

interact

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



The future in our hands

Universities by the people,
for the people

Also in this issue:

Capacity building in Yemen
Food sovereignty in Nicaragua
Water management in Peru



editorial

The future in our hands

Educationalists would no doubt protest that times have changed. But my own experience of education was of being told what I needed to know, and of being taught to think what the people in charge wanted me to think.

Imagine how much worse this is when what you are told, and how you are told to think, does not conform to your own reality.

I believe that challenging the given way of thinking can enable people to better understand their own reality – and perhaps, to see more clearly their own future.

This edition of **Interact** examines how people are thinking outside the boxes provided for them. The **insight** section tells the stories of two pioneering universities: one that seeks to build on the wisdom of the indigenous peoples of Ecuador; another that seeks to build a future for a country, Somaliland, being built by its people.

Other articles give a fresh perspective on doing things differently: from alternative forms of organisation and civil participation in Latin America (**voices**), to why we as consumers are contributing to a model of agriculture that leads to social exclusion (**analysis**).

These articles show that development is about learning, and that the best teachers are the people who seek to learn.

Cover picture: *Pilatuña Lincanyo Ñaupá Karapunyo*, a member of the team at *Amawtay Wasi university in Quito, Ecuador* (see page 8). Photo: *Graham Freer/Progressio*

interact summer 2006

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Published July 2006 by Progressio

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Design Twenty-Five Educational

Printing APG (ISO 14001 accreditation for international environmental standards).

Printed on REVIVE 100% chlorine free recycled paper. **Recycle this magazine!**



Identifying with the cause

As I was bidding farewell to the friends I made at The Centre and the Network for Positive Women in Zimbabwe, after two years there as a Progressio development worker, one of my colleagues said something that made me reflect on my work there.

The colleague started by saying: 'When you came we thought, here comes another doctor who will try to experiment with what she has learnt over the years. Boy was I wrong. As time went on I realised this was another breed of doctor.'

'What I learnt from you is that the most complex issues can be deconstructed to simple things that any lay person can understand and fully make use of. Whatever you taught us, you reduced it to our level and that made a big difference. You have taught me to be humble and accepting of the situation I am in, you have taught me to be committed and disciplined, and you have taught me to be patient and not judgemental.'

Although I enjoyed good working relationships with the staff at The Centre and Network, I always felt I was distinguished from them as HIV negative and somehow was not fully a part of their community. But these words made me believe that in the work that we do what is in the end most important is the person that we are, and how we use that to transform and enrich other people's experiences.

We may have all the skills needed in this world but if we are unable to apply these to the situation that we are presented with, it is unlikely that we will succeed in our endeavours. The work that we do as development workers requires much more than technical skills. It is important that we possess adaptive skills that enable us to see the world or the work we do through multiple lenses. In being adaptive we are able to be flexible in our approach while working towards achieving our goals.

When you work with organisations like The Centre and the Network for Positive Women, it is easy to see that the main priority for them is the cause, that is, the survival of people living with HIV and AIDS. How then do we as development workers achieve the inclusion of our agenda on the main menu? In my experience the strategy has been to identify with the cause, to show how development work impacts on the cause, and ensure that development initiatives are implemented in tandem with initiatives directly related to the cause. That symbiotic relationship must be maintained through and through.

Tsitsi Choruma was a Progressio development worker with The Centre and the Network for Positive Women in Zimbabwe. She is now Progressio country representative in Zimbabwe.

Introduction

Change is in the air in Latin America and the Caribbean. In the face of the relentless advance of globalisation and neoliberalism, alternative forms of organisation and civil participation are being tried out across the region.

These alternatives are found at base level in municipalities, departments, provinces, and even at national level. In different countries there is a resurgence of the organisation of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities in the defence of their lands, their rights and their cultures. An increase in the political participation of women and young people can be seen.

Several countries now have governments which represent interests different from those which have traditionally held power – and which generate equal amounts of controversy and hope. Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia represent governments deeply opposed to George Bush's and the USA's policies, while Nestor Kirchner in Argentina, Tavaré Vasquez in Uruguay, Michelle Bachelet in Chile and Lula da Silva in Brazil represent a left which is less breakaway and radical, but which also promotes the interests of the poorest sectors of their countries.

Yet these new expressions vie with traditional ones which continue to implement neoliberal policies. Migration continues to be the main option for a better life for millions, and inequalities and social problems continue to blight the lives of the region's people.

So what does the future hold for Latin America and the Caribbean? Are the signs of change a false dawn? We asked some of Progressio's development workers for their thoughts.

Small struggles and daily victories

Graham Freer/Progressio



Julio Olivera is a Progressio development worker with Amawtay Wasi in Ecuador. Julio is from Peru.

I believe the shoots that are coming up in favour of the most dispossessed societies will go on strengthening. The important thing is that our peoples are waking up and becoming conscious of the riches they possess.

Our peoples have great strength to face up to the system. At the moment

six Latin governments are raising the banners, and these examples will be reinforced in the medium term. The seeds of hope are being sown and we will soon have harvests, since sowing the seeds will produce more strength every time in favour of a juster society.

I hope that our people will unite to face a common problem; that our children become aware of the problems; and that on the basis of the advances obtained by our organisations, they will back the search for good living. We must love more what is our own, and defend it through the strengthening of our social and indigenous organisations; through educational alternatives which value the knowledge and culture of our peoples; through productive approaches which value our natural resources and their biodiversity.



Sanne te Pas is a Progressio development worker with Las Dignas in El Salvador. Sanne is from Holland.

Personally these changes in the countries of South America give me a lot of hope, and I feel that in the organisation where I work, these changes in some way lift up the spirits. But it is a hope for the South only, and my work companions also seem to live it like this. The truth is that here [in El Salvador] the context is so extreme, and the government so right-wing and repressive, that few people seem to believe in the

possibility of great changes in this country in the short term.

Here we try to give meaning to the small changes we achieve, but the much bigger changes like the free trade agreement are disappointing, because they certainly worsened the situation of the majority of the Salvadorean people. Here in El Salvador, I fear the consequences of the inequalities – which already are pretty strong – are becoming more acute. Life is going to be even harder.

I hope that this movement of the left will be strengthened, consolidated and extended, and that there will be a real chance to show that there are alternatives to the very exclusive development models like the one in El Salvador. I hope that a strong left in the South will have a positive effect in the NGOs in super-neoliberal countries like this one, in terms of maintaining hope in the possibility of a better future and inspiration for continuing the struggle.

Graham Freer/Progressio



Sergio Alejandro Vergne is a Progressio development worker with GAMMA (the support group of the women's movement of Azuay) in Ecuador. Sergio is from Argentina.

We go into the new century with a panorama, on the one hand, of social-economic sectors and neoliberal governments applying state reforms in compliance with the capitalist globalisation model, albeit with huge difficulties of governability. And on the other hand, we have popular political movements seeking to build new identities, and social and political subjects not ruled by the traditional political theories (liberalism, marxism): movements of women, indigenous people, the unemployed, sexual

minorities; movements for the rights of marginalised people.

These new movements, together with traditional popular sectors (workers, students, the lower middle class, intellectuals), have the capacity to build new states with new governments. But I think that the region has not yet found a way to process the new popular and social demands, or to widen out democracy towards a true democracy, not formal but real, as a means and as an end.

The new governments are still involved in an economic-political struggle which is not settled, between the capitalist sectors formed under the neoliberal governments, and the excluded popular social sectors, which have seen their levels of participation reduced, and whose rights of citizenship (health, education, dwelling, employment, etc) are not guaranteed. So I think that these new governments have to be called governments 'in transition'.

But an important impact is the change in discourse. There is no longer a single discourse in the face of globalisation, but many discourses. There are cracks appearing in the wall of neoliberalism, which declared 'This is the only possible

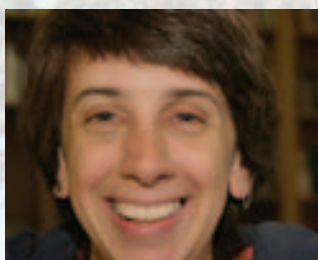
model'. Now it is possible to speak of another world – indeed, to say that 'Many worlds are possible', thus signalling that inclusive societies can be built, without poverty and with diverse ethnic, gender and sexual identities.

Another important change is the reconstruction of the meaning of nation, not from chauvinistic or rightist postures, but from the idea of a citizenship sharing a territory whose resources (natural and economic) and whose environment is from all and for all, and which consequently all should enjoy – and all be responsible for its conservation and upkeep.

We can also speak of changes with regard to the protection and guarantee of human rights. The process initiated in Argentina and briefly glimpsed in Uruguay has put up for discussion the close links between democracy, truth and justice.

Another impact is that the political processes of Venezuela and Bolivia give a strong impulse to the social and popular forces of other countries, which now see the possibility of access to power via democratic methods.

Nick Sireau/Progressio



Silvana Gernaert Willmar is a Progressio development worker with Fundacion Nacional para el Desarrollo in El Salvador. Silvana is Belgian-Argentinian.

The changes are very varied and heterogeneous. As we would say in the region, 'you can't put all the cats in the same bag.' They are very different and must be analysed from local realities and knowledge. But beyond this differentiation, I still have a doubt: will there not continue to be only personalist, populist governments, centred on an all-powerful personality? While it is true that Chávez and Morales have confronted the American system, the merciless neoliberalism, the swindling and bribe-taking privatisations, it is not just about them. Where are the people, the organised people, aware, actively participating, who know the reality of their country and do not live in a fishpond? I don't think it has yet come to this. There are nationalisms, populisms, leadership-isms, clientisms – but a united movement seeking the inclusive development of impoverished women and men is still far off.

Augusto Vázquez



John Bayron Ochoa is a Progressio development worker with Centro Bartolome de las Casas in El Salvador. John is from Colombia.

One cannot yet speak of changes: 'let dawn come and we'll see,' as they say in my country. Time, and the outcome of what is being initiated today, will show us truly what will be transformed, since change could be relative and temporal. Yet I have a feeling like hope, because you have to believe to create, and to go on building creatively more just and equal roads for everyone. So my hope is that these changes will become real transformations; and my conviction has to be that the small struggles and daily victories can be the beginning of structural and transcendental transformations, and that this, diffused in many Latin American spaces, will make tremble and shake any macrostructure which currently thinks it is eternal and impossible to overcome.

In memory of Jairo Rolong

LUIS TAVARA reports on a remembrance ceremony for Jairo Rolong, who was a Progressio development worker with Ecuarunari (the Confederation of the Kichwa Peoples of Ecuador) when he died in a road accident in June last year

LIFE IS FULL OF SURPRISES. At the most unexpected moment, it can fill our day with light and help us to see what we were not seeing, comprehend what we were not understanding, hear what we were not perceiving. This is what happened to me a few days ago, when I went to a celebration in memory of Jairo Rolong, our fellow development worker, who died a year ago.

The meeting room of Ecuador's strongest indigenous organisation was full. Jairo worked in this organisation as a

social communicator. I looked round and my surprise grew: the main leaders of the indigenous movement were also there. Then I asked myself: How is it that a year after his death Jairo can gather so many people together? What was it that he left in them?

I didn't need to think for long. The indigenous people themselves answered my question. A little woman with an intense gaze fixed us with her eyes as she spoke of Jairo. Her speech, which was full of Andean images, also contained many of the ideas worked over with Jairo in his time with the organisation. It was followed by an Andean ritual, as rich in symbols as an Orthodox Mass. A cosmic ritual, but one fed by the fight for the dignity of the indigenous people.

Amidst the smoke from the incense, the many-coloured flowers and the tropical fruit offered to Jairo during the ritual, we felt the presence of Jairo

among us. And then came the moment of forgiveness. Forgiveness for not having sufficiently valued the transforming power of communication. Forgiveness, because sometimes we don't believe in the renewal of life through social organisations. Forgiveness, because in our eagerness to effect change, we fall into the temptation of the shortest path, and forget that development requires processes of qualitative transformation that need more time and are less visible.

This was all – and you were there, Jairo. From the heart of heaven may you help us to choose the best routes and find the way again when we are lost.

Luis Tavara is a Progressio development worker with ALER (the Latin American Association of Radio Education) in Quito, Ecuador.

Mark Howard



Churches oppose Terminator technology

THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (WCC) has spoken out against Terminator technology (the genetic modification of plants to make them produce sterile seeds).

Rev Dr Samuel Kobia, general secretary of the WCC, which has a membership of over 340 Protestant, Orthodox, Anglican and other churches representing 560 million Christians in more than 110 countries, said: 'Applying technology to design sterile seeds turns life, which is a gift from God, into a commodity. Preventing farmers from re-planting saved seed will increase economic injustice all over the world and add to the burdens of those

already living in hardship.'

He added: 'Terminator technology locates food sovereignty, once the very backbone of community, in the hands of technologists and large corporations.... All Christians pray: "Give us this day our daily bread." That this profoundly material request appears in this profoundly spiritual prayer signals for us the centrality of food in our lives, as well as the indivisibility of the material and spiritual in the eyes of God. It is of great concern to me that life itself is now often thought of and used as a commodity.'

Progressio has taken an active role in campaigning against Terminator technology, and will shortly be publishing, on behalf of the UK Working Group on Terminator technology, an updated version of the leaflet 'Say no to suicide seeds'.

interactnow

For more information on Terminator technology, see Progressio's environmental website www.eco-matters.org. The updated leaflet 'Say no to suicide seeds' will be sent to Progressio members with the autumn edition of Interact.

Unrest hits East Timor

EAST TIMOR faces a major challenge to restore faith in the government, military and police, after months of political instability and violence which has rocked the emerging nation, *writes Alison Ryan.*

During the last few months East Timor has seen the deaths of over 20 people, the displacement of 130,000 more, and the resignation of key members of the government (including the Prime Minister). The underlying causes of the unrest are complex, but it was sparked by demonstrations in the capital, Dili, surrounding the dismissal of around one third of the military.

The international community, many of whom now admit that they left the newly independent nation too early, has sent military and police personnel as well as financial aid to respond to the immediate food and health needs of the displaced people.

In addition to forming a new government and ensuring the humanitarian and security

situation is resolved, East Timor now faces the challenge of restoring people's confidence in their prospects for the future. This process not only needs to look at investigating the causes of recent events but also providing justice for past crimes.

The report of the East Timorese Reception, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CAVR), yet to be distributed in East Timor, found that 'justice and accountability remains a fundamental issue in the lives of many East Timorese people, and a potential obstacle to building a democratic society based upon respect for the rule of law and authentic reconciliation between individuals, families, communities and nations.'

The UK government was commendably one of the largest donors to the CAVR, contributing nearly £0.5 million to its operating costs. CAVR's task was to investigate human rights abuses and make recommendations to

prevent the repetition of these abuses and to respond to the needs of the victims. But after being given a copy of the report at the start of this year the UK government is still refusing to publicly respond to the report.

The CAVR report makes important recommendations aimed directly at the UK as a government and as a member of the UN Security Council. To completely ignore this report sends a negative message to the people of East Timor in their quest for good and transparent governance.

The UK government not only owes it to the British taxpayer to continue a process it invested in, but to the 8,000 East Timorese people who placed their trust in the CAVR to tell of their horrific experiences – and who are still waiting for justice. As one Timorese interviewed by the CAVR commented: 'What's the point of continually collecting information from us if there's nothing to show for it?'

Alison Ryan is Progressio's advocacy coordinator for Asia.

POPULORUM PROGRESSIO, one of the most inspirational of the Papal Encyclicals ever written, reaches its 40th anniversary in 2007.

Populorum Progressio ('On the development of peoples') remains a major document especially for anyone working towards a just and fair world. That is why we at Progressio want to mark this anniversary. Joining together with CAFOD and many other Catholic organisations, we are setting the challenge for every one of us to 'live simply'.

This is seen as being an opportunity for us all to address the way in which we live our lives and the impact it has on the rest of humanity. Over the coming year there will be a whole range of events and opportunities for us to come together to learn how we can



Nick Sireau/Progressio

make a difference to those who live in poverty.

For this to be a successful campaign we need you to get involved now. If you are part of a group or network who would like to join us in this campaign, please contact Martin Auton-Lloyd on 020 7288 8601 or email

martin@progressio.org.uk. There is a series of one-day training sessions taking place across the country in September to guide you in preparing events and activities.

We hope that you all will rise to the challenge and make 2007 a year of renewal and rededication to the fight against global injustice.



Isidoro Quinde (foreground) and Pilatuña Lincanyo Ñaupá Karapunyo.

LEARNING WISDOM

and the good way to live

An indigenous university in Ecuador is challenging the way we think, learn and live, writes Alastair Whitson

‘WE ARE IN THIS BIG CRISIS – social, economic, religious. We don’t know where we belong, where we are, what we do, and where we are going to.’ These are the words of Pilatuña Lincanyo Ñaupá Karapunyo, a *yachak* (priest) from Quito in Ecuador. ‘The meaning of Quito is “light and fire of the sun straight to the earth”,’ he tells me. ‘I am a warden of the holy fire of Quito. We belong to ancient peoples who live in this place. And this is what we want to express in our university.’

I am sitting in a meeting room at Amawtay Wasi university in Quito, surrounded by calm, serious men dressed in traditional clothes. They are part of a team of around 40

people, none of them paid, who are building a dream: the dream of the indigenous people for an intercultural university based on their own ancient wisdom and worldview. ‘Why should the western way be the accepted way,’ asks the university’s director, Luis Fernando Sarango, ‘and ours always the alternative, the outsider’s way?’

Now I am on the inside, trying to understand. There is a powerful atmosphere in the room. I can almost see the intensity of thought suspended like a physical object in the air. Another man, Isidoro Quinde, dressed in a poncho and a white bowler-style hat, begins to talk. ‘We needed to work out how the Andean cosmivision could provide a framework, direction and ethos for the

university,’ he says. He takes a pen and begins to sketch on a piece of paper.

‘The Andean cross represents wisdom and knowledge. From this, we can establish a structure. The cross has four elements: air, water, earth and fire. Each element represents a concept: learning, loving, doing, being strong. These conceptual areas interact and intersect to define the fields of learning: environment, technology, politics and society, philosophy...’

Over the cross he draws a spiral, the time-space spiral, containing what is here and now, what is above (in the explicit world) and below (in the implicit world), what went before, and what is to come. ‘How do you reach the centre?’ he asks. ‘The spiral is life, and in the centre is knowledge.’

Identity

Since 1988, Ecuador has had a bilingual system of education in nursery, primary and secondary schools – but not for universities. In 1994, two people in the Ecuadorian

Congress – Luis Macas and Leonidas Iza – came up with the idea of creating an indigenous university. The Congress did not approve the idea, as Isidoro explains: ‘They said the country did not need any more universities. But we said this was going to be a university completely unlike any other.’

‘In regular universities and high schools they don’t teach us the wisdom. If you start talking about this in other universities, they ignore you,’ says Isidoro. But this was an idea that could not be ignored, an idea that would not go away. In 2005, the university was finally granted formal status, and in September 2006 it will begin to offer classes in intercultural learning, architecture and planning, agro-ecology, and the Andean cosmivision.

The university aims to recover indigenous knowledge; educate people without taking away their identity; educate the indigenous professionals of the future. ‘Education is very important if we want to make our rights viable as indigenous, ancestral people and as well to have all the elements that a society needs to be better,’ says Luis Fernando. This vision – of education as a means to a strong and just society – underlies the university’s methodology. The university goes to the people rather than the people coming to the university.

Exchange

Progressio development worker Julio Olivera, who has been working with the university since 2001, explains what this means in practice. Julio, an agro-ecologist from Peru, is responsible for developing the agro-ecology course – ‘a subject that does not exist in any university in Latin America,’ he tells me.

‘In conventional education, most subjects consist of 80 per cent theoretical work,’ he says. ‘Our approach is to have four

‘We are no longer what you forced us to be. We have everything: the eyes, heart, and will-power to fight for our rights; we shall defend what is ours. We know what we have to do, we know that both you and we have our own dignity and values; it is time to look at each other face to face and to live as equals, it is time to learn from one another, to live in harmony with Pachamama [mother earth]’

– indigenous thought of the Puruhua people of Chimborazo, Ecuador, quoted in *Learning wisdom and the good way to live*

processes of study, each with equal weight: theory; practical research; entrepreneurship – meaning initiatives with concrete aims that start to bring in some income; and *conversatorios* – the exchange of learning with others.’

Since 2005, the university has been trying out this approach with what it calls ‘learning communities’ in three regions of Ecuador. Teachers go to the communities to hold workshops, and students make a commitment to do the practical work discussed during the workshop.

‘Students of agro-ecology, for example, will have a plot where they start putting into practice what they are studying and learning. The emphasis is on research and enterprise, so that students can begin to earn a living while they are learning,’ says Julio.

Process

Julio admits that developing the university has been a long, slow process. ‘This really is a work in progress rather than a concrete proposal or organisation,’ says Luis Camacho, Progressio’s country representative in Ecuador. ‘But Progressio made the key decision to support something that otherwise might not happen. Most organisations would not support this sort of project because it is something that has to grow rather than reach a predestined objective within a specified timeframe.’

It is a process of growth that is now beginning to bear fruit. The theory and the methodology have been written

down, in three languages – Kichwa, Spanish and English – in a book called *Learning wisdom and the good way to live*. ‘The book’ – as everyone at Amawtay Wasi refers to it – is, according to Julio, ‘the chain that unites the people of the university and the people of the community.’ Luis Fernando adds: ‘What is written in the book is a synthesis or summary of what we have always practised in our communities.’

To an outsider it may seem bewildering at first. But that’s because it represents, to a westerner, an entirely different way of thinking. Those at Amawtay Wasi think differently. And they think they can make it work because, says Luis Fernando, it is their way of thinking, their way of being, their way of living, their way of learning. ‘Our ancestors used to talk about the university of life,’ he says. ‘We believe in that university. In the end, we are trying to do something new, something alternative. We don’t pretend to be just one more university, but something different.’

Alastair Whitson is Progressio’s senior editor.



Progressio development worker Julio Olivera.

Nick Sireau/Progressio



Mary Enright and colleague in the university library.

FROM GUNS TO PENS

David Tanner describes how the people of Somaliland set up the country's first ever university

AFUNDAMENTAL PART of any country developing and lifting its people out of poverty is education. Somaliland, which broke away from Somalia in 1991 following a decade of civil war, has had a harder struggle to educate its population than most. The bitter civil war ravaged the country during the 1980s, destroying schools and dispersing the population, including its brightest and best students, businessmen, teachers, doctors, scientists and academics.

In the mid-1990s, as the people of Somaliland struggled to build their country, a group of former Somali lecturers and professors undertook a survey of young people in and around the capital city of Hargeisa. A key finding was that 90 per cent of the young people interviewed were planning to emigrate, some illegally, in order to enable them to attend university abroad – as

no university yet existed within the country. 'We realised,' says one of the academics involved, Professor Suleiman, 'that the culture of peace spreading across Somaliland would not be fully sustainable without an educated workforce.'

A weak and poorly funded Somaliland government was unable to address this problem, so the group developed the idea of establishing a university in Somaliland supported by the local community and the Somali diaspora. Professor Suleiman and his colleagues began by contacting diaspora Somalilanders based in the United States, the Middle East and Europe as well as local businessmen, community members and government ministers. Enough funds were raised so that in late 1997, in the town of Borama near the Ethiopian border, Amoud University, the first in the country, opened.

Watershed

According to Progressio's country representative in Somaliland, Dr Adan Abokor, 'The establishment of Amoud University was a watershed. It provided a clear demarcation line between two eras: the end of the era of destruction, and the beginning of the era of peace, reconciliation and development.'

The university began with 60 students, three lecturers, two buses and a library of 4,000 books. Though registered as an independent not-for-profit NGO, Amoud maintains close links with the Ministry for Education, following a set curricula. Student admission is based on GCSE and A-Level results, but student age range and ability varies considerably. As Dr Abokor explains: 'Most of these young people's education was interrupted by the long civil war in Somalia. Many of them grew up in refugee camps and carrying a gun was the only opportunity they had.'

For the first three years of its existence Amoud was heavily dependent on funds sourced primarily from the diaspora. However, as more and more students joined and funds were generated through tuition fees, the university has become increasingly financially stable. As well as fees and private funds, the university receives some funding from the Ministry for Education and tens of thousands of books have been donated by NGOs in the US and UK.

Model

In July this year Amoud University held its fifth graduation. Over 300 graduates are already working around Somaliland in both the public and private sector. The university has grown to encompass five faculties: Education, Business and Public

Administration, Agriculture and Environment, Information Technology and Medicine and Surgery. Six thousand full-time students are enrolled and taught by 55 lecturers. Eight buses collect and drop off students from the surrounding area. The library houses 100,000 books and 80 computers are available. The Amoud model has now been replicated elsewhere in Somaliland, with diaspora- and community-supported universities opening recently in Hargeisa and Burao.

It's a remarkable success story – but its significance goes much further than just providing education. An evaluation of the setting up of the university notes how it has helped to build community ties and had a fundamental and far-reaching effect on Somaliland itself:

'Amoud University unified communities in a cause everyone, including the expatriate community, thought was beyond their reach. The involvement of various segments of society in the same project acted as a unifying and cohesive factor that reduced the clan and political differences resulting from years of rivalry, anarchy and internal strife. It served as an example and a model to be emulated and aspired to by other regions in Somaliland and in the rest of former Somalia.

'The success of the initiative quickly restored a great measure of hope and pride among the people and provided much needed self-confidence after years of helplessness and desperation. In particular, Amoud University, while in existence only for a short period of time, has already had a tremendous psychological impact on youth in this country by restoring hope after a full decade of despair. Idle and desperate secondary school graduates and those enrolled in those schools have suddenly started to study



Progressio development worker Mary Enright and Professor Suleiman, dean of Amoud University.

harder in order to pass the annual examinations.'

Flexibility

Progressio has engaged with Amoud University since its inception and has placed several development workers (DWs) there. DWs have worked as lecturers, covering a wider variety of courses than normally expected, since qualified teachers and lecturers were still lacking. As the books began to pour in, a DW with librarian skills was requested to turn the growing piles into a functioning modern library. DW Mary Enright soon became not only Amoud University's librarian but also what seemed like the librarian for the whole of Somaliland, helping to set up the university library, the public 'Ghandi Library' in Hargeisa, and various secondary school libraries.

In 2005 DW Ahmed Juma joined the university's information technology (IT) department to oversee the installation of a system to enable Internet access via a satellite connection, build the skills and capacity of his colleagues, and help with the establishment of an e-learning centre – an interactive online

learning centre where students can access lessons and complete courses over the Internet.

'The e-learning centre gives students time flexibility in learning as well as a wide variety of research materials and programmes,' says Ahmed. 'E-learning centres such as

'The success of the initiative quickly restored a great measure of hope and pride among the people'

these have the potential to close the learning gap between students studying in underdeveloped countries and those in more advanced countries.'

Amoud University continues to grow and develop, recently taking over an agricultural centre, and remains the only university in Somaliland training and qualifying teachers. It's a true African success story built on the vision and hard work of a group of scholars backed by the long-term commitment of the local community and the diaspora.

David Tanner is Progressio's programme coordinator for Africa, the Middle East and Asia.



The chance of a lifetime

Lisa Dioneda-Moalong reflects on the close relationship between personal and international development

AFTER 14 YEARS working in the Philippines on various development initiatives, I felt the time was ripe for me to go out of my country and explore what they call 'beyond the borders'. The journey to Yemen, to work as a Progressio development worker, is an opportunity to witness the development struggles of another society and group of people. I consider it the chance of a lifetime to see beyond the confines of my nationalist perspectives in development.

Leaving my country at this point in time was, however, a hard decision to make. The civil society movement in the Philippines faces many challenges in one of the most trying periods in the country's history. How do you leave behind colleagues and fellow human rights activists being persecuted and even subjected to extra-judicial killings? I had to be sure that I was fully resolved and in touch with the struggle of my own people before I could consider

When you try to understand other people's culture and faith ... they will in turn respect you

taking part in another context. Fortunately, the growing strength of the civil society movement in the Philippines gave me the confidence to do so.

Will-power

Coming to Yemen to do skill-sharing is another challenge to face. The support from my husband, my entire family and former colleagues gives me the strength and will-power to face the unknown. They are the 'wind beneath my wings'.

The knowledge that Progressio has established a solid reputation for working with people of all faiths and none is also reassuring. I am temporarily sharing an office with an Islamic faith-based organisation. When my counterparts from the local NGO vocally regard me as their sister, despite the fact that I am not a Muslim woman, I feel relieved and honored. There is hope for dialogue after all. As I always believe, when you try to understand other people's culture and faith, and show your sensitivity towards them, they will in turn respect you.

Dealing with another faith in the context of development work is making me re-examine my own faith and lack of faith. I have always credited the growth of my social awareness to the influences

of Christian liberation theology, through discussions with my brother, who once studied in a Franciscan seminary in my country, and from my older sister who now works as a Franciscan missionary in Algiers. Later experiences radicalised this faith. Now, I am in the process of affirming my own perspectives in development work, one rooted in social justice and liberating humanism. By deeply appreciating my own context and experiences, I hope to better understand Islamic charity and humanism.

From here, I hope to further engage my Yemeni colleagues in the local civil society organisations and challenge them to advance into another level in their development perspectives. After all, development involves participatory processes, and capacity building is about change, both at the personal and organisational levels.

Communication

If there is one thing that proves to be a barrier, it would be language. This, however, I am trying to overcome. As a development communication professional, it is a big frustration not to understand and be understood. As I grapple with the Arabic *huruf* or alphabet, grammar and pronunciations, I also feel sympathy for my Yemeni counterparts who likewise struggle to speak English (a language which, come to think of it, is also not my own). Somehow, the aid of a translator bridges the gaps. Furthermore, the fact that the Yemenis are masters in the art of using non-verbal cues often saves me a lot of trouble during some challenging communication situations. These experiences I treasure as education in my cultural encounters with the Yemenis.

The phenomenon of Filipino *diaspora* may be deeply rooted in the lack of genuine development in my country, but the knowledge that I left to share my skills with another group of people also wanting development gives my own journey another dimension. One day I will be going back home with stories to tell to my daughters, and the knowledge that I have taken part in the journey of the Yemeni people to development.

Lisa Dioneda-Moalong is a Progressio development worker in Hodeidah, Yemen. She works with a range of NGOs on issues from women's rights to HIV and AIDS. She is from the Philippines.

Why we are hungry

The history of many countries in the global South, from the days of colonisation to the present, has been marked by production for export. This monocultural model – growing a single crop for export – lines the pockets of big transnational companies and local oligarchies. But in Nicaragua, it has had serious consequences for the life and health of the people, and for the environment.

Campeño (peasant farmer) organisations are now putting food sovereignty forward as an alternative strategy, based on small farmers producing food for local and national markets. Its success depends on the support of urban consumers, not just in Nicaragua, but around the world. Peter Rossett (co-author of one of the classic books on development, *World hunger: 12 myths*), in conversation with Progressio development worker Ernesto Cañada, explains how.

Ernesto Cañada: What do we mean by food sovereignty?

Peter Rossett: Food sovereignty is the right of every people to define their own system of production, distribution and consumption of foods. It is the right of rural peoples to have access to land, to be able to produce for their own local and national markets, and not to be excluded from those markets by subsidised imports from overseas. And it is also the right of consumers to have access to healthy, locally produced, culturally appropriate foods.

If a country is not capable of feeding its own people, if it depends on the world market for the next meal, we are in an extremely vulnerable situation: vulnerable to the good will of the superpowers or the fluctuations of the market. That's why we talk of sovereignty.

What are the consequences of the monocultural model?

Before colonisation every world culture was sovereign with regard to food: that is, they produced what they consumed. Following colonisation the best lands of all



Tomatoes in a field farmed by the Playa Grande community in El Salvador.

Vanessa Kurz/Progressio

the countries of the South, the lands that before produced food for the local population, were converted into platforms for export.

The main historic attack on food sovereignty has been the single crop: a model based on huge tracts of land given over to a single crop, directed for export. Historically the countries of the South, its peoples, have lost their ability to feed themselves, because the best lands are given over more and more to export.

Nicaragua is a good example of what has happened in many countries...

Very much so. During colonisation, the first crops imposed were cocoa and indigo. After independence came coffee, sugar cane, bananas, stock breeding, cotton, controlled by agribusinesses. Each crop took over the available fertile land. The people of these

The countries of the South have lost their ability to feed themselves, because the best lands are given over to export

These two models are confronting each other ... in every country in the world

lands were progressively excluded. They faced the choice between becoming badly paid agricultural day labourers, working only two or three months in the year, or moving onto marginal land, cutting down forests and sowing corn and beans, until these lands were themselves incorporated in the next export crop.

In Nicaragua, as in numerous other countries, it is precisely where natural resources – land and water – abound, that poverty is highest. The peoples who formerly enjoyed these resources ended up excluded from their own riches. As Eduardo Galeano says, ‘the poor countries are poor because they are rich.’ It was the wealth of their resources that attracted the colonisers, the same that today attracts the transnationals. And it is this process which generated social exclusion and poverty in the midst of wealth.

What other problems are there with monocultures?

The monocultural model of agro-exportation generates a terrible vulnerability, because it means that the country depends on the fluctuation of prices in the global market of what it exports, and the need to import food from markets whose prices vary.

The monocultural model has also left a legacy of ecological destruction, of degradation of the natural resources – soil, water, biodiversity – which are necessary for there to be sustainability of production in the future.

For example, when cotton reached Nicaragua in the 1950s, it found fertile lands – and not just in the quality of the soil. Initially, only two or three species of insect attacked the cotton. But DDT had already arrived on the agricultural scene, and the farmers applied it liberally. It quickly eliminated beneficial biodiversity – that is, those other insects which were predators on the cotton pests. The result was an increase in the number of pests. In the 1980s the situation was really serious, with more than 15 species of pests and the application of insecticides up to 60 times in the agricultural cycle.

Moreover, the soil, which was originally very fertile, was destroyed by overuse and the lack of crop rotation. Cotton left devastation: soils eroded, without trees, dust storms, insects resistant to chemicals, the smell of blights everywhere ... An almost complete ecological destruction.

But agro-exportation is not the only possible model...

At the moment we are at a crossroads between two approaches. On the one hand, there is the dominant model of agro-exportation, of the single crop of the transnational business, of the use of agropoisons, of genetically modified seeds, of processed products dangerous for the consumer, full of fats, sugar, salt,

carcinogenic preservatives. And on the other hand we have the peasant model of family farm production, which produces food cultivated with much more sustainable techniques in ecological terms. Today these two models are confronting each other, as in a fight to the death, in every country in the world, in the North as in the South.

What are the main threats today to peasant production?

The main threats are the importation of cheap subsidised food with which the peasant cannot compete; the expansion of new single crops for export which displace them from their land; and the neoliberal policies of the privatisation of everything that is important for agriculture, like land, water, credit or technical assistance.

One of the new dynamics of agro-exportation is non-traditional crops. In general these are fruits and vegetables out of season for the countries of the North, such as melon, passion fruit, mango. These crops need high investment, are intensive in the use of agropoisons, and their prices fluctuate so much that most of the small producers that go in for these crops end up bankrupt.

Multilateral organisations like the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and regional free trade agreements reinforce the agro-export model. On the one hand, the opening of their markets is imposed on the countries of the South, which means that they receive into their own markets subsidised products with which the local peasant cannot compete. On the other hand, they impose the privatisation of the services and goods which the peasants need in order to go on producing.

You are putting forward peasant family farming as the alternative – but can it guarantee the food needs of a growing population?

Peasant farming – contrary to what certain ‘experts’ say – is more productive than the agribusiness model, because the peasant uses his (or her) plot of land more intensively, growing multiple products. Not only do they cultivate soya, for example, but also corn, beans, pumpkin, fruit trees, crops for fodder; they have pigs, hens, the odd cow.

If family farming becomes economically viable again – through protecting the market against cheap imports – it could not only revitalise rural areas, but be the key to solving urban problems. People in the poor marginal neighbourhoods of Latin American cities, living with gangs, robberies, crimes, have one single dream: to return to the countryside. But to a countryside where they have their own plot of land, where they can produce and earn their living with dignity.

So is this just an issue for the global South?

The problem of agriculture and food cannot be postulated in the classic North-South terms. It is

instead a question of models. The first thing to understand is that the dominant agro-export model serves neither the interests of the great majority of the population in the South, nor those in the North. It is an exclusive model as much in one place as in the other. What is happening to peasants in the South is also happening to family farmers in the North. In Europe thousands of peasant families are losing their lands. In both cases it is a dominant model of agro-industry, agro-exportation, which displaces them; and in each case they are defending a model of family farming against this dominant model. So we have to begin by understanding that it is to our advantage to ally ourselves with the peasant movements in the South to change the model of farming and feeding in this world.

What can people in the countries of the North do?

We should begin by thinking what we are buying, and not buy without thinking. We have to inform ourselves and consider whether what we are buying is a local product or comes from a transnational which displaced local producers in another country in order to bring us this product. Equally, how was this product produced? With agrototoxic pesticides and destruction of the soil and biodiversity? Or with ecologically sustainable methods? We should consider whether our act of consumption is strengthening peasant family farming, which is sustainable, or helping to destroy it.

The most important criterion for the consumer who wants to change the world is local consumption. In this way they will be supporting the family farmers of their own country, and they will not be harming peasants in another country. If someone in Europe consumes grapes imported from Chile, out of season, or melon imported from El Salvador or Nicaragua, also out of season, they are supporting a model of exclusion. Because it is not the small peasant who produces this food, but the big transnational. If one stops consuming this type of product from the transnational, and instead buys local products, one stops harming the peasant producers of another country and begins to support the family farmers of one's own country.

We must stop believing in the myth that opening the markets in the North will solve problems in the South. This is a fallacy. What the countries in the South need is to be able to close their own markets to subsidised exports from countries in the North, and to be able to subsidise their own local agriculture, to meet their local and national food needs.

Where does the concept of fair trade fit into this?

Many of us want to think that by buying a product from Argentina, Nicaragua, Ghana or India, we are supporting the peasant people of those countries. But the reverse is true: on buying a product of agro-export we are directly supporting a social exclusion model.

Of course there will always be tropical products like



Vanessa Kurz/Progressio

A farmer in Honduras inspects a pepper plant.

coffee or cocoa that cannot be produced in the North. In this sense it is clear: there will always be international trade and it is better that there be fairer prices. But this concept of fair trade can tend to legitimise the idea that the countries of the South should give themselves over to the production of these products for export. It does not solve the big structural problems, insofar as it continues within the same agro-export model – with better prices, but without changing the structure in which the best land is given over to exportation and not to the production of food for local consumption.

Therefore I identify myself with the concept of just trade which thinks each producer should have a local

The dominant agro-export model serves neither the interests of the great majority of the population in the South, nor those in the North

market, and that consumers can buy from local producers. The most important thing is that countries produce what they consume and that they have the possibility of creating national local markets in their own territory.

In order to change the unjust structures of the food and agriculture system, it is necessary first to understand how this world functions; second, to think when we consume; and third, to convert that thought into action. Social mobilisation is the only force capable of changing these structures.

Ernesto Cañada is a Progressio development worker with Fundación Luciérnaga in Nicaragua. Luciérnaga works on recovering and documenting the memories of Nicaragua's history and Latin American cultural identity. Ernesto is from Spain. World hunger: 12 myths by Frances Moore Lappe, Joseph Collins and Peter Rossett is published by Earthscan (ISBN 1853834939).



The flowering of the future

A young boy at a flower stall in the Huaral valley in Peru.

words: Alastair Whitson

pictures: Graham Freer



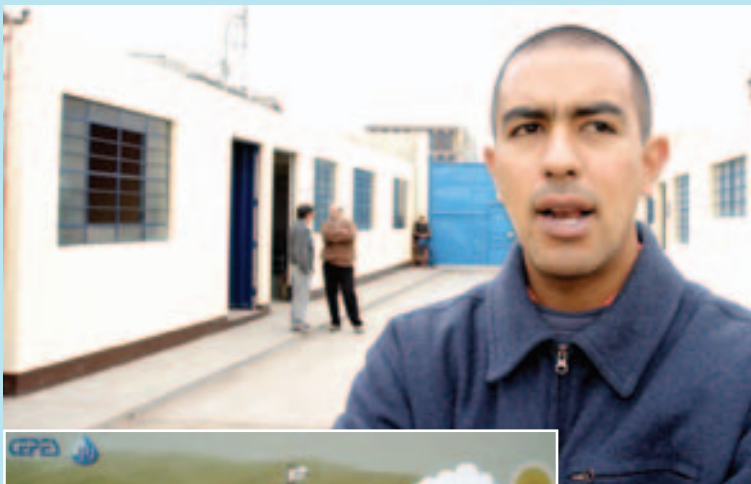
The Huaral valley is two hours drive north of Lima, through a bleak industrial landscape peppered with the shanty towns of the city's poor. Their ramshackle homes are built on crumbling hillsides or, quite simply, on desert. No water, no vegetation, nothing, just sand and dirt. How can people live here? Yet when people migrate to Lima in search of a livelihood, they have to stay somewhere. They build a shelter on the unclaimed desert, and at night go back to sleep there. They get an electricity cable, add another room to their house, arrange regular deliveries from a water truck, plant a small garden in the desert soil. And over time – maybe over a whole generation – they begin to achieve a bit of permanence; they begin to build a community.



The Huaral valley is, like the rest of the coastal plain of Peru, a desert zone. Despite this, it is intensively cultivated, with around 8,000 small farms growing potato, cotton, strawberries, flowers, maize, sweet potato, green beans. The farmers rely on water from the mountains which is distributed over 22,000 hectares of farmed land through a maze of irrigation channels. Administering the system – the responsibility of the Chancay-Huaral irrigation council – used to be a bureaucratic nightmare. Information about how much water was available, which crops were planted where and when, how much water was needed by each farm and when it was needed, whether the appropriate fees had been paid to release the water – all this used to be collected by pencil and paper and collated manually. The system was slow and cumbersome and could not respond to farmers' changing needs.

The problem has been solved through a pioneering computerised database that simplifies the collection and dissemination of information on water availability, water needs, crops, weather, markets, fee status. Under the paper system, less than half the farms were surveyed to assess their needs.

Now more than 80 per cent are being monitored. Irrigation council staff used to have to constantly update paper charts. Now the information can be updated and viewed at the click of a mouse. But the real beauty of the system is that all this information is available to the farmers themselves, through a network of telecentres connected by wireless internet technology. In addition to this information sharing, communities can also access the Internet at the telecentres, and make phone calls to anywhere in the world.



The new system is the brainchild of Progressio development worker Jaime Torres (left) and his engineering team at CEPES, the Peruvian Centre for Social Studies. 'We built this from scratch because we didn't find anything anywhere else in the world to build from,' he says. It is based on free 'open source' software and uses a content management system so people can add information to the database without technical computer knowledge. The telecentres make the information widely available, and a touch screen system with audio playback (see picture below left) is being developed for people who do not know how to use a computer. According to Carlos Saldarriaga of CEPES, 'This is the only project of its kind in Peru, where ICT skills are being applied to meet the real needs of farmers.' Jaime is a young Colombian who gave up a prestigious job at an internet company in Bogota – and the bright lights of the big city – to come to work with the rural communities of the Huaral valley. 'When you are working for a company you may have lots of ideas, but how many of them come to reality?' says Jaime. 'Here you have an idea and you can see it happen.'



According to Marcial Vega, president of the irrigation council (near right), 'The system is a great help. It saves time and it saves resources. Everything is immediate – information is immediately uploaded and available, and even if you are 25km away you can get the information through the telecentres.' Hector Salvador (far right), who has farmed in the Huaral valley for decades and knows Huaral, the farmers and their problems like the back of his hand, works for CEPES to promote the information system. 'The success is down to the fact that everybody trusts the project,' he says. They held workshops so that farmers could put forward ideas about what they needed.

'They helped create the project and now they feel it's their project,' says Hector. 'It has helped them to be more organised, more in touch with each other.' It means farmers can work out which crops to grow and when to get the best prices, and can be sure they will get the water they need to grow those crops. It takes the guesswork and chance out of the process. 'The idea is to increase profit,' says Marcial. 'Farmers are producing more thanks to access to the information, and they are very happy because they feel they are touching development. We know now that with information people can develop.'

interactnow

Go to www.progressio.org.uk/appeal to find out how you can support the work of Jaime and other Progressio development workers whose expertise and innovation is bringing improvements to the lives of people in poor communities.



The spirit of celebration: a woman in Uganda expresses her joy in life.

Giving thanks

Working with Sudanese refugees in Uganda reminds **Raymond Perrier** never to take anything for granted

ONE OF THE THINGS I find hardest to get used to here is the fact that people don't say 'thank you'. I realise that the English do tend to overuse the term and perhaps don't always mean it. But still, after giving a lift to someone, or showing a video in a settlement, or paying for some medicine, or (with donated funds) supporting someone to go to school, I wait in vain for the magic words.

At first I thought it was a language problem, and then that it was a sign of ingratitude, and then that it was evidence of dependency. But now I have resigned myself to accepting this as a cultural difference. No rudeness is intended by it.

But perhaps there is an underlying truth that they are communicating (albeit unwittingly). I expect the refugees to say

The young people here will not even drink a cup of tea without stopping to sing a hymn first!

thank you when the bore holes are repaired, or when some of them get a secondary education, or when a few medicines are available at the doctor-less health centres. But why do I expect the refugees to say thank you for things that in England I took for granted? After all, I never used to say thank you for the fact that water came out of my taps, or that the state provided me with an excellent education, or that the health system was there to catch me should I fall.

Is the difference just about what we do or do not pay for? Or is it something to do with what we feel 'entitled' to? But why shouldn't people who have suffered war, persecution, famine, loss of their homes and sexual abuse – through no fault of their own – feel entitled to water, education and health? Indeed, all of these (and many others) have been articulated as 'rights' in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Do we say thank you for the freedom of speech or the freedom of association that we enjoy 'by right'?

Socially I feel they (and we) should all say thank you a lot more than we do –

but I am not sure there is a philosophical or political basis for this. There is however a clear theological basis for it – and people here seem to appreciate that. They may not feel the need to say 'thank you' to others, but they do not stop thanking God. The young people here will not even drink a cup of tea without stopping to sing a hymn first!

Saying thank you to God is something which I find very easy here. There is so much that we cannot take for granted that when there is electricity or a good road or a cool day, God gets an immediate vote of thanks. There is a useful meditation that a Jesuit is supposed to do at least once a day. It is to reflect on the previous few hours and notice all the things that have come from God but were taken for granted at the time. It is amazing how much we do not notice – things we use, people we meet, moments of happiness, beautiful views.

But such reflections inevitably bring up the problem of evil. If God is credited with the good stuff then why is he not also to blame for the bad stuff? I can offer no pat answers to that. But what I observe around me are people who retain hope in the face of repeated disappointment. The start of repatriation has been delayed yet again. The conflict in Darfur worsens. The rains are slow in coming. And yet even the students who have been abandoned mid-studies by the UN remain hopeful.

As I wrote these reflections, the refugees around me were celebrating Holy Week. They enacted various rituals: waving palm branches, washing feet, venerating the cross, lighting the Easter bonfire, singing Alleluias. All of these actions express a theology of saying thank you (or 'Eucharist' to give it a technical name). What God has done for us – from creation to salvation – we did not deserve and we are never entitled to. The least we can do is say thanks.

Raymond Perrier works for the Jesuit Refugee Service at Rhino Camp in northern Uganda. Most of the 20,000 Sudanese at the camp have been there for more than eight years. Raymond previously worked as a branding consultant and he assisted Progressio, on a voluntary basis, with the transition to our new name.

IT WAS THE BEGINNING of the year 2000. We activists and NGO workers who through the 1990s had supported and campaigned on behalf of the East Timorese liberation struggle were meeting with a group of young Timorese students in Oxfordshire. Timor was on the road to statehood following the historic vote by an intimidated but determined population to separate from Indonesia. The question was, what did the students want us to do now to support them?

The response was unequivocal. 'We need skills. We cannot go home empty-handed – we have a country to build.' 'Our leader, Xanana Gusmao, has recommended us to gain an education before we go home.'

Education is one thing many East Timorese have missed out on. The education service provided by the Indonesians – rote learning, poorly resourced – had hardly prepared them for anything. And many had skipped school to devote themselves to the struggle for self-determination anyway.

We agreed to set up a charity which would raise funds for students to get an education in the UK. When they asked for volunteers I found my hand in the air. With little knowledge of how to go about it, I started networking and got stuck into the task. My aim was to set up the charity and quietly withdraw, but somehow I became the chairperson – a position I am only now relinquishing after six years!

Journey

It has been quite a journey. To start with, the East Timorese students wanted us simply to fundraise, divide up the money and parcel it out to them. We decided we could not possibly operate like that – though for the first couple of years we did reserve the scholarships for UK-based East Timorese students who wanted to return to Timor.

A couple of years into the trust we worked out what has been a very fruitful partnership with Westminster University, which provides fee waivers; International Students' House, which provides free student accommodation; and ourselves who find the students, bring them to the UK and provide living expenses. We started sourcing our candidates from East Timor itself, recognising that these students were more likely to want to go back at the end of their studies.

Fundraising for the trust has been far

The struggle continues

Catherine Scott describes how the Ai-Kameli Trust has been helping East Timor's people get the skills they need to build their emerging nation

from easy. I am not afraid to admit there were times when I felt like giving up. But we are gradually building up private donors – the best hope we have of establishing a funding base. Myself and our trustees have given many a talk to would-be donors and interested audiences – with mixed results. One early attempt at the Anglo-Portuguese Society netted exactly the train fare Estevao Cabral, one of our board members, had spent getting to London!

Celebration

But we also have things to celebrate. For instance, we had the great pleasure two years ago of sending home our first graduate – Florencio Fernandes, with a degree in business economics. He will be followed this year by graduates in biochemistry, biotechnology in medicine, and tourism.

Meeting and working with the students has been inspiring. I was delighted to have Lucia Freitas, one of our students, speak at the launch of *Independent women*, a book I co-authored with Irena Cristalis last year. She spoke of her plans to go back home and work in a forensics laboratory so East Timorese society would be better able to nail the perpetrators of domestic violence – a serious problem faced by East Timorese women. I am proud of her.

Another satisfying development is the establishment of an advisory board of East Timorese academics in Dili. They will advise us on new candidates, and help us channel funding to deserving students who want to study at home at one of the new universities springing up domestically.

We have an active and engaged board of trustees in the UK, and it has been a marvellous experience shaping this young charity. Although our achievements are yet modest, we have a good basis for future growth and for



Nick Sireau/Progressio

Facing up to further study: school students in East Timor.

making a concrete contribution to the 'skilling up' of East Timorese civil society – much needed and, with the recent unrest and civil strife in this newly independent nation, more necessary than ever.

I raise an imaginary glass to all who have contributed to the Ai-Kameli Trust over the past six years and encourage everyone to go on contributing in whatever way you can. Nothing can be more practical and concrete than providing education and skills to committed young individuals set on doing their best for an emerging and deeply needy country. There is a huge amount yet to do... *A luta continua* (the struggle continues)!

Catherine Scott is manager of Progressio's Africa, Middle East and Asia programmes.

interactnow

Ai-Kameli is the tetum word for Sandalwood – an historic export of the island of Timor. If you would like to support the Ai-Kameli Trust, please contact Alison Krentel (info@aikameli.com; www.aikameli.com) or telephone Catherine Scott on 020 7288 8628 for further information.



Em Esta Cidade

In this city

The rains have ceased but cracked drains spill dank dark pits across the street waiting to catch the blue and white kombi taxis weaving, swerving, suddenly stopping, finding impossible spaces in the endless traffic

In this city

Sun burns through the morning polluted haze, smoke from tyres stacked in pyres. Satellite dishes cling to crumbling masonry, wires trailing like a greasy fringe. City of neglect and war.

In this city

Gaggles of girls young in everything but faces retie babies tight to their backs with capellanas. On every girl's head plastic bowls of fruit, cigarettes, kitchen towels, endlessly hawking.

In this city

Young dudes sell everything that Asia produces – watches, football shirts, bathmats, carjacks – and not a little attitude.

In this city

Everything is for sale

In this city

Along the wall of the barracks, the fading revolutionary slogans. Three bent over women hunkered down in the dust. Behind on the red wall in white 'Emancipao de Mulher'.

In this city

Five million squatting peasants where the few thousand whites lived and fled. But the peasants will never go back.

In this city

'Por favore mantenha nossa cidade limpe' – a notice leans, stuck in a blowing chase-my-tail of rubbish.

In this city

Everyone speeding – their own course like the fishers they once were, their own furrow like the peasants they will never be again.

In this city

Where once the revolution in mad May days of rage turned and ate its own children

We survive.

Steve Kibble, Luanda, capital city of Angola, June 2006.
Steve is Progressio's advocacy coordinator for Africa and Yemen.

A violent past...

The civil war ended 14 years ago, but Angola still bears the scars of its violent past. The country is in desperate need of help. Most of the population live in extreme poverty and lack basic needs such as water, food, and housing. There is only one doctor and one midwife for every 20,000 people, and one nurse for every 1,000. Angola suffers high rates of child malnutrition, low school enrolment rates and poor adult literacy.

A hopeful future...

Here at Progressio, we are working for peace, justice and sustainable development in many countries around the world. Since the 1990s our international advocacy work has played a key role in supporting Angola's struggle for peace – as it also has for East Timor, Somaliland and El Salvador. Today our work continues to help rebuild communities torn by wars. But we depend on people like you to do our job. Without your support, we can't act. Please make a donation today and help us continue our work in fighting poverty.

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