

summer 2005

interact



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Participating in democracy

Also in this issue:
Challenges in Yemen
Environment in Honduras

**NEW BOOK
FROM CIIR**



Independent women

The story of women's activism in East Timor

By Irena Cristalis and Catherine Scott

Independent women is about the activism of East Timorese women and their part in the struggle for liberation from Indonesian rule. It shows how participation in this struggle empowered women and set them on a path towards greater equality with men.

The book explores the social and political dynamics that shaped the newly-independent nation, and compares the experience of women in East Timor with the experience of women in Cambodia, Mozambique and Namibia – countries that also endured periods of conflict followed by a transition to independence.

Based on extensive research and interviews with East Timorese women activists, *Independent women* provides a fascinating insight into the lives and motivations of these courageous women. It will be essential reading for anyone interested in the history and development of East Timor, the role of women in independence struggles, or women's rights in general.

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CIIR Annual General Meeting Friday 7th October 2005

The interfaith challenge

Working together for peace and development

Dr Chandra Muzaffar

London Voluntary Sector Resource Centre
356 Holloway Road
London N7 6PA

All welcome

The AGM will start at 6pm, with Dr Chandra speaking at 7pm
A buffet supper will be served at 8.30 pm

Dr Chandra Muzaffar is a Malaysian Muslim scholar, activist
and head of the International Movement for a Just World.

CIIR
CHANGING MINDS ● CHANGING LIVES

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editorial

Participating in democracy

Standing alone, people's voices will not be heard. Together they have a chance. And they have more of a chance if they can seize opportunities to participate in the democratic or decision-making process.

CIIR/ICD has made promoting civil society participation one of its three strategic aims over the next five years. This edition of Interact looks at some of the ways in which people in the countries where CIIR/ICD works are already getting involved and participating – sometimes, as the story on community radio in Ecuador shows, with amazing results.

The ability to 'participate in democracy' is also a key issue for those of us living in the global North, where the structures of formal democracy have over the years managed to largely refine out the voice of the people. Consequently people fed up with the way the world is being run are turning to other methods of making their views known.

Thanks to the participation of millions of ordinary people in campaigns like Make Poverty History, our leaders are having to sit up and take notice. The articles in this Interact show the inspiration that we can gain from people in the global South. We in the North must keep the pressure up at our end, if we are to play our part in making another world possible.

Editor

Cover picture: A young boy sporting a sticker for Olandina Caiero, a candidate in the 2001 elections in East Timor. Photo: Irene Slegt/CIIR.

The journey to development



Nick Sireau/CIIR

Boys on the roadside between Sana'a and Hodeidah.

Joy Jakosalem-Balane, from the Philippines, reflects on her first few weeks as a development worker in Yemen

ARRIVED IN SANA'A, the capital of Yemen, on 7 February, together with my son Jon River. The journey from the Philippines was a long one, but it was only the start of my journey – a journey into Yemeni culture on which I would learn much, not just about the country, but also about myself.

I have two words to describe the Yemenis – 'very warm'. In general the people are welcoming and friendly. I am always struck by the closeness between Yemeni men. They are very expressive, especially when greeting each other, kissing each other's cheeks and even giving each other a hug. I also see a lot of men friends walking along the streets holding hands. In my country, this would be taboo.

Challenges

Before I came to Yemen, I had the pre-conceived idea that Arab culture is very strict, particularly concerning women. Shortly after I arrived, on a visit to the coastal city of Hodeidah, I wore for the first time the *balto*, a traditional costume for Yemeni women. Yet Yemenis are far from the Arab culture that I originally imagined, and I am glad about this. While I

can see that Yemeni women are somewhat restricted in public life (compared to my Filipino culture), I also see several Yemeni women working outside the confines of their homes – particularly in development work. This for me is very positive and a good start for putting forward the ideas of gender and development.

I will be working on CIIR/ICD's capacity building project for civil society organisations. There is a great challenge ahead in building the capacity of local organisations and of civil society in general. Most non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are still in the initial phase of formation, and will need a lot of support in the areas of organisational and human development.

Potential

At the same time, the local NGOs in Yemen have great potential. For one thing, Islam has built in among its followers the value of giving to the poor. Most NGOs have received contributions from individual businessmen for their charitable work. This practice is favourable to NGOs and not something I have seen (at least to this degree) in the Philippines.

Some fellow development workers from other international organisations have jokingly told me that there are several kinds of NGOs operating in Yemen, such as 'suitcase NGOs', 'one-man NGOs', 'mobile phone NGOs' and 'plastic bag NGOs'. Initially I laughed at this, but it made me reflect that these are the kinds of NGOs that I might be working with. What lies ahead is indeed very challenging and will no doubt require a lot of creativity. I hope and pray that I can cope with what is required and needed from me.

Opportunity

I have always wanted to work outside my own country, so I am very glad of this opportunity to take part in catalysing change in Yemen. However, coming here meant that I had to leave my family in the Philippines. This was a difficult decision to make, but I am fortunate to have a very supportive husband who urged me to take this opportunity. His constant support and reassurance that he and my two other kids are fine in the Philippines keeps me strong.

At times I wonder how many other women like me have dreamed of working in a foreign country but cannot do so because of their family and the kids. But bringing my son Jon River here with me has been a great help. Working in a foreign country and in a different culture can be lonely, but having Jon River to go home to after work keeps that loneliness at bay.

Of course, I did not expect my experience in Yemen to be always an easy one. At times, I find solace in believing that during difficult times a person's courage, creativity and spirit are put to the test. I believe we can come through this test, and that I and my son can be part of the journey to development of the Yemeni people through CIIR/ICD.

Joy Jakosalem-Balane is a CIIR/ICD development worker in Yemen. She is from the Philippines.



It's just me, what can I do?

MANY OF US are disappointed with the outcome of the G8 summit at Gleneagles. We all expected more from our leaders.

There can be no doubt that people have made their concerns known. Whether in the UK as a result of Make Poverty History, or elsewhere in the world through the Global Call to Action Against Poverty, people have found a real strength and force to their desire for a more just world. I hope that this energy and passion will not now turn to cynicism and despair. For, while the outcome from the leaders can be seen as a first step, much more needs to be done.

In recent months the campaign for change has massively increased awareness and discussion about issues of global poverty and development. CIIR has been involved in conferences, workshops and events both large and small that have sought to inspire, inform and mobilise people in the cause of Make Poverty History. These events give all of us the time and space to consider the issues in more depth and in a wider context than one usually gets from media coverage – including exploring what they mean to each of us in our daily lives.

Coming out of these events is a strong view that change must also happen at the individual level. Often people say, 'I am only me, what can I do?' It is easy to think that as individuals there is nothing we can do and that the power lies elsewhere. Yet while we can press for change at the macro policy level, we also have a range of opportunities as consumers, as educators, as people in networks and faith groups to affect how we live our lives.

In this area, I have noticed that people are much more aware that

We must all live out our solidarity with the people of the world, writes Christine Allen

there is a price to pay. At the moment, through unjust trade rules, post-colonial heritage and international institutions, it is the poor and the planet who pay the price for our wealth and our lifestyles here in the 'rich north'. The natural resources found in the 'poor south' are extracted and processed for the consumption of the rich at the expense very often of the locality. The campaign has raised awareness that it is this inequality and injustice that has to be addressed if poverty really, truly is to be made history.

We all need inspiration, dedication and support to respond to this challenge. One such inspiration is Fr José Andrés Tamayo, who came over to Europe at CIIR's invitation to speak at a conference on climate change held during the G8 and at other meetings.

From El Salvador originally, he works with a community in Olancho, Honduras, leading and supporting the community in their work to stop illegal loggers from devastating the forests in the locality. For Fr Tamayo, his commitment to life encompasses all of creation. The defence of our environment is the defence of life – not just because poor communities depend on the environment for their livelihoods, but because of the sacredness of creation itself.

He has witnessed the devastating effects of logging on the diverse Olancho landscape and seen the resultant poverty. He has seen its people intimidated, harassed and even murdered with the complicity of the logging companies who control the area. At one point there was a price put on Fr Tamayo's head. This is a



Barbara Wearne, a contributor to the CIIR G8 dream tree (see page 7): 'Campaigning since 1942. Keep it going. The clouds are breaking...'

reflection of the life of one of Fr Tamayo's fellow countrymen, Archbishop Oscar Romero. Fr Tamayo was once 'accused' of following in Romero's footsteps. 'I am,' he said, proudly.

'I know of many who have died in the struggle,' he said, 'and one feels impotent in the face of power.' Yet they are inspired to

It is the poor and the planet who pay the price for our wealth and our lifestyles here in the 'rich north'

continue in their struggle by their faith, their courage and their solidarity with one another – and knowing too of the solidarity that exists around the world.

So when I feel tempted to cynicism or despair, I remind myself of the courage and fortitude of people like Fr Tamayo. People who live out that call of the church to make their own the joys and hopes, sorrows and anxieties of the people of the world, especially those who are suffering.

Christine Allen is CIIR's executive director.

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See page 7 for more on Make Poverty History and the G8, page 12 for more on Fr Tamayo, and page 19 for more on Oscar Romero.

Faith groups lend support to West Papua

A NETWORK of faith based organisations has come together to support religious and traditional leaders in West Papua in promoting Papua as a land of peace, *writes Catherine Scott.*

The political situation in West Papua continues to result in violence and conflict. Sometimes this is deliberately provoked by acts of aggression perpetrated against the people by the Indonesian military, whose presence in the territory has recently been increased to a total of some 45-50,000 troops. The

In 2001, the territory was promised special autonomy in a law passed by the central government in Jakarta. This was to include the setting up of a local parliament and the allocation of 70 per cent of profits from the mining of its rich natural resources to development in the territory. This was seen by the military as a direct threat to its interests. The law as a consequence has never been properly implemented. Instead a more recent presidential decree has set about dividing the province into separate regions.

Religious leaders travelled to Geneva in March this year while Indonesia was chairing the 61st session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. The leaders met with a growing network of faith based organisations which has been meeting regularly to give international support and attention to the Land of Peace campaign.

A statement was released after the meeting entitled the 'Geneva Appeal on West Papua'. The statement has been widely circulated in many languages worldwide and calls upon the government of Indonesia to demilitarise, enter into dialogue with Papuans, implement the special autonomy law and grant Papuans their rights.

It further urges Indonesia to open up West Papua to visits from the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and to allow journalists and other foreign visitors free access to the territory.

The statement also calls upon people of faith to join the campaign. As Bishop Leo Laba Ladjar of the Catholic Diocese of Jayapura said in March 2005: 'The one thing we desire is to live with dignity as human beings; and to realise this, we want to create an atmosphere of justice and peace, which will enable the growth of the common good and welfare of our people.'

CIIR seeks new name

CIIR has embarked on a process of finding a new name for the organisation, and if all goes well hopes to unveil its new name in September, shortly before the Annual General Meeting.

CIIR's director of communications, Nick Sireau, explains: 'Times are changing fast and we need to reach out to new generations of members and supporters with our message of hope and justice. We need to communicate to young and old to attract them to our cause.'

CIIR's origins go back to 1940, when the organisation was set up by radical Catholics with the aim of denouncing fascism and promoting justice. Originally called the Sword of the Spirit, the name was changed to the Catholic Institute for International Relations in the 1960s to better reflect the international policy thinking that was then the focus of the organisation's work.

Since then the organisation has developed in new directions, pioneering new approaches in the fight against poverty through its model of sending development workers to work in partnership with local organisations in countries around the world.

Nick Sireau says: 'We need a new name that captures how the organisation has moved on. We are no longer an institute; nor do we focus on international relations. We are an international development agency at the cutting edge of development work at the grassroots.'

CIIR has therefore been carrying out a thorough process of research and creation in order to find a suitable new name. Mildred Nevile, a former general secretary of CIIR, commented: 'We changed our name before when the times required it. I think it's time we change it again to build on our success and attract a new generation of supporters.'

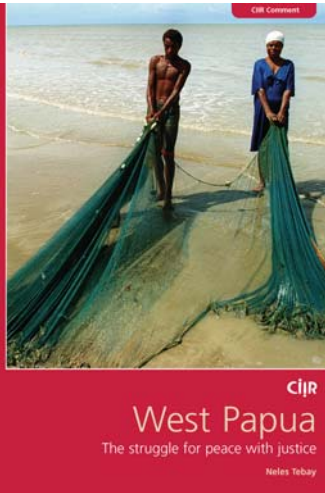
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Further details on the Papua Land of Peace campaign, as well as the full text of the 'Geneva Appeal on West Papua', are available at www.ciir.org along with suggestions for action.

high level of militarisation has resulted in ongoing human rights violations and killings of indigenous Papuans when they stand up for their rights as citizens of their own land.

West Papua was annexed by Indonesia in 1969 in what is increasingly acknowledged to have been a fraudulent, but nonetheless UN sanctioned, 'Act of Free Choice'. Most Papuans have not accepted Indonesian rule.

ciirresource



Find out more about West Papua by reading this CIIR Comment by Neles Tebay – download for free at www.ciir.org

Visit www.ciir.org for a full list of CIIR Comments

Campaigners urge leaders to go further on poverty

MAKE POVERTY HISTORY campaigners have in a statement expressed their disappointment that the leaders of the G8 'have chosen not to do all that campaigners insist is necessary to free people trapped in the prison of poverty'.

A statement issued by the Make Poverty History campaign says: 'The G8 have not met the challenge of trade justice.' Despite some hints that African countries may be allowed to set their own trade policies, the G8 through the World Trade Organisation is likely to continue to force open developing country markets.

'G8 leaders decided not to set a date for ending the export subsidies that destroy livelihoods of poor countries around the world,' says the Make Poverty History statement. 'By forcing free trade on poor countries, dumping agricultural products and not regulating multinational companies, they have chosen not to take the necessary decisions to make poverty history.'

The Make Poverty History statement says that the proposal by the G8 to cancel some of the debt owed by some countries 'is a small step compared to the giant leap that was called for'. On the proposed increase in aid announced by the G8, it says that while this will save lives 'this aid will still arrive five years too late and falls far short of the scale of aid that is needed to end poverty in the world's poorest countries.'

The campaign statement also regrets the failure to make progress on climate change.

In conclusion, the Make Poverty History campaigners say: 'Important steps have been taken ... But more action is urgently needed.'

'The people of the world are already on the road to justice. They expect their leaders to be with them.'

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Read the statement in full at www.makepovertyhistory.org

Jairo Rolong and Yvonne Pickering

Two CIIR/ICD development workers have died in separate road accidents in June and July.

Jairo Rolong died in an accident in June. He had been working with CIIR/ICD in Ecuador for eight years, including six years as a communications specialist with the Confederation of the Kichwa Peoples of Ecuador (Ecuarrunari). Jairo, who was from Colombia, was 43.

Humberto Cholando, president of Ecuarrunari, said: 'Jairo cooperated unconditionally and full-time with social organisations and the indigenous movement. We can testify that his commitment to the cause of the poorest and dispossessed was untiring and praiseworthy. His greatest dream was to see a new

and distinct country with more justice for everyone.'

Yvonne Pickering died in an accident in Namibia in July. She had been working since 2002 as coordinator of the regional education programme of the San Children's Access to Education Project of WIMSA (the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa). She has written inspiringly of her work in previous editions of *Interact* (summer 2004 and spring 2005). Yvonne, who was 61, was British.

Christine Allen, executive director of CIIR/ICD, said: 'Jairo and Yvonne were both very talented development workers, deeply committed to the rights of people who are excluded and marginalised. They will be sadly missed by all who knew them.'

What do you dream of?

Visit the CIIR dream tree at www.ciirg8.blogspot.com and add your comments on how to **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY**



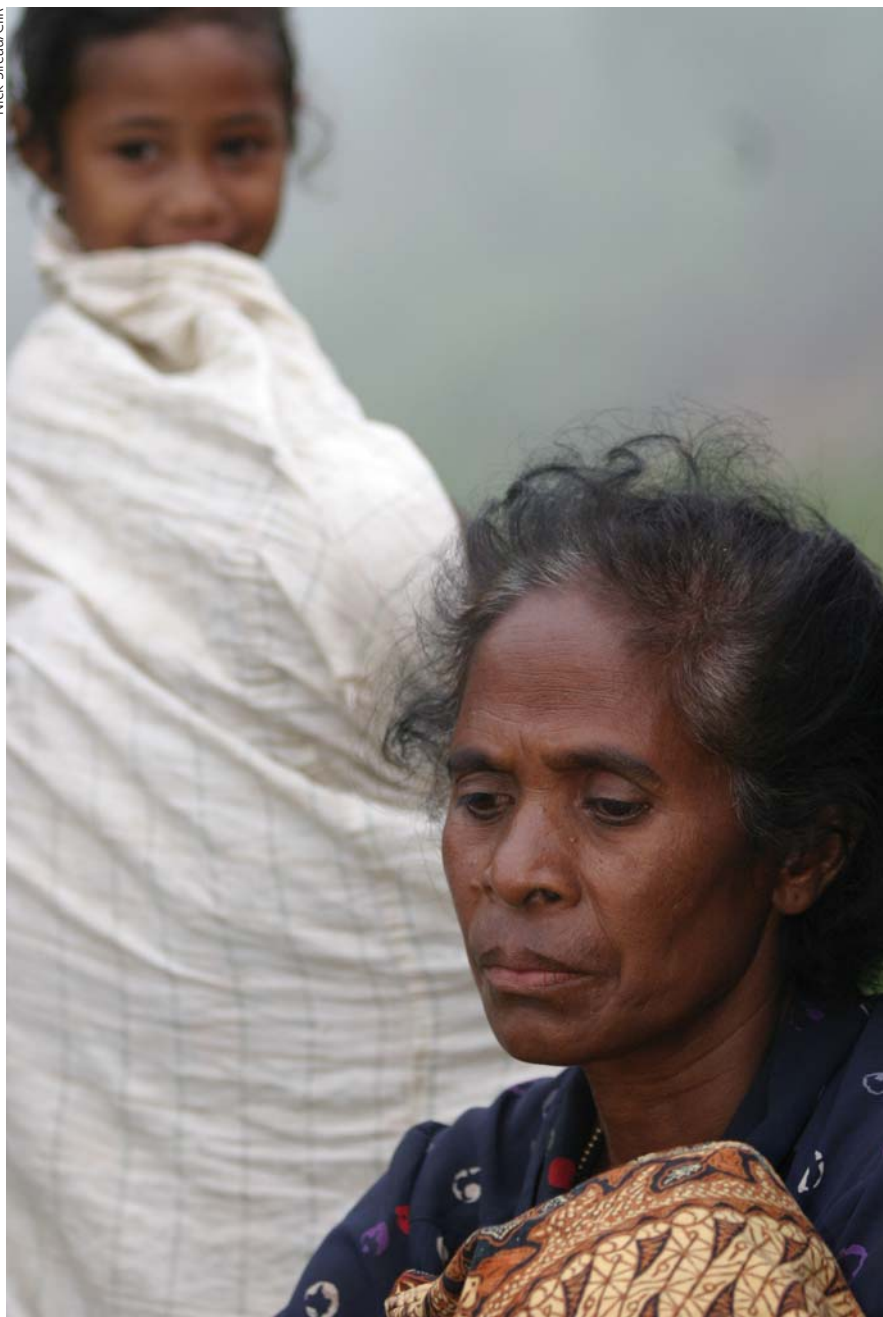
"Because believing is the first step for change and a better world"

Zara Benosa
(London)

See the hopes and dreams of people who contributed to the CIIR dream tree at the **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** G8 rally in Edinburgh at www.ciirg8.blogspot.com

Add your voice for a better world

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A woman from Aileu, East Timor.

No democracy without us

Ivete de Oliveira describes how women of Timor Leste (East Timor) are working to claim their place in local governance

AT 8.30 IN THE MORNING, the vehicle of the government's Office for the Promotion of Equality (OPE) pulled into Aileu. It was 28 May 2005 and we – myself from CIIR and two other trainers (one from OPE and one from the Women's Caucus) – arrived to hold leadership training in the district.

We headed directly to the Bombeiros building, where the training would be held. Gathered in the room were dozens of women. Most of them appeared to be in their 30s. The majority were housewives, but there were also teachers, social workers and farmers. All of them live in the different villages that make up the Aileu district.

As a nation committed to democratic principles, the government of Timor Leste is making serious efforts to give democracy meaning at the local level. One effort towards this is a programme of local elections to create a structure of governance at the level closest to the community.

These elections are intended to select representatives who will serve as village heads, neighbourhood leaders and on neighbourhood councils. These representatives originate from the locality and are elected directly by the local communities. Once appointed, representatives will work to coordinate agreed work programmes of the village council and establish mechanisms for consultation between the village and other layers of government. They will also work to create a community-based system of governance that can, among other things, resolve conflicts that arise in the community.

Opportunities

Seeing the opportunities related to this local process of democratisation, women's organisations have been trying to boost women's chances of actively participating and ultimately gaining leadership positions in their villages and communities.

The Women's Caucus, a prominent women's organisation, has been leading efforts to encourage women to take their place on the political stage. The Caucus has played two key roles. Firstly, in cooperation with the national

electoral commission and a national network to support local-level elections, it has undertaken campaigning and voter education in all 13 districts in Timor Leste.

Secondly, the Caucus has been holding leadership training for women who hope to run for election. This is no minor feat – even in this small country of Timor Leste where there are 13 districts, 60 sub-districts and more than 400 villages.

The series of local elections began in October 2004 and is expected to be completed in October 2005. The voter education programme has so far been held in 11 districts and the leadership training in eight districts. Our visit to Aileu was part of the programme of leadership training, which was sponsored by the European Commission through Unifem (the United Nations Development Fund for Women) in Timor Leste.

Enthusiasm

During the training, one thing was clear – there was no shortage of enthusiasm. Judging by the large number of women who turned out to attend the training, they clearly welcome the chance to run for election. The organisers had planned for 30 participants, but in the end 60 women attended. There was no end to their stream of questions, most often related to leadership, gender, politics and governance. The women were also keen to learn about campaign strategies and ways to win the support of traditional leaders, the church and their own families.

Maria Esposto, the trainer from the Women's Caucus, admitted: 'I have always found the participation and enthusiasm of the women of Timor Leste to be overwhelming. When we held training in Baucau, many women protested because there was a limit on the number of women who could participate.' Another trainer, Julieta Ferreira, added: 'We generally plan to have only 30 participants, but in the end up to 100 come along. Sometimes we have difficulty accommodating them all.'

The director of the Women's Caucus, Teresinha Cardoso, says the Caucus is inspired to meet this challenge by the high degree of



Ivete de Oliveira

enthusiasm and desire to lead among the women of Timor Leste. It is not only the trainers who work untiringly to encourage women to run for election. Participants also give each other a great deal of encouragement and even agree to try to persuade their families and communities to vote for fellow women candidates.

Support

Women in Aileu district have tried to learn from the experience of women in districts that have already held elections and who have found that women often lose out to 'the opposite sex'. They have learnt that it is important for women candidates to get the support of their husbands and other men in the community who are often more inclined to elect a male leader. They realise that women in other districts have not been able to reach their target for women to win 30 per cent of the positions up for election. So far, only six women have successfully been elected as village heads (compared to over 200 men), and only 15 women have won seats on neighbourhood councils.

Women are not so concerned about their position on the village advisory council. They are guaranteed by law at least three out of the seven seats, and one of these is reserved for a woman youth representative. The problem is, however, that in practice the make-up of these councils has not been in accordance with the law. In Bobonaro, for example, of the more

than 20 villages, only five of the councils have women (and even then, no more than one member). Meanwhile, in Ermera and Oecusse, three of the village councils have not appointed a woman youth representative.

Pressures have not only come from local communities, which tend to be very patriarchal, but also from political parties and powers. The local elections are regarded as a gauge of political strength and also as an entry ticket to general elections in 2007. Because of this, political parties have shown a keen interest in these local elections and sought to get 'their people' into power.

Ambition

These pressures, however, are not enough to discourage the ambition of the women of Timor Leste to come forward and put themselves in the running. An independent candidate for the position of village head, Tia Ana, confided during a break in the training: 'They [the ruling party] say that if I want to run in the election, I have to join their party. But I don't want to. I would rather run myself as an independent.'

Dusk came quickly and the training wound down. Lacking transport of their own, participants came along in our car. We dropped them off by the roadside, and from then on, they had to brave the cold and walk the many kilometres along dirt tracks to their villages. Meanwhile, we continued our journey back to Dili, the capital.

This is only a short episode in the longer narrative about a country that has only newly freed itself from colonialism, but it is also an episode that conveys the commitment of the women of Timor Leste to play an active role in the process of nation building.

Ivete de Oliveira is CIIR's women's advocacy officer in East Timor.

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Read more about women's activism in East Timor in the new CIIR book *Independent women* – see the advert on page 2 for more details.

Constructing a new meaning

People's voices in Ecuador, broadcast by a community radio station, led to the downfall of a president, writes **Luis Tavara**

THEY SAY ECUADOR is not an easy country. For many, it is ungovernable. Wasn't president Abdalá Bucarám overthrown in 1997, after less than a year in power? Didn't the same thing happen to Jamil Mahuad in 2001, before he had been president of Ecuador for two years?

And last April, another president of Ecuador was overthrown, this time by the people of the capital. That is the fact. President Lucio Gutiérrez was overthrown by the men and women of Quito.

What happened? Were the military not defending Gutiérrez? Were the media not his friends – the ones who decided to keep quiet and say nothing about the popular protests? How was it then that a peaceful citizens' protest was able to grow so much that it ended with the fall of the president?

Possibilities

A few weeks earlier, some journalists had discovered that the government had paid large sums of money to

the owners of the big communications media, in a costly campaign to keep in power. But any campaign, big or small, is destined to fail when the sense of reality is constructed in another direction by the very audiences that are targeted by the campaign. And if those audiences can count also on a means of communication through which they can express themselves, then anything is possible. And that is what happened: what the government did not think possible.

Radio La Luna is part of CIIR/ICD partner organisation ALER, the Latin American Association of Radio Education. For eight years it has transmitted to the two million people of Quito, the capital of Ecuador. The radio stations affiliated to ALER are known as grassroots radio, community radio, citizen radio. They are stations which encourage audience participation and involve their audience in the production of the messages that are transmitted. The principal result of this is that the audience

becomes a big community which takes part creatively in the interchange of ideas, in the construction of meaning.

Protests

The protests of the people of Quito began when the president acted contrary to the constitution. One bad day last December, this man removed from office the Supreme Court judges and appointed other judges according to his interests. In addition he intervened in the Electoral Tribunal and, as if this were not enough, took control of the Congress through his party, thus making it impossible to rectify the errors committed.

The citizen's protest began at this point. And it gained in strength when the then president committed the last of his mistakes: he brought back to Ecuador the ex-president Bucarám, who had taken refuge in Panama and was sought by the courts on grave corruption charges. Except that instead of going to jail, Bucarám was welcomed as a powerful and victorious leader.

While the tone of the citizens' protest rose and some dared to demonstrate in front of the president's personal residence, Gutiérrez used the mainstream media to suggest that the movement against him was simply a group of 'bandits' – a word used in the

Haz bulla! Make a noise! Protesters show the way at the Americas Social Forum held in Quito in July 2004.



Spanish language to designate delinquents and those outside the law.

Identity

With all the important means of communication on his side, the president seemed to have won his battle. Except for a small detail: Radio La Luna had once again opened its microphones to the audience. Through thousands of telephone calls people began to forge a new identity, calling themselves 'bandits'. They shared on air and without barriers a rain of creative protests on how to put an end to the government of president Gutiérrez and re-found a republic free of corruption and exclusion.

The government responded by cutting the telephone lines and interfering with Radio La Luna's signal, but in vain, because ALER put its satellite transmission equipment at the disposal of La Luna, and

because the people's participation increased much more. Thousands of young people, adults, children and old people arrived at the transmission studios and hundreds of them queued patiently to identify themselves as members of the 'Bandit Movement' and express their ideas, live and direct, on air.

Reality

What the radio did was nothing other than construct meaning. Every interpretation of reality has two dimensions: what each one interprets (subjective dimension) and what the social group interprets (inter-subjective dimension). The conjugation of both is the symbolic reality which we construct, and this is what we call 'meaning'.

The process of construction of meaning of the citizens of Quito mediated by Radio La Luna resulted in the people constructing an identity, setting out clear objectives

and carrying out a number of activities which ended with the overthrow of the president. It was not a question of a revolt or of an ungovernable people. The people became aware that all possible ways of respecting the constitution had been exhausted, and the duty of a good citizen consisted not only in overthrowing the government, but in laying down the basis for a lasting change in the country.

In Latin America, Radio La Luna is only one example of what many other radio stations are doing. Today, the ALER stations are present in rural and urban areas, supporting popular organisations and projects with their programming. In the end, everything begins and ends with communication, and communication with the production of meaning.

Luis Távora is a CIIR/ICD development worker with ALER. A specialist in radio training, he is from Peru.

From small beginnings

Carmen Veiga describes how a community organisation in Cusco, Peru, encourages citizen participation in local democracy

A FEW WEEKS AGO we began our 2005 leadership courses. Two groups of about 30 men and women arrived, of different ages and from different social classes, but united in their eagerness to learn. Throughout the nine months of the course we prepare each session with the needs and expectations of each participant and the political and social situation in mind. The sessions are strung like the beads of a necklace with the thread of our appreciation of each other and our differences.

Seven classes have already graduated from these leadership courses run by Coincide (Coordinadora Intercentros de Investigación, Desarrollo y Educación), from which some 60 people continue to be in touch through an organisation they have created. With the support of Coincide they draw up their plans, put forward themes, meet and

organise to make it happen, each one from their own abilities and possibilities.

Young people have a particularly important space in the programme. Young men and women, students or workers, come to our offices where they meet and plan and invade us with their enthusiasm, their happiness and their desire to transform the world. They are the tomorrow, the future citizens. They are the hope. That's why they are important.

Democracy and citizen participation are key themes for Coincide. In a country where the basic rights of citizens have not always been respected, it is admirable to see how today men and women of any social background take part in the decisions of the authorities, propose projects in which to invest, or carry them out. I won't say that everything goes perfectly – of course there are many difficulties – but little by little the citizens learn about their

rights and their duties and exercise them. Beyond the act of voting they are an active part of local and regional politics.

Coincide's office is in a central avenue, it is relatively large and those who work in it are at first sight not many. But there is much coming and going of people of all ages, social classes and occupations. There is no register of the number of people who come to the office every day, nor of the reasons why they come, but they are always welcomed, and synergies are supported and encouraged.

In a country where more often than not one only sees the poverty, the needs, the difficulties or the wrongs of the political and social situation, it is a privilege to work side by side with people who have their feet on the ground and are nourished by hope, by a faith in a better tomorrow, who build democracy day by day, step by step.

Carmen Veiga is a CIIR/ICD development worker with Coincide. She is from Spain.



Two charismatic figures are igniting opposition in Honduras to destruction of the environment, writes **Finola Robinson**

The fight for life

DOÑA CATALINA'S ramshackle farmhouse sits on a plot of land backed by fields of sugar cane and maize – crops that her family rely on to eat and sell in the neighbouring market. Her eyes twinkle with a spirit that is proud and strong. But her face is weathered by storms that suggest life has been far from easy. Poverty in rural

Honduras is rife, and the fluctuating market price of sugar, combined with a drop in the water table caused by rampant deforestation and illegal logging, is making it increasingly difficult for families like hers to eke out a living.

'One of the main rivers that passes through Campamento used to reach up to my waist,' she remembers. 'But now

The impact of logging in Olancho is everywhere to be seen.

it's just a trickle: you can walk over it easily just by stepping on a few stones. It's getting harder and harder to find water.'

Courage

In 2003, Doña Catalina became an unexpected national figure after joining a week-long protest march that saw thousands walk 175 miles from the Olancho regional capital Juticalpa to the country's capital city, Tegucigalpa. As a sprightly 78-year-old, Doña Catalina walked all day, every day, fuelled by a meagre diet of plain tortillas and water. At night she slept under the stars by the side of the road or in houses offered up by supportive strangers. 'I started the march in Juticalpa and just carried on walking,' she explains. 'My bones are healthy and if the distance had been further, I would have walked for longer. I walked to fight against deforestation and to fight for life.'

The following year's March for Life (*Gran Marcha por la Vida*) saw numbers triple as environmental awareness grew and people became more courageous about speaking out. Farmers and country-folk took to the streets from five different points in Honduras and when protesters reached the capital they were 30,000 strong.

Protestors on both marches followed one man: a charismatic Salvadorean Catholic priest called Fr José Andrés Tamayo.

Fr Tamayo is parish priest of Olancho's small town of Salama and leader of CIIR/ICD partner organisation MAO (the Environmental Movement of Olancho) – a coalition of small-scale farmers and community leaders calling for a 10-year moratorium on logging.

Threat

Deforestation is now the country's single biggest environmental threat. Loggers, operating in cahoots with Honduran authorities and fuelled by money from wealthy US corporations, are mowing down a staggering 267,000 acres each year – roughly the equivalent in size to 109,000 football pitches. In Olancho, Honduras's largest region, unregulated logging has already destroyed half of the 12 million acres of forest. The resulting soil erosion has dried up much of the water supply and threatens the region's

rich but fragile ecosystem, home to a dazzling array of more than 500 species of birds, rare species of trees, endangered plants and animals.

Only a small percentage of the logging is legal. Estimates show that illegal, clandestine logging accounts for more than three-quarters of hardwood production and nearly half of pinewood production. Thanks to loopholes in Honduran forestry laws, much of the remaining production is 'legalised' – accompanied by documents and permits and therefore legal from a bureaucratic perspective – but it is common practice for loggers to abuse these regulations. One permit can be used time and again, for instance, or a licence granted for pine will be used to fell other hardwoods. It is now impossible to trace the flow of wood around the country.

Hit-list

Olancho's rich landscape gives the region a lush and seemingly tranquil beauty. Undulating hills carpeted with tall, majestic pine trees are dotted with clusters of rustic houses that imply a harmonious marriage of man and nature. But scratch beneath the surface and a bitter, bloody war is raging between environmentalists, loggers and corrupt government officials: a war that has seen Fr Tamayo publicly denounced, physically assaulted, and threatened with death; a war that has even led to the brutal murder of three MAO activists, including 23-year-old priest Carlos Arturo Reyes, shot dead in his own backyard. The murderers escaped justice but are believed to be part of the

terrifying logging mafias who roam the area with a list drafted by local sawmill owners of 17 environmentalists to target.

Fr Tamayo is top of the hit-list, yet he refuses to be scared into silence. 'If we let the powerful elite take away our means to earn a living, we are allowing them to turn us into victims and take away our right to live,' he says. 'The environment may not be a fashionable topic but it is a problem that we just cannot see in isolation from other parts of life.'

'Today, national and transnational companies are taking possession of what belongs to the people. Millions of living creatures, including man, are being stripped of their rights just because of the ambitions of a few. Surely, to act against nature is to act against humanity. Show me a human being who does not live from nature.'

Survival

Yet there seems little political will to turn the situation around. The wood industry is mired in accusations of corruption and most Hondurans suspect loggers work hand in hand with government officials and wealthy cattle ranchers, for whom logging is a profitable side-business.

Olancho was already in the grip of these loggers when, in 1985, Fr Tamayo moved there with the church after his ordination into the priesthood. He discovered his parishioners' biggest concern was how to survive amid the environmental destruction. His pivotal moment came when a parishioner had to be buried in a plastic sack because



Fr Tamayo talks to environmentalists watched (background) by logging contractors.

they could not afford a coffin. The contrast between the wealth of the natural resources and the poverty of the people was so stark that Fr Tamayo felt he had no choice but to act. He has campaigned to protect the environment ever since.

In 2001 Fr Tamayo formed MAO, and in 2003 he was awarded the Honduras National Human Rights Award. Then, in April this year, he won the Goldman Environmental Prize. His campaign goes from strength to strength. A trip to the UK in July – hosted by CIIR/ICD – saw him voice his concerns to delegates at Global Warming 8, a climate change event hosted in the run-up to the G8 summit in Gleneagles. Later that same week, he addressed the National Justice and Peace AGM where he received a standing ovation. 'How can we talk about defending life,' he said, 'if we do not defend our environment?'

Next on the agenda is a Meso-American March for Life from Panama to Mexico, to protest against CAFTA (the Central America Free Trade Agreement), as well as deforestation and the extraction of natural resources.

As Doña Catalina points out: 'It is up to all of us to do something to protect the environment and the life we have – for the happiness of Honduras, the air, the water, for all the children who are growing up in this country. For the future. What else do we have?'

Finola Robinson is CIIR/ICD's press and information officer. She visited Honduras in February.



Doña Catalina



Vanessa Kuriz/CIR

Seeds of change: a farmer in Honduras.

we also now plan long term training processes that link theory and practice, and provide monitoring and support after the training sessions.

Impact

Once we have achieved change at the individual level, how can this generate change at the organisational level? Training beneficiaries can face various obstacles once they are back within their organisation. Superiors or managers may lack understanding of or be resistant to new ideas. For example, a finance officer will face problems if the board of directors or administrative staff prefer to have the organisation managed with a certain lack of transparency.

The organisation as a whole may not give priority or time to the problem to be resolved. As institutional strengthening takes time, can be painful, and is not easily visible, often everybody – donors, local organisations and beneficiaries – prefers instead to invest time and energy in short term, 'easy' and visible projects.

There may also be conflicts of interest, function or responsibility within the organisation that make change difficult to agree upon or implement. Similarly, the different demands and expectations that various donors can have towards the organisation, for example in terms of planning and reporting tools, can make it difficult to design and introduce new institutional tools or ways of working.

In order to respond to this challenge, we need to focus, in the long term, on the few and most important problems the organisations face, and ensure that the resolution of these problems is promoted by the whole organisation – and in particular its decision-makers – as well as important donors.

Strengthening a local organisation requires establishing a very close and trustful relation with that organisation. To influence changes of attitudes and behaviour, one must first understand the organisation's internal and external context. It may be that this is a process that does not yield easy or immediate results, but with the right approach hopefully all involved will eventually see its value.

Marion Guillermand is a CIR/ICD development worker in Honduras. She is from France.

Marion Guillermand describes how a capacity building programme in Honduras aims to overcome some of the barriers to success

Moving one step forward

IN ORDER TO PROMOTE civil society participation and local democracy in a sustainable way, one could argue that it is first necessary to strengthen local civil society. However, what does this mean? What kind of obstacles are we facing when doing it? And what should we take into account to make it work better?

The following reflections are based on 17 months' experience with a civil society strengthening project in Honduras. The objective of this three year project is to reduce poverty by improving, in a sustainable way, the quality and distribution of the products and services offered by four local farmers' organisations. To achieve this, we aim to improve the skills of staff and directors through training. We also aim to help the organisations set up systems that will enable them to function more effectively, and establish sustainable and independent sources of funding.

Attitudes

However, as in every development project, we are facing a number of obstacles which make progress slow. A major challenge is how to encourage a change of attitudes and behaviour at the individual level. Problems in the way an organisation functions can be down to a lack of knowledge, information,

tools, systems or equipment, but to an inability or lack of desire to implement changes.

Sometimes, due to their personal, social and/or professional history and context, people do not want to change their way of working, even though they may accept that it is not the best way of doing things. For example, some directors will continue trying to mismanage funds to serve their own personal interests, although they have been trained in financial management and know that they should not do it this way.

In other cases, due to a lack of interest, motivation, or financial or logistical support, the training beneficiary does not have the capacity or time to reflect on the acquired knowledge and translate it into an improved way of working. Sometimes – due to various factors such as communication or transport problems or lack of time – participants in the training are not always the most appropriate people within the organisation, or are not able to participate in the whole training process.

In order to respond to this challenge, we are now trying to improve the selection of the participants by giving the local organisations selection criteria. Rather than isolated training workshops,



Reina Isabel Vidal and Monica Calvo Ortiz in the offices of Flor de Piedra.

Stone flowers

A pioneering organisation in El Salvador is helping to raise the self-esteem of sex workers, writes **Finola Robinson**

IT'S A HOT WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON in San Salvador, El Salvador's busy capital city. Crowds throng the streets: market-traders ply their wares along the roadside, people shop for fruit and vegetables, students wait at bus-stops. San Salvador is a city buzzing with life.

But it is also a city of harsh extremes, with an ever-growing gap between the rich and the poor. In the quiet, tree-lined streets of the rich neighbourhoods, mansions are protected by armed guards. The poorest districts, meanwhile, are equally deserted, but for a totally different reason: even in daylight, some streets are just too dangerous to walk down.

CIIR/ICD partner organisation, Asociación de Mujeres Flor de Piedra (the Stone Flower Women's Association), is situated in a quiet backstreet in one of the city's danger spots – the red-light district. Flor de Piedra is the only organisation in the country working with sex workers to protect and promote their rights, and its location is, therefore, intentional. The offices have to be

accessible to the organisation's members and users – the sex workers who trade in the nearby parks and brothels.

Desperation

Reina Isabel Vidal, 43, first visited Flor de Piedra five years ago after hearing about the association through a friend. 'I used to work in a sweatshop where there was so much exploitation that a group of us formed an illegal union, but the owner found out what we were doing and we were fired,' she remembers.

'The sweatshop paid me \$57 every two weeks, which isn't much, but jobs are so hard to come by. I took my CV to numerous companies but no-one would take me on. All the women in the sweatshops are between 18 and 28 years old and I was 32 at the time so doors were automatically closed to me.'

Reina's cousin told her about a room that was available. 'I was very hesitant about it because of my upbringing. I thought sex work was disgusting and I didn't want to do it but my cousin kept telling me that I could earn some money.

I had two children to feed on my own and my cousin said that sex work was really no different to sleeping with a boyfriend. I was so desperate, I agreed to do it.'

Rights

Although prostitution is legal in El Salvador, the public perception of sex workers is mired in prejudice and hostility. Sex workers and homosexuals are regarded as the source of HIV and violent assaults are common.

CIIR/ICD development worker Monica Calvo Ortiz is working with Flor de Piedra to strengthen its communications strategy and improve public awareness of the rights of sex workers. She says: 'The main reason someone becomes a sex worker is lack of money but most of the women have family problems. Sometimes women can't even get the most basic job and life just imposes this situation on them.'

Dignity

Flor de Piedra was set up in 1990. The word 'flower' in the name was chosen to reflect the beauty of women and 'stone' represents the hard life they lead. Flor de Piedra now works on a wide range of activities, including preventative health schemes, education, awareness raising and condom distribution. There's also a psychotherapist who gives individual sessions, free of charge, and a lawyer who gives legal advice and helps the women to understand their rights.

Over the years, the focus has shifted from attempting to equip sex workers with skills and reintegrate them into society, to focusing primarily on human rights and on giving sex workers back their dignity. Flor de Piedra currently works with around 700 sex workers.

Flor de Piedra also runs a scheme whereby sex workers are trained in-house to educate and inform others. Reina, who recently went through the training, says: 'Sometimes I am insulted in the street because of my involvement with Flor de Piedra but I can respect myself far more now. My self-esteem is no longer on the floor.'

Finola Robinson is CIIR/ICD's press and information officer.

Putting democracy to the test

Forthcoming elections will be a measure of Somaliland's progress towards democratisation, write **Steve Kibble** and **Adan Abokor**

THE INDEPENDENT but internationally unrecognised state of Somaliland (North West Somalia) is due to hold parliamentary elections in September. These will be the first direct parliamentary elections in greater Somalia for 35 years.

Somaliland still has a long path to go towards full democratisation. This should be the most important phase, marking the move away from a clan-based government with little effective parliamentary opposition.

To date the government has shown minimal intervention in social areas and little commitment to overcoming gender and other inequalities. The parliamentary elections open up major opportunities in these areas. Civil society can be empowered to engage with government on key issues – not least human rights, development, gender equality and HIV and AIDS. The regularisation of political representation in parliament could also avoid a return to the instability that has plagued Somaliland and Somalia in the past.

Process

Somaliland, having decided unilaterally in 1991 to end its union with Somalia, embarked on this process of democratisation in the late 1990s. A referendum in 1999, local elections in 2002 and a presidential election in 2003 all contributed to the process.

There have been some setbacks – notably the government's incomplete compliance with human rights standards, as shown by the arrest of journalists and efforts to lean on the judiciary. Nevertheless, Somalilanders hope that the strategy will bring international recognition. For many



Queueing to vote at Yirowe in Somaliland during the local elections in December 2002.

observers, the democratisation of Somaliland is seen as an interesting experiment that deserves greater study (and support) in its incorporation of democratic values within a traditional social structure.

Previous elections, according to international observers (including CIIR), have proved peaceful, reasonably free and fair and enthusiastically welcomed. Somalilanders say that as the international community is pushing for democratic practice in Africa, it should support them in observing what is expected to be another reasonably free and fair election.

Costs

However, the delicacy of the situation does present problems for the government in Hargeisa, Somaliland's capital. The government is only able to provide one-third of the projected budgetary costs of the election, partly due to increased military expenditure on the Somaliland/Puntland dispute (Puntland is the region bordering Somaliland to the north-east).

Meanwhile, in contrast to 2002, the

EU and its member states initially seemed less keen to show support – financial or moral – for these elections. This appeared to be linked to their involvement with the Mbagathi government-building process in (southern) Somalia, and worries that the new government there will react negatively to funding for the Somaliland parliamentary elections.

As well as external constraints, there are internal differences. The opposition and sections of the population allege that parliamentarians have more commitment to their own stay in power than to the democratisation process. The outcome of the election, however, is likely to require a great deal of trust in the process, if past experience is any guide. In the 2003 presidential election, the Kulmiye party, having lost, claimed that it had won but was prepared for the sake of the nation to accept the result.

Commitment

Civil society organisations have committed to helping in the electoral process, as have the *aqils* (local community leaders who administer justice at *dir*, or sub clan, level). Both wish to promote peaceful elections through encouraging communities to vote and organising neutral help for the blind or illiterate at polling stations. Local NGOs are involved with drawing up a voluntary code of conduct for the political parties, coordinating local observer groups and running civic education programmes.

Financial and moral support also appears at last to be forthcoming from the international community. CIIR will be supporting the coordination of international observation.

It is to be hoped that with this help and the commitment to a peaceful process of the Somaliland people and government, the threat is receding that the one stable part of greater Somalia will relapse from the democratic path. Given the internal and external commitment to stability in Somaliland and the general desire among donors for good governance and democracy throughout Africa, anything less than a free and fair election would be an opportunity squandered.

Steve Kibble is CIIR's Africa/Yemen advocacy officer. Adan Abokor is CIIR/ICD's country representative in Somaliland.



Armed police in Tiatabeland, Zimbabwe.

country profile: Zimbabwe

History

After a bitter war against an illegal settler regime, Zimbabwe became independent in 1980. The Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) was elected to be the country's first government. Although ZANU-PF proclaimed national reconciliation, the early years were marred by massacres in Matabeleland as the new state clamped down on a perceived dissident threat from groups in the minority Ndebele ethnic group.

The newly independent country experienced a rapid expansion in health, education and social service provision, although the state was under-resourced to provide such services. By 1990 the economy was experiencing difficulties within a political climate of increased authoritarianism and elite corruption.

Zimbabwe negotiated large loans from the World Bank and was required in return to cut public expenditure. In 1997 large payouts to war veterans meant a massive drain on the economy. This was accentuated when in 1998 the government sent troops to shore up the Kabila regime in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The impact of very high rates of HIV and AIDS continued to undermine the social and economic fabric of

Zimbabwean society during this time. Unemployment was consistently rising. In the late 1990s the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions staged a series of well-supported national strikes.

Politics

ZANU (PF) continued to win elections in June 2000, March 2002 and March 2005 but in each case these were marred by violence and intimidation.

After 2000 when the government lost a referendum on a new constitution which would have given even greater power to the executive, it embarked on a programme of land acquisition. This involved sending 'war veterans' to take over the majority of white-owned commercial farms for 'resettlement'. The government's line was that this process addressed past historical injustices, but

many saw it as an attempt to stay in power and remove sources of opposition. Many although not all farms appear to have passed into the control of the ZANU-PF elite rather than the landless and poor.

There has been a sustained campaign against the independence of the media, judiciary, NGOs and churches.

Development issues

Zimbabwe continues to suffer economic crisis with little indication that the government has any clear strategy to overcome it. Food, fuel, and foreign exchange are in short supply. Much of the country suffered widespread crop failure after poor rains in the last growing season. The recent targeting of the urban poor and informal traders in Operation Murambatsvina has left thousands homeless and without resources.

The HIV and AIDS pandemic interacts with food shortages to further undermine health, education and family structures. Two thousand people per week were dying from HIV and AIDS in 2002 and the figure is now more than 3,500. Life expectancy has dropped to 34 years from 65 in 1990.

Because of the situation in Zimbabwe an increasing number of people are leaving the country, including many experienced and skilled personnel.

CIIR/ICD in Zimbabwe

CIIR/ICD has four development workers in Zimbabwe, focusing on civil society participation and HIV and AIDS. With our partners we assist the parents of children with disabilities to advocate for their rights and address their families' socio-economic needs. We also work to strengthen community participation in programmes responding to HIV and AIDS.

Facts and Figures

Population	12.6 million
Maternal mortality	700 per 100,000 live births
Infant mortality	76 per 1,000 live births
People living with HIV/AIDS	2.3 million
Population living below US\$1 per day 1990-2001	36%
Human development index country ranking	145 out of 175

Growing a greener future

Marvin Zavala is helping small-scale farmers in Honduras farm their land in a sustainable way, writes **Finola Robinson**

MARVIN ZAVALA knew from an early age that he wanted to work on the land. Born in Nicaragua into a family of *campesinos* (peasant farmers), his earliest memories are of helping his father in the fields.

When he was 13 years old, a pivotal moment occurred. 'I was spraying an insecticide called Malathion in the fields to try and control a plague that had taken hold of our beans,' he remembers. 'I had the pump strapped to my back but, all of a sudden, I started to feel dizzy and sick. I was ill for days afterwards.'

At that time – the 1980s – the Sandinistas wanted a boom in agriculture and Nicaragua became, as Marvin puts it, 'a champion in the use of insecticides and other agro-chemicals'. Chemicals were either free or very

cheap, and the same strong insecticides were handed out to small-scale farmers as to larger ones.

Organic

'I had wanted to study to be an agronomist, but after the experience with Malathion I decided I didn't want to do that if I had to use chemicals,' he says. He trained as a vet, but slowly but surely he felt his heart return to agricultural work. He abandoned his veterinary career and went to the new Campesino University of Nicaragua to study organic farming. His interest in farming was reignited.

Marvin became a member of CIIR/ICD partner organisation UNAG (the national union of agriculturalists and cattle farmers) and convinced his father and uncles to follow suit. A job offer at UNAG led Marvin to his next project – working with women, giving them financial advice linked to their agricultural work.

In 1994, Marvin started work as a promoter of sustainable agriculture with different communities – still with UNAG. Through this work he met a CIIR/ICD development worker and became her counterpart.

Vision

But in 1998, life for everyone was turned upside down when Hurricane Mitch tore through Central America, destroying everything in its path. Marvin took a job in Honduras distributing emergency food aid under the World

Food Programme (WFP). 'However, I realised that it wasn't my vision,' he says. 'I had come to teach people how to produce their own food, not give it out.'

With funds from the WFP and bags full of initiative, Marvin set about buying seeds and tools to put his vision into practice. The experience led him to apply for a job as a CIIR/ICD development worker with partner Coatlahl (Cooperativa Agroforestal Colón, Atlántida, Honduras Limitada), a cooperative of communities and small-scale producers of tropical wood. Marvin's role was to help introduce sustainable crop production as a way of reducing dependency on the forest.

As Marvin's skills grew, so did his opportunities. At Coatlahl he was approached by Fupnabib (the Foundation for Pico Bonito National Park), which agreed to Marvin's request for seeds in exchange for his time. The foundation would give Marvin 1,500 plantain seeds and he would hand them

'alternative agricultural techniques would guarantee food security, without putting at risk our natural resources'

out to 60 farmers. Then, after a year, the farmers would give back twice as many. This methodology has developed and multiplied and given Marvin a very clear vision for the future – one that could be shared and developed, just like his seed programme.

'Since I was young, I have believed that underdeveloped countries are used as a laboratory for developed countries and companies: for research, medicine, agriculture and the environment,' he says. 'So many experiments are carried out in this region, genetic modification being just one of them. If there isn't a negative impact, the experiments are implemented in the developed countries.'

'In my opinion, if in this world we could implement alternative agricultural techniques we would guarantee food security, without putting at risk our natural resources. No one need go hungry again.'

Finola Robinson is CIIR/ICD's press and information officer.

Vanessa Kuruz/CIIR



CIIR/ICD development worker Marvin Zavala.

Octavio Duran/Equipo Matiz-CAFOD



Archbishop Oscar Romero pictured in 1980.

feeding his prophetic strength and giving him peace in the generous and bloody dedication of his life.'

The poor were frequently told by their pastors that they should be content with their lot and look forward to better times in heaven. This was not Romero's message. He said, in 1977: 'The Word of God has to be a word which springs forth from the eternal, ancient Word of God, but which touches today's wound, today's injustices, today's victims.'

Once, when Romero was going through customs, someone was heard to say: 'There goes the truth.' When Romero was told this, he said: 'That short phrase fills me with optimism, because in my suitcase I have no contraband, neither do I bring lies, I bring the truth.' In a homily in July 1979 he said: 'These homilies try to be this people's voice. They try to be the voice of those who have no voice. And so, without doubt, they displease those who have too much voice. This poor voice will find an echo in those who love the truth and who truly love our dear people.'

In his homilies on Sundays in the cathedral, after commenting on the Biblical readings, he went over the events of the past week, often reading from scraps of paper put into his hands by poor families with the names of their loved ones who had disappeared or been killed. 'We cannot separate God's Word from the historical reality in which it is proclaimed,' he said.

In a final impassioned appeal on behalf of his suffering people, at the end of his homily in the cathedral on 23 March 1980, he made a direct appeal to the soldiers and the police to disobey orders to kill, adding: 'In the name of God, and in the name of this suffering people ... I beg you, I ask you, I order you in the name of God: stop the repression!'

The next day a single shot fired by a hired assassin from the back of the chapel killed him. He was 63. As the Polish poet Czesław Miłosz has written: 'In a room where people unanimously maintain a conspiracy of silence, one word of truth sounds like a pistol shot.'

Pamela Hussey has worked with CIIR since 1981. She is the co-author of the recent CIIR Comment A culture of peace: Women, faith and reconciliation.

Defender of the poor

Pamela Hussey reflects on the life and legacy of Oscar Romero

ARCHBISHOP OSCAR ROMERO WAS murdered 25 years ago, on 24 March 1980. He is now for many in Latin America and all over the world – and especially for the poor whose cause he fearlessly championed – an icon, Santo Romero de las Americas. As someone once said to the Salvadoreans: 'I have bad news for you. Romero is no longer yours. He belongs to us all.'

Oscar Romero was born in 1917 in Ciudad Barrios, El Salvador. He studied for the priesthood in El Salvador and Rome, was ordained priest in Rome, and returned to El Salvador in 1943. In 1977 he was appointed Archbishop of San Salvador.

1977 was one of the most turbulent years in El Salvador's history, culminating in 1980 in a civil war between government forces and the Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation (FMLN). Seventy-five thousand Salvadoreans, mostly poor, were to be killed, the majority by government forces, before peace was signed in 1992. The rural poverty was appalling, the wealthy refused to countenance land reform, there was brutal repression. In opposition to this

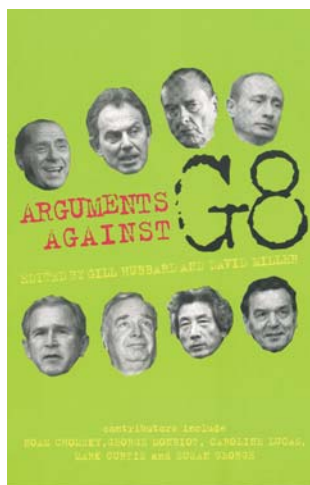
was an incipient rural peasant movement, and a church increasingly sympathetic to, and present with, the poor.

As a bishop, Romero had been conservative, cautious, more at ease with the powerful than with the poor. He was nervous about involvement in politics. Several priests sympathetic to the peasants' organisations had been detained, threatened or expelled.

Soon after he became Archbishop, Romero's friend, the Jesuit priest Rutilio

'We cannot separate God's word from the historical reality in which it is proclaimed'

Grande, was murdered. This event is often quoted as marking the 'conversion' of Oscar Romero – but the poor had already begun to 'convert' him. The Jesuit José Tojeira has said: 'The martyrdom of Monseñor Romero grew out of the solidarity with his people. We can say today that it was the poor, the simple and humble people, who evangelised Monseñor Romero,



Arguments against G8
 edited by Gill Hubbard and David Miller

The Make Poverty History campaign has brought together an unprecedented mass protest against world poverty. In the run up to the G8 summit in July, however, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown somehow managed to manoeuvre themselves onto the side of the protesters. They and their neoliberal capitalist cohorts deftly sought to deflect criticism away from the very thing that creates and perpetuates poverty – their own neoliberal cartel – and present themselves, incredibly, as being in the

vanguard of the fight against poverty. As a result, people joining the march in Edinburgh could be forgiven for being unsure about the focus of their protests. Was the G8 seen as potentially part of the solution, or is the G8, and its neoliberal capitalist project, itself the problem?

The contributors to this book would have no hesitation in answering: the G8, and all that it stands for, is itself the problem. The book's title makes it clear: these are *Arguments against G8*.

The contributors to the book are the usual suspects, but that does not make what they say any less true. From Noam Chomsky to George Monbiot, from Susan George to Caroline Lucas, they spell out how the fat cats of neoliberalism – the leaders of the world's most powerful economies – have set up, imposed on the world, and now rule with an iron fist a system that makes rich people in rich countries ever richer, precisely because it has been so successful at making the rest of the world so poor, locking it into poverty, and throwing away the key.

This might make for grim reading, but the tone of the book is far from despair. The penultimate chapter asks, Where do we go from here? Throughout the book, the contributors have been

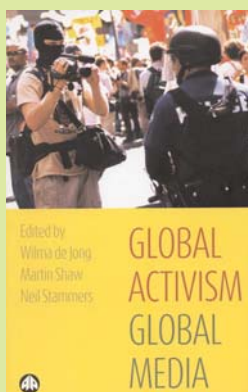
answering that question. There are many strategies, many movements, but one answer: keep on going, because the momentum is with us, the people. As Chomsky says, 'The masters of the universe ... are concerned and defensive.' Now more than ever, say the book's editors, David Miller and Gill Hubbard, is 'the time for us to raise our voices ever louder.'

Haidi Giuliani, mother of the young protester, Carlo Giuliani, who was murdered by police during the G8 summit in Genoa in 2001, tells us why. In a moving contribution to this angry but clear-sighted book, she writes: 'How can you be indifferent and watch the devastation and destruction of the earth without even letting your own "no" be heard, without trying to put a grain of sand in the wheels that are churning over the rights of entire people?'

As Miller and Hubbard conclude: 'We are involved in a truly global struggle,' and we must believe that change really is possible.

Reviewed by Alastair Whitson, CIIR's senior editor.

Arguments against G8 published by Pluto Press, ISBN 0 7453 2420 7, £11.99 paperback.



Global activism, global media
 edited by Wilma de Jong, Martin Shaw and Neil Stammers

Communications are at the heart of what campaigning groups do. In this book, campaigners and academics explore how agencies such as Greenpeace, Amnesty International and the World Development Movement attempt to use the media

to influence mainstream politics on critical topics such as development, gender, the environment and war.

In a perfect world, all citizens would have equal access to the media to openly debate key social issues. The first part of the book debates whether such a global public sphere exists. The conclusion is a negative but accurate one: there are too many social and political imbalances in the world and access to the media is restricted to the rich and powerful.

In a chapter on 'Peace activism and Western wars', which focuses on the February 2003 protests against the Iraq war, Martin Shaw argues persuasively that social movements are in crisis because of a rapidly changing media and political context that they are having trouble adapting to. Indeed, despite the rise of the internet, of large NGO media departments, of media stunts and direct action techniques, campaigners are still finding it difficult to get their message

across in a mainstream media obsessed by scandal and celebrities.

Although the book celebrates the successes of organisations such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International, it leaves one feeling that the structures of the media and political system need overhauling if we really want to make an impact.

It's a shame the book doesn't really tackle this issue. In reality the media are there to serve corporate interests; their central motive is to make money. Unless a major change occurs in the structures of the global media, it is likely that social movements will continue to be secondary voices struggling to get heard.

Reviewed by Nick Sireau, CIIR's director of communications.

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