Centro Juan Montalvo at www.centrojuanmontalvo.org (in Spanish)

always in relation to others. The others form part of our identity and history. We share with them a past and a hope for the future. We dream, celebrate, cry and struggle together.

By becoming an active part of civil society, people discover that they are not individuals but members of a community. In the Dominican Republic, a country with a strong Catholic tradition, they may even discover that this is what we mean when we say 'Our Father': that we are all brothers and sisters.

Jorge Cela is coordinator of the Centro Juan Montalvo, a Jesuit centre for social studies in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic.

Local democracy, local development

CIIR/ICD partner Centro Juan Montalvo's (CJM's) work on local development starts with inviting all the organisations in a neighbourhood (between 20,000 and 50,000 urban dwellers) to form a coordination group to begin to analyse the reality of the 'barrio' (neighbourhood).

Usually the poor are organised in different groups: associations of neighbours, youth clubs, churches, parent and teacher associations, women's groups, etc. But the poorest ones are not organised, so their needs are often not represented. CJM asks participants to consider the poorest of the neighbourhood, such as elderly people and people with disabilities. It encourages participatory research to get a better understanding of the problems and issues.

Then the people select their priorities and formulate a strategic plan. They pay special attention to the government institutions responsible for a problem, and to possible allies.

The next step is negotiation through different means: lobbying, advocacy, mass media and mobilisation.

If they get projects approved, they will get involved in the participatory management of them – another occasion to grow and learn. CJM provides training in community leadership, and assists with evaluation.

In the process, the organisations discover that the roots of the problems go further than the borders of the neighbourhood. They begin to understand the city, the country and the global world as part of their local reality. In Santo Domingo, CJM helped set up a collective group of neighbourhood organisations called Foros para la Participación Municipal (Fora for Municipal Participation). More than 400 organisations are involved. One of their achievements is the approval by municipal authorities of a resolution creating a municipal council of civil society.

For the country, there is a larger umbrella group called Foro Ciudadano (the Citizen Forum). Many community organisations have joined the forum and it has been active in promoting state reform and proposing new laws.

I REMEMBER HOW in the years of civil war in the 1980s, the women worked together to develop and promote peace. As women we'd meet together and draw up lists of points to discuss with our husbands, our brothers and our sons. Sometimes we assigned a few women to travel around the region to talk to the men with guns. We had to find ways to influence men and convince them to establish peace and rebuild the country.

Traditionally there is a cultural division of responsibilities between women and men. Women worked tirelessly to bring about and support the peace conferences that finally achieved an end to the violence and war, but we were excluded from participating. We could only observe.

Somali society is patriarchal and even though legislation existed before and now exists again to afford women equal political rights, in practice women face many cultural and social challenges in achieving their rights, not just from men but also from women themselves. One of the obstacles is lack of educational opportunities. Literacy rates for women are just 12 per cent, and not much more for men.

Since 1991, when Somaliland declared its independence from

Equal rights, equal voice

Amran Ali Mahmoud describes women's efforts to play a role in Somaliland's progress to peace and democracy

Keep the land, we emigrate...

When the rhythm for rebuilding slows down, we rally and mobilise.
To this end, we are always beside men, never behind them.
We are at the forefront for peace and reconciliation.
We are ready with what it takes to resurrect good government.
But you men render lost our advice and inspirations;
You suffocate our intellect, so it never sees the daylight;
You grab and swallow all benefits due to us.
If you don't rethink and vividly acknowledge the role women play,
And institutionalise it in modern and customary laws,
Be warned, we are now awakening after a long sleep of passivity.

Translated extract from a poem by Anab Xasan read to male delegates at a peace conference in Somaliland.

Somalia, women have been pushing for the right to hold political decision-making positions – traditionally the exclusive preserve of men. But the ball only really started

rolling in October 2002 when we created the Women's Political Forum.

The forum came into existence when a group of women activists from civil society organisations realised the need for a special body to promote women's participation in politics. The forum has provided a focus for promoting women's political rights, and conducting discussions and debates with the political parties, women's groups, elders, religious leaders, the business community and others.

We are starting to see results, for example with the appointment of our top woman to the post of minister of foreign affairs, and my own appointment to the ministry of family welfare and social development. We are role models for women and girls and we hope that more women will now gain recognition for their part in the rebuilding of our country.

Amran Ali Mahmoud is director general of the ministry of family welfare and social development in Somaliland. See the country profile, page 17, for more information on Somaliland.



Mark Bradbury

Standing up to be counted: women queuing to vote during 2002 local elections in Somaliland.



Moment of destiny: the vote count with the candidates looking on.

At the village we were met by the local police inspector and an electoral commission official, whom we had invited to ensure that the election was properly conducted.

Symbolic votes

Most of the San have very low literacy levels, so to overcome this we used a simple but effective idea. We asked the four candidates to hold a large piece of paper, each of which had a different symbol drawn upon it (a square, triangle, circle and cross). Each voter then drew the symbol of their candidate on paper and placed it in the ballot box.

The first count resulted in a tie for first place between two candidates. The third and fourth place candidates were eliminated, with a second vote following. By this time, the atmosphere was tense and no one seemed to be able to anticipate the outcome of the final vote. Finally, the new chief of the San people for the Omaheke South region was announced as Sofia Jacobs – widow of the late chief, and the first woman ever to be chosen by the San, or indeed by any other formally recognised ethnic group in Namibia, as their chief.

One month after her victory, chief Sofia Jacobs was introduced to the president, Sam Nujoma, during a state visit to the region. It was reported that he was impressed with the election of the new chief, which had been the first ever formal election of a chief for Omaheke South. OST hopes that this achievement marks a new chapter in the life of the San traditional leadership, and that ultimately the government will support the right of the San to become a recognised 'traditional authority' in their own right, following many years of frustration and struggle.

Ian Agnew, from England, is a CIIR/ICD development worker with the Omaheke San Trust.

Democracy in the desert

The San people of the Namibian Kalahari are fighting a long battle to gain government recognition of their traditional leaders, writes **Ian Agnew**

IN LATE 2002 the San Chief of Omaheke South died. The Omaheke San Trust (OST) was approached by the San traditional authorities to assist in the process of finding a new chief. This proved to be more difficult than we first imagined.

Firstly, OST had to get various arguing San factions to agree to a single approach to selecting a new chief. We organised a meeting of all 26 San traditional councillors in the region – no easy task as the region covers over 87,000 square km.

After two exhausting days of debate, the councillors agreed that the new chief could only be appointed from the existing senior councillors in the area. There were five senior councillors and each wanted to be chief. The 26 councillors wanted to select the new chief immediately – but OST persuaded them of the need for proper community involvement and of the need to demonstrate a transparent approach.

Election logistics

The stage was set for the biggest logistical exercise that OST had undertaken. Seven thousand San

live within the Omaheke region and it was decided that 13 representative communities would act as delegates for the electorate in their area. The candidates would visit the village of each representative community, give their election pitch, and then each village would send two representatives to the election to cast the vote of that area – one village, one vote.

OST managed to scrounge an old minibus for a couple of weeks and four of the five candidates climbed aboard (the fifth had recently fallen sick with tuberculosis and died two months later). The week-long campaign tour began. Hundreds of people were given an opportunity to meet and question the candidates – an important development, as many San people had never met the previous chief nor been involved in appointing him.

Two weeks later, the day arrived for us to set off for the election site – a small village that was the home of the late chief, about 250 km from our offices over dirt roads. We picked up several community representatives along the way, with others making their own way there.

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Learn more about the San people at www.san.org.za

Nick Sireau/CIIR



Having their say: anti-war protesters took to the streets in London in February, 2003, to make their views known.

Bringing democracy home

Niall Cooper from Church Action on Poverty describes how disaffected voters and disenfranchised poor people are finding a political voice in the UK

MORE PEOPLE voted in last year's Big Brother TV polls than in the Scottish, Welsh or European elections. It seems there is a widening gulf between the citizen, disengaged from traditional forms of democratic involvement, and government.

Constituencies with the lowest turnouts at elections are usually located in deprived inner city areas. People living in poverty face many barriers when it comes to taking part in decision-making: not enough money; not enough information; not enough confidence. The main problem is that too often people experiencing poverty don't feel respected – and too often they aren't respected. Such attitudes effectively exclude people with direct experience of poverty from having any voice in public debate.

For many, the answer to the crisis of representative democracy lies with civil society and its potential for a revived public sphere – a space in which multiple, collective aspirations can be freely deliberated and formed

into a powerful resource for influencing political decisions.

Turning the tables

At Church Action on Poverty, we realised by the early 1990s that it was not enough to just speak on behalf of the poor. We had to create space for people in poverty to speak for themselves.

We sought to do this by organising 'poverty hearings' across the UK. Poverty hearings are about turning the tables. Those who normally talk about 'the poor' – bishops, politicians, business leaders, journalists – are invited to attend the event as listeners. Those who are normally talked about have their chance to speak, from firsthand experience of poverty, to those in positions of power and authority in the church and beyond.

We moved on to explore ways of enabling people in poverty to engage more directly with the powers that shape their lives, from local authorities through to national government. In doing so, we have increasingly sought to apply participatory methods developed in the global South.

Community power

One example is the Community Pride initiative in Manchester and Salford. Over the past four years, Community Pride has helped develop a network of community

activists across the city, the 'cross-community gathering', and equipped them to take on the city councils; to negotiate directly with property developers wishing to take over and regenerate their estates; and to develop strong participatory community networks rooted in the experiences of local neighbourhoods.

Community Pride seeks to take this a stage further by enabling people to have a direct say in how the budget of the local authority is spent, through the so-called participatory budgeting (PB) approach first developed in Brazil.

In Porto Allegre, in northern Brazil, up to 10 per cent of the total population of the city participate in the annual budget setting process, through meetings at street, neighbourhood and city wide level. It has led to a shift in the spending priorities of the city from glamorous city centre projects to much more basic services – street paving, local health clinics and the like. What excites people about PB is that, unlike conventional representative democracy, there is a direct connection between participation in the PB process, and tangible outcomes: better, cleaner streets, more spending on local health facilities.

We aren't quite that far on in the UK yet. But Community Pride has convinced Salford City Council to pilot the use of participatory budgeting in 2004 – with one million pounds up for grabs.

These efforts are revitalising democracy at local level – but to go further, we need to encourage the political elite to re-connect with the realities of the street and the ideas of the real poverty experts. The crunch question now is: how willing are the politicians to genuinely listen, engage, share power and square the circle of representative and participatory democracy?

Niall Cooper is national coordinator of Church Action on Poverty (UK).

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Visit the Church Action on Poverty website: www.church-poverty.org.uk

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The articles by Jorge Cela, Amran Ali Mahmoud and Niall Cooper are based on papers delivered at the CIIR seminar 'Roadmaps to democracy' held in London in October, 2003. Full texts of the papers can be found on the CIIR website: www.ciir.org

Strength in adversity

Papuan women are taking a lead in working for freedom through peaceful means, writes **Catherine Scott**

WEST PAPUAN WOMEN, by their own admission, have a hell of a life. Despite this, says Fenny Mahuze, a member of the women's group Solidaritas Perempuan Papua (SPP – Papuan Women's Solidarity), 'We have love in our hearts, and our job is to support women everywhere in Papua.'

That they need this support is beyond question. During my visit last September to this vast, beautiful and largely unknown land in eastern Indonesia, I encountered a huge range of pent-up emotion. From the quiet determination of the independence movement, to the veiled admissions on the part of Javanese missionaries that Papuans do not feel like Indonesians, to the desperate and drunken casualties of the government's wilful neglect visible everywhere on the streets of Jayapura, it is clear that the lid could blow on Papua, as it did in Aceh a year ago.

I wanted to hear from Papuan women themselves about how they cope with the tensions caused by the policies of the Indonesian government towards its reluctant but resource-rich eastern-most province. Papua was annexed by Jakarta in 1969 against the wishes of the majority of a population which did not even receive a vote. Since then the

Jakarta government and army have plundered its natural resources, and left the largely Melanesian population to rot.

The women I met from SPP – young women and seasoned veterans, from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds – are a strong and colourful mix. But strength seems pretty much a prerequisite for survival for women in Papua – for it is they, above all, who are picking up the pieces of Jakarta's contradictory and failed policies over Papua.

In 1999, inspired by the East Timorese, 100 Papuan leaders went to Jakarta and demanded independence. They were instead offered a special autonomy package which the Indonesian military, and some politicians, have ever since been trying to bury.

The women despair at the lack of investment in health services and education, despite increased money coming in under the special autonomy arrangements. SPP member Yusan Yiblo laments: 'Many of our people, especially women, are leaving school still illiterate.'

Another member, Corry Siregar Alhamid, adds: 'More women are being beaten by men than ever, because men are drinking the money. There are so many examples of alcohol-induced

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Read more on Papua at www.westpapua.net including contact details for Papua support campaigns

domestic violence. Women in parliament have not been able to do anything about it – there are so few of them – only three out of 45.'

'Special autonomy has divided Papua,' explains Corry. 'It has caused a split.' That is putting it mildly. Two extra battalions of soldiers were recently dispatched to Papua, on the pretext of keeping the peace between factions of the government's own making. In practice, they will probably do the exact opposite. The terror is there, only partially hidden. In this small group of 15 or so women, at least three were widows whose husbands had died in



Members of the women's group SPP, including (from left) Fenny Mahuze, Corry Siregar Alhamid and Abina Wasanggai.

altercations with the military or the police. Many have experienced violence by the military and security forces, including rape.

'The objectives of our struggle,' explains Abina Wasanggai, secretary of SPP, 'are simply to have our rights and dignity as women created by God acknowledged and accepted. We crave freedom of movement, and a better life for our children in our own land.'

'We don't want an Aceh situation,' adds Corry; 'we want to use the SPP system to our advantage and work for peace. Even if we have freedom, we will still have to live with the Indonesians.'

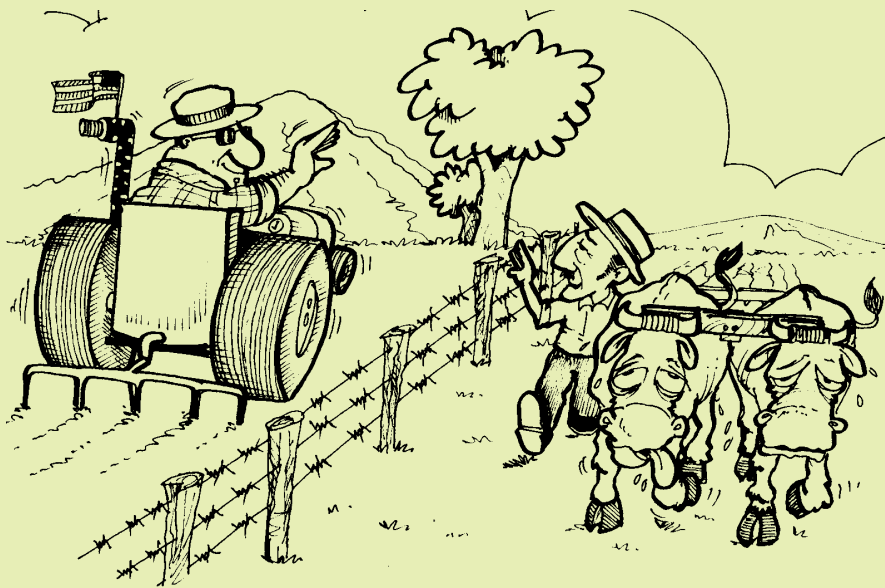
'The problem is that the Papua situation is not well understood outside – even in other parts of Indonesia. We want to work for freedom through peaceful means. But we need your help.'

Catherine Scott is CIIR's programme manager for Asia.

Action on Papua

CIIR members can support Papuans by writing to the UK government and asking it to:

- press the government of Indonesia to implement the special autonomy law which was offered to Papuans in 2001; to curb the ongoing human rights abuses committed by the military; and to prosecute human rights abusers before impartial courts and independent judges
- ensure that British investment in Papua – particularly through BP's Tangguh gas project in Bintuni Bay – does not contribute to human rights violations by security forces, deals fairly with people who are resettled, and uses appropriate compensation mechanisms.



Unequal partners

The US is intent on pushing through an unfair trade agreement that threatens the livelihoods of Central American farmers, writes **Elisabet Lopez**

COWS IN THE UNITED STATES have a higher income than most people in Nicaragua. According to Nicaraguan economist and sociologist Oscar Rene Vargas, US cows are subsidised at US\$2 per day, while 75 per cent of the Nicaraguan people live on less than US\$2 a day.

Vargas made the comparison to highlight the inequality between the partners to the proposed Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). The trade and investment agreement is being negotiated between the US and five Central American countries, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica: in other words, between the world's largest, most powerful economy and (with the exception of Costa Rica) some of the poorest countries in the world.

The leaders of these countries present CAFTA as a unique opportunity for economic growth and development in the region. Yet there are several reasons why this trade agreement will exacerbate poverty and inequality. Chief among these is the fact that the agreement fails to take into account the high socio-economic vulnerability of these Central American countries, where the majority of people live in poverty and depend on subsistence agriculture.

These are the people who will suffer most from the dislocations that inevitably accompany the liberalisation of markets. CAFTA is not a free trade agreement but a highly distorted contract under which the US subsidises its few agricultural corporate producers to the tune of billions of dollars a year while demanding immediate, unfettered market access to Central American countries. In these countries, the majority of people are dependent on low-scale and subsistence agriculture and receive no support from their respective governments: no subsidies, no access to credit, no safety nets, no minimum guaranteed prices.

Subsidies vs livelihoods

The consequences for the food security and livelihoods of millions of Central Americans will be catastrophic, just as they were for thousands of Mexican maize farmers after a free trade agreement was negotiated between Canada, the US and Mexico. Opening markets to subsidised US agricultural produce will put millions of small farmers out of business because they will be unable to compete with artificially cheap imports. In the words of María, a campesina in Gracias, Honduras: 'This agreement will mean that we will neither

Level playing field? A cartoon from a booklet on free trade agreements produced by Equipo Maíz, a non-governmental organisation in El Salvador specialising in popular education.

be able to sell our products nor afford to buy the imported ones.'

In the absence of a significant industrial base that could provide alternative sources of employment, these farmers will have little choice but to emigrate to cities (joining the thousands of urban destitute people trying to eke out a living) or attempt to emigrate illegally to the US, with the human misery that this entails.

Stopping the juggernaut

The importance of CAFTA to US interests is shown by the way the agreement is being pushed through with a previously unheard of sense of urgency: negotiations started in January 2003 with the final round held in December 2003.

Despite this steamroller approach, resistance to CAFTA has been strong and widespread. On the first day of negotiations in January 2003, thousands of people blockaded highways, factories and bridges in El Salvador. Campaigns have run throughout the year in Central America and the US. In September, thousands of Nicaraguans together with delegations from El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala handed a joint letter to the president of the Nicaraguan national assembly demanding a moratorium on implementation of CAFTA until thorough studies have been made about its implications.

It remains to be seen whether this opposition will lead to a departure from the US tradition of riding roughshod over the wishes of the Central American people. But for these people, in Oscar Rene Vargas's words, 'to accept CAFTA would be to accept a treaty between an elephant and an ant; what the US produces in one day it takes Nicaragua six months to produce'.

Elisabet Lopez is CIIR's environmental advocacy officer.

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For more information on CAFTA visit the US-based website www.stopcafta.org or try www.cispes.org (the website of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador).

Buy fair trade products, because then you can be sure that small producers are getting a fair deal.

No go zone for GMOs

Latin American countries must not become a dumping ground for genetically modified foods, argues **Julio Sanchez**

FOR YEARS the proponents of biotechnology and genetically modified seeds have claimed they will increase crop yields, use fewer agrochemicals and insecticides, protect the environment and bring an end to the problem of hunger in the world.

In spite of these grandiose claims, the truth is that up to now most of the innovations of agricultural biotechnology have been directed towards the economic benefit of the multinational giants of the genetic engineering industry.

At the very least, these companies – and their supporters in the US government – have failed to convince the rest of the world of the supposed benefits of genetically modified foods. Many countries throughout the world, from Brazil and Paraguay to members of the European Union, have imposed restrictions or even a moratorium on the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

The right to choose

Despite this suspicion, and even opposition, GMOs are sneaking into the food chain around the world. There are serious problems, particularly for organic farmers, of contamination of their crops by genetically modified crops grown in nearby fields; while genetically modified elements have recently been identified in food provided as aid to Guatemala, Nicaragua and Bolivia.

Marilyn Zak, director of USAID/Nicaragua, commented: 'These foods

are the same as those that 282 million north Americans consume daily. Eighty per cent of all the foods processed in the United States possibly contain some kind of genetically modified products.'

Statements like this suggest that we in the Latin American countries have no other alternative but to accept the idea of consuming these products. But at which moment in our history did we give the right to other countries to choose what we are going to eat?

The need for an open debate

The companies which promote genetically modified products in our countries, with an authority apparently superior to that of our governments, attack civil society organisations in Guatemala and Nicaragua. The reason is simply that these organisations demand respect for the basic constitutional rights of their countries, including the right to healthy food and to the choice of their food.

Latin American countries do indeed suffer hunger, but the strategy for reducing the number of hungry people should look at the true causes of hunger. It should look to a future where people not only have enough food, but are also healthy.

We need an open debate and more research about the risks of consuming genetically modified foods. We have already reached a point where the risks are becoming facts,

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Visit the Centro Humboldt website:
www.humboldt.org.ni

but no one has yet said: 'We take responsibility for the impact of these genetically modified products.'

The United States, as one of the creators of genetically modified foods, is not going to censure this technology, but on the contrary defend it. Latin American countries must therefore impose their own, strict regulatory systems, precisely because they are otherwise highly vulnerable – and because they want to become countries with better indicators of development.

The lack of rules

Many countries in Latin America lack consolidated rules of regulation, and precisely for this reason we are sent genetically modified products. Labelling, which is not a final solution but is a basic instrument, has been blocked by the government of the United States. What are they hiding that they do not want genetically modified products to be labelled?

The Latin American people must look to their history for the solution. The multinational companies and the overseas governments are not gods. They are human like us – and they will go as far as we let them. We should not believe in their omnipotence. The curse hanging over Latin America's people, by which we exchange gold for glass beads and hand over our riches for mirrors, has to be broken.

We must demand that our governments exercise their principal function: to defend the rights of the people who elected them.

Julio Sanchez is coordinator of the biodiversity programme of Centro Humboldt/Friends of the Earth Nicaragua. Centro Humboldt is an environmental non-governmental organisation in Nicaragua.

Children with disabilities – and their parents – are finding the strength to stand up to discrimination, writes **Irene Banda** in Zimbabwe

Standing proud

SOMANDLAUYAZI NDLOVU, 25, is an outgoing Zimbabwean youth who likes to sing in church. He also has cerebral palsy. 'Some people cannot accept me,' he says. 'I cannot speak properly and they advise me to stay at home. Some of them, including my relatives, do not welcome me in their home.'

'But I'm not shy to speak up and say my views, even if I'm aware that some people will frown at me. I know my rights and how to stand up for them on my own.'

Ndlovu has found the encouragement to speak up for himself through his involvement with the Bulawayo branch of the Zimbabwe Parents of Children

Caroline Mbangeni's son Ishmael, now four, has mild cerebral palsy. 'When my son was born my husband and in-laws blamed me for delivering a child with disabilities,' she says. 'I was hopeless. I spent nights and nights blaming myself and trying to find a solution.'

'It was only when I became a member of ZPCDA that I realised that I was not alone – and that disability is not caused by witchcraft. Interaction with other ZPCDA members made me come to terms with my situation. It also empowered me to go and educate my husband and in-laws.'

Ishmael received physiotherapy from an early age, so that now he can walk, although balancing is still a problem. 'I know the rights of my child: he is now at school,' says Mbangeni. 'But a challenge for my child and me for the future is ensuring that he gets into an integrated mainstream school. He is still discriminated against. Society does not easily accept our disabled children.'

Fighting discrimination

Nevertheless, the days when parents of children with disabilities hid their children from the general public – when disability was seen as a curse from God or the spirits – are gone. Today, organisations like ZPCDA are playing a crucial role in the life of families of children with disabilities.

The Bulawayo branch of ZPCDA has a membership of 165 parents, nearly all of them women, and nearly half of them single parents. The socio-economic environment in Zimbabwe is at its worst due to inflation and the high cost of living coupled with a shortage of basic commodities and fuel. However, members of the ZPCDA Bulawayo branch are still determined to help their children develop their full potential.

Through advocacy, skills training, mutual sharing of experiences and ideas, parents are able to address the

challenges that they face: discrimination, lack of appropriate services and stigma. Their children are going to school, and the project has established a strong relationship with the city council and other local leaderships.

Living with Trust

Susan Mlandeli, 35, is the mother of Trust, who is seven years old and suffers from severe cerebral palsy. She learnt of ZPCDA when she was attending a rehabilitation clinic at Mpilo hospital in

'I now realise that children with disabilities have rights just like any other child'

Bulawayo. In those days, Trust had severe behaviour problems, 'but now he is a peaceful child who smiles sweetly all the time', says Mlandeli. Trust now goes to the ZPCDA-Jairos Jiri integrated pre-school and is the proud owner of a wheelchair.

Mlandeli says that in the early days, just being with other ZPCDA members experiencing the same problems was a great help. 'My main challenge now is being a lodger,' she says. 'The attitudes of landlords make our lives complicated. We are forced to move from place to place for they do not accept nor understand the disability of our child.'

'My membership with ZPCDA has cemented my determination to fight for the rights of children with disabilities and bring awareness to the general public on the plight that we face as parents of disabled children. I now realise that children with disabilities have rights just like any other child.'

Irene Banda is a CIIR/ICD development worker with ZPCDA in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Irene is from Malawi.



Ron Norgard/CIIR

Speaking up: Somandlauyazi Ndlovu (right) talks to Chipho Phiri, secretary of ZPCDA Bulawayo.

with Disabilities Association (ZPCDA). 'The best event in my life since I became a member of ZPCDA was to develop the capacity to represent myself and participate in community activities without the assistance of my parents, who are not very supportive of my well-being,' he says.

Coming to terms

Like Ndlovu's parents, many parents of disabled children in Zimbabwe find it hard to accept their child's disability.

country profile: Somaliland

War

Somaliland, situated on the Horn of Africa and formerly a British protectorate, was first granted independence in 1960. When neighbouring Somalia obtained its independence from Italy shortly afterwards, the two states joined together to form the Republic of Somalia.

The country disintegrated into a decade-long internal war during the regime of Siad Barre in the 1980s. The people of Somaliland experienced more than three years of bitter fighting from 1988-91, resulting in the deaths of nearly 60,000 people, massive displacement both internal and to other countries, and a near total destruction of infrastructure and public services.

Reconstruction

The Republic of Somaliland was formed in 1991 after separating from southern Somalia. Following a period of inter-clan conflict, the people have settled internal disputes using traditional peace-building methods, and they have started to rehabilitate and reconstruct their damaged country.

A stable administration has been formed, with a smooth transition of leadership when Dahir Riyale took over following the death of former president Mohamed Ibrahim Egal in May 2002. President Riyale was re-elected in April 2003 by the narrow margin of 80 votes.

Development

A broad range of civil society organisations has emerged in response to the development needs of the population, contributing to a dynamic environment for change. Women's groups are particularly active. The

Facts and Figures

Statistics for Somaliland alone are not available. Some indicators, taken from statistics for Somalia as a whole, including the area covered by the Republic of Somaliland, are given below.

Average life expectancy	47 years
Infant mortality	132 deaths per 1,000 live births
HIV/AIDS prevalence	1%
Adult literacy	17%
Male adult literacy	22%
Female literacy (aged 15 and above)	12%

Statistics derived from the UNDP Human Development Report on Somalia 2001

written media is vibrant, and human rights are openly discussed.

Prior to the war, Somalia was considered one of the poorest countries in Africa. Somaliland today remains desperately poor.

Self-reliance

With no international recognition, Somaliland is not eligible for grants or loans from multi-lateral or bi-lateral donors, and investment is limited. Despite this, enormous advances have been made through the Somali emphasis on a culture of self-reliance. Support from Somalis in the diaspora has been of crucial importance in providing funding to re-establish health and education services.

The majority of the Somali people are

pastoral nomads. Camels (the traditional currency of prestige and wealth), sheep, goats and some cattle are raised in large numbers across the plains and rangelands of Somaliland and provide daily subsistence and the economic backbone of the country.

Livelihoods

An estimated 60 per cent of the population depends directly or indirectly on livestock and livestock products for their livelihood. Agriculture provides subsistence for nearly 20 per cent of the country's population. Crops grown include sorghum, maize, fruit and vegetables. Somaliland is also a producer of frankincense.

The informal economy and trade is strong and the results can be seen in the variety of goods available within the major urban areas. However, unemployment is high and there are few formal job opportunities for young people. The eastern regions of Somaliland are also currently experiencing a severe drought.

CIIR/ICD in Somaliland

CIIR/ICD has nine development workers in post in Somaliland, working on strengthening the health system, fighting HIV/AIDS, and capacity-building for NGOs and women's organisations. Our programme work seeks to establish links among civil society and human rights organisations in all parts of the Somali speaking territories.

Nick Sireau/CIIR



A sign of self-reliance: students at a school for deaf children run by CIIR/ICD partner, the Activists' Network of Disabled Persons.



Denis Hawes with his wife Sarah, pictured in Yemen during their time as CIIR/ICD development workers.

Taking sides

Working with our partners overseas was a pleasure and a privilege, CIIR's former programmes director Denis Hawes tells Alastair Whitson

EVEN 25 YEARS AFTERWARDS, there is a gleam in Denis Hawes's eyes when he recalls his time as a CIIR/ICD development worker, alongside his wife Sarah, in Yemen. 'We lived in a small village in the mountains, four hours' climb from the nearest road,' he says. 'It was basic living – no running water, no electricity, no mod cons – but it was lovely.'

Denis and Sarah provided training in primary health care, but the learning was a two-way process. He still treasures the 'human lessons' that the people they lived with passed on to him. 'The rural Yemenis have an amazing loyalty and generosity,' he says, adding: 'not exactly the profile of the Middle East that we are constantly fed these days'.

The passion for learning and sharing

that Denis discovered in Yemen was also what sustained him throughout his subsequent career as a manager for CIIR's overseas programmes. His experience in Yemen convinced him that CIIR's work should not be driven by 'our agenda' but by 'that of our partners'.

'We are transferring skills to empower them, so we have to be listening, not imposing. Even when a change happens we can't see it as just being linked to our input. We are always just part of this change,' he says.

A manager's job back in London, 'one remove' away from the important work at project level, was not without its frustrations for Denis. 'Report writing always has to say what is our input, what is our impact. It's almost like it's the wrong question – asking what difference did we make. Our partners are the main actors, and they should take the credit for what they are doing; we are background players.'

Key qualities

Such humility is, says Denis, a key quality for a development organisation. Another is courage: the courage to think boldly about the reasons for underdevelopment. 'It's not enough to deal with the symptoms; we must also look at the causes,' he says.

'CIIR has always had a very strong analysis, an understanding and a bravery to talk about the actual situation of injustice in the world,' he says. He cites CIIR's strong advocacy programmes over the years, such as

support for the anti-apartheid movement in southern Africa and liberation movements in Latin America, and sees the current policy of bringing our advocacy and skill-share work together as 'a very positive way forward'.

The third crucial quality for organisations like CIIR is, says Denis, patience. 'Real development can't be pushed and can't be imposed. There is often a temptation to try and rush things through, and we do bring new ideas, but we must allow our partners to make these their own.'

These qualities of humility, courage and patience are epitomised by Denis himself. In his years in what he calls 'a desk job', what kept him going was visiting the programmes in the field. On those visits, 'you see what a privilege it is to work with the partners that we've got,' he says.

Looking for improvement

You also see what the problems are – and how they can be overcome. 'We've got a very uneven society and a very exploitative society, where the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. In a sense that is terribly depressing,' says Denis.

'But when you actually go and visit the country programmes you see an optimism in the partners, where they

'Real development can't be pushed and can't be imposed'

can see spaces for improvement that almost look impossible for us. In some of the countries, like El Salvador, Nicaragua, East Timor and Somaliland, you see them coming out of conflict situations that seem horrendous – and yet being able to work constructively, to see opportunities and to think: "this can get better".

'As you see the world getting more and more uneven, it is imperative to continue to work on their side and be on their side in that uneven struggle.'

Denis Hawes worked with CIIR for 25 years before retiring in October 2003. Alastair Whitson is CIIR's senior editor.

Christopher Rowland argues that all Christians should be inspired by 'the democracy of participation'

Building blocks of democracy

THE HUMAN NEEDS and the demands for a just ordering of society that brought liberation theology to birth are still with us. Alongside massive poverty and injustice, the issue of equal participation in society and its development still demands our attention.

My theological outlook was formed by my experience of the Basic Ecclesial Communities in Brazil. In these communities, the Bible – read, acted on and wrestled with – formed the catalyst of a life of commitment to the practice of peace and justice.

One of the things that made a lasting impression on me during my first visit to Brazil 20 years ago was the democracy of participation existing at the grassroots level in these communities. The empowerment of ordinary people led to an opportunity for self-determination.

Voices and stories

Here, it seemed to me, were the building blocks of democracy. In a disciplined way, a Christian church was actually finding ways of enabling ordinary people to set the agenda of their lives. This process was democratic in the way it embraced all concerned, and the way in which the voices and stories of all the people were heard.

This was the very antithesis of a top down model of church or society, in

which a truth is handed down from above, telling people what they should do. None were excluded from the debate, as God's Spirit was not the property of an elite but had been poured out on all flesh. Anyone might be expected to contribute an insight about the Bible or about the God who speaks through human experience.

Reading and participating

Since my return from Brazil I have discovered much about the antecedents of liberation theology. The happiest part of my work as an academic has been learning about the Anabaptists, Beguins and radical Franciscans in the late medieval period; the Levellers and the Diggers in 17th century England; and more recently the grassroots movements of contextual theology which have sprung up in many parts of the world.

At the Reformation, Anabaptists recovered the vision of 'God with us' – of a Spirit who inspires all and from whom insight into the ways of God may be expected – as ordinary people met to engage with the Bible and make connections between it and their everyday lives.

This way of reading the Bible has its origins in the Bible itself, where Paul's communities were participative affairs (1 Corinthians 14). This story of

participative church life, in which the work of the divine Spirit poured out on all flesh, is fundamental to the gospel. In church and society, making real a participative democracy is a live issue.

Grassroots experience

The experience of the grassroots church in Latin America has much to offer us as we think about how the Christian churches may contribute to the building of democracy. The prominent place given to this experience ensures that the stories of ordinary people are the proper subject of discussion and policy.

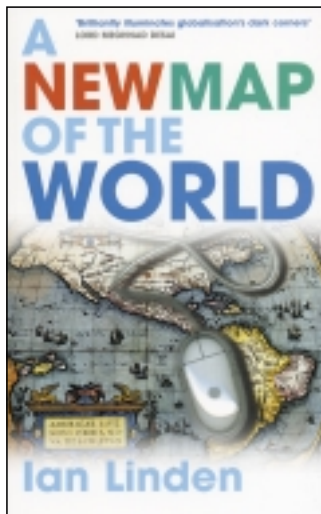
I do not think it is an accident that 20 years after I witnessed for the first time those participative groups at work, there should be a government in Brazil whose president, Luiz Inácio da Silva ('Lula'), and party, the Workers' Party, has been so rooted in the same kind of popular movement as the Basic Ecclesial Communities.

This participative process is at the heart of democracy. There are no short cuts or easy answers as we seek ways and means to encourage all to find their voices. Those who would short-circuit or inhibit discussion put a stumbling block in the way of the work of the Spirit, with whose work all Christians ought to be identifying.

Christopher Rowland is Dean Ireland's Professor of Exegesis of Holy Scripture at the University of Oxford. His book Radical Christian Writings: A Reader, written with Andrew Bradstock of the United Reformed Church, includes some of the story of attempts to build democracy among Christian groups down the centuries.

Participation in practice: grassroots communities working together, as shown on an embroidered tapestry from Peru.





A New Map of the World by Ian Linden

A number of reformist political leaders on Europe's centre-left have taken to describing their key role as one of 'paranoia management'. The phenomenon of globalisation, they insist, is not the product of a criminal conspiracy between crooked politicians, the chief executives of multinational companies, key officials in the IMF and the World Bank, and the fat cat controllers of the international capital

flows. Rather, they aver, it is merely a condition. Something more like the weather – to which we can all learn to adapt.

A somewhat sterile debate has developed between these leaders on the one hand, speaking from on high, and the 'paranoid tendency' on the streets, represented by anti-capitalist protestors, the more strident advocates working in NGOs and, not least, by George Monbiot.

With the publication of *A New Map of the World*, that debate may now cease. Right from the outset, Ian Linden transcends its terms in a trice, and lifts the consideration of globalisation onto a higher plane of sophistication. Here it can be viewed in all its complexity, emerging as neither the fruit of conspiracy nor as a necessarily unassailable reality.

Sophistication, however, doesn't imply sanguinity. Linden issues a warning that 'the world is on a trajectory that threatens the security, freedom and human rights of all of us, not just the poor'.

Nor does it imply moral insouciance. Linden is absolutely clear about what structures are unjust, and why. He produces a series of carefully framed snapshots that show up the deficiencies

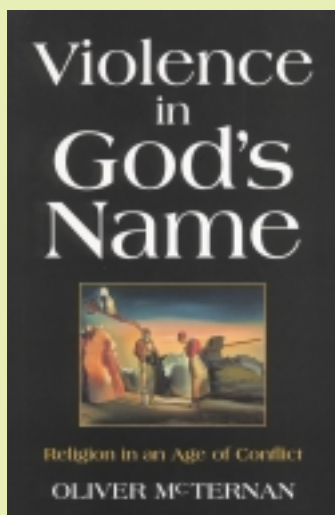
of attempts to fuel development with prescriptions drawn from classical-liberal economics. And he exposes the underbelly of globalisation – drugs, people-trafficking and corruption.

So, what is to be done? Better global governance that acts in the interests of all the human family? For sure. But Linden's crucial perception is that just institutions require virtuous people to build and staff them – people who can make correct moral decisions. Accordingly, political parties and civil society organisations must become vocational schools of prudential wisdom.

When Linden, a former director of CIIR, first signs up St Thomas Aquinas to the cause of a new, progressive and ethical politics, it seems like a mischievous provocation aimed at ultra-conservative Catholics who have long claimed St Thomas as their patron; but one soon realises that he is not joking at all, he is onto something original and very important.

A New Map of the World by Ian Linden, Darton, Longman and Todd, ISBN 0 232 52442 4, £10.95 paperback

Reviewed by Dennis Sewell. Dennis is a BBC journalist and a member of the CIIR Board of Trustees.



Violence in God's Name by Oliver McTernan

When reaching the end of this fascinating book, one needs to take a deep breath and return to its splendid foreword. In this way one is able to see how faithfully Oliver McTernan has fulfilled his profound intention of helping us to come to a deeper understanding of contemporary violence.

In an analysis based on personal experience as a priest, a broadcaster and a 'peace activist in the international arena', McTernan shows the distinct and crucial role of religion as a source of motivation for violence, and as potentially a means of eliminating it.

We are all involved today – emotionally if not otherwise – in a reaction to what seems at first sight to be mindless terrorism across the world. There is no single cause for the violence, whether greed for land or resources, scandalous poverty and ignorance, or avoidable disease and unbearable debt.

But we do need alerting to the central place of religious zeal in underpinning so much of the violence.

McTernan rightly proclaims that we need more than mild tolerance of one religion for another; we need a deep understanding and acceptance of one another in our immense internal diversities.

There are signs, however overdue, that more people want to look beyond nation-state thinking in confronting contemporary violence. McTernan makes a clear case for a much deeper awareness of the factor of religion, and probably therefore of the need for faith-based diplomacy. His book is essential reading for our time.

Violence in God's Name: Religion in an Age of Conflict by Oliver McTernan, Darton, Longman and Todd, ISBN 0 232 52494 7, £10.95 paperback

Reviewed by CIIR member Owen Hardwicke.