

interact

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

Why justice matters

The campaign for
a better future
for East Timor

Also in this issue:

Focus on HIV and AIDS
Disabilities in Somaliland
Participation in Honduras



editorial

Why justice matters

Floriana Nunes Saldanha, pictured on the front cover of this *Interact*, lives in East Timor's capital, Dili. Her husband Luciano Sequeira was murdered in the violence that broke out after the East Timorese people voted for independence in 1999. Floriana has since raised her eight children alone.

'We have all been through a horror,' she says.

'When the result of the referendum was announced, it was a happy moment. But it didn't last. In the afternoon the army started shooting.'

Floriana and her children took refuge in the local church. One day, Luciano did not come to check on them.

'People had been running away, trying to escape from the militia. Luciano ran too. I found him lying there in the hills. He had been shot.'

'What are my hopes now for the future? Two things. I expect the government to help me to look after my kids.'

'But I want justice too. I don't know who killed my husband, so I'm expecting the government to do something to support me.'

You can read more about East Timor and Progressio's campaign to help bring justice to the East Timorese people in the *insight* section.

This issue of *Interact* also focuses on HIV and AIDS. World AIDS Day on 1 December is an annual reminder to the world of the continuing severity and impact of the epidemic. But it is also an opportunity to celebrate the strength and dignity of people who are living with HIV and AIDS, and the commitment of those working to tackle the epidemic and its consequences.

Cover picture: Floriana Nunes Saldanha, pictured in Becora, Dili, East Timor, in September 2008.
Photo: Marcus Perkins

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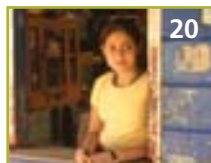
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Published December 2008 by Progressio

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Editor Alastair Whitson

Executive Director Christine Allen

Design Twenty-Five Educational

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

Printed on REVIVE 100% chlorine free recycled paper.

Recycle this magazine!

SR GREGORIA, who barely comes up to my shoulder, takes my arm to steady and steer me as we cross the muddy, rubble-strewn, pot-holed road. We are in the town of Wanament, on the Haitian side of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola: quite possibly one of the saddest places I have ever been.

Though neighbouring Dominican Republic is famed for its picturesque beaches and palm trees, there is nothing picturesque or unspoilt about the poverty here. Children in nothing but ragged underwear peer at us from the doorways of makeshift shacks. The recent hurricane didn't affect Wanament, but the town looks as though it has been hit by a natural disaster.

We've come to visit Centro Punte, the 'Bridge Centre', a local organisation partnered by Progressio that is helping to build links between Dominican and Haitian children living on either side of the border. Sr Gregoria, an inspirational Dominican Juanista sister who is also working with child labourers, has come to meet us too.

I'm amazed to hear that Wanament is actually one of the wealthier towns in Haiti, but for children, it's no place to grow up. The vast majority of kids here are working by the time they are six years old, selling goods in the market or cleaning houses across the border in the Dominican Republic.

Getting to work means a perilous daily journey to the other side of the river, just to scrape a living. Though some adults choose to cross the bridge that straddles the two countries, this means dealing with passport control. With no passports, children become embroiled in bribery and abuse. So it's safer and easier to wade or swim. Even at night.

And still, there is no guarantee of employment. Some, mainly girls and women, find domestic jobs in the homes of wealthier Dominicans. It's hard work, and there is no guarantee they will be treated fairly. With no formal right to work in the Dominican Republic, there is no legal protection for them either, and once



Hope amidst despair

they find employment, some are too frightened, or simply too desperate, to leave.

All of which leaves no time or money for education. Sr Gregoria explains that some of the children she works with spend all day selling goods in the market, but then can't calculate how much money they have made or lost at the end of the day. It's no wonder they can't add up if they never get the chance to attend school.

Then there's the risk of HIV and AIDS, Sr Gregoria says. The average age at which children in Wanament become sexually active is ten; HIV prevalence is highest amongst adolescents.

In spite of everything, Sr Gregoria is a realist. She has devised a training programme for working children, with flexible classes that allow them to work when they need to. Lessons cover basic education as well as crafts and vocational skills, so the children will be able to provide for themselves and their families as they grow up,

and will have a more secure future. I was struck by how well she knows the children in Wanament, and how practical her project is. Though clearly saddened by the conditions in which these Haitian children live, she doesn't let her emotions get in the way of the important work she is doing.

Though we may try to explain poverty away – blaming social or political ills – it's not logical, not inevitable and not acceptable. Sr Gregoria, for one, refuses to accept the situation. As we said goodbye, she shrugged and said, 'What can I do? What do I know? I'm just one person.'

But Sr Gregoria is not 'just' anyone. Her indignation is accompanied by a determination to change these children's lives, and she really is making a difference, one child at a time.

Kate Long is Progressio's funding coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Film festival supports Progressio

THE ANNUAL Discovering Latin America film festival, showing in London the first week of December, has this year chosen Progressio as its charity beneficiary. Profits from the film festival will be used to support our work with women affected by HIV and AIDS in the Dominican Republic.

Progressio is working in the Monte Plata province of the Dominican Republic with Colectiva Mujer y Salud – the Women and Health Collective – to help provide improved health care for some 15,000 women affected by HIV and AIDS. The project will contribute to the prevention of HIV and AIDS through community campaigns, and will improve treatment and care for HIV-positive women.

The film festival also featured a screening of the film *The challenge of coexistence*, an investigation into the multi-faceted results of Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic, directed by Progressio development worker Tigu Guimarães.



A workshop run by Colectiva Mujer Y Salud.



Kate Long/Progressio

Misery for Zimbabweans with HIV and AIDS as food shortage bites

THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE with HIV and AIDS are being forced further into misery in Zimbabwe, as drastic food shortages and spiralling prices make it difficult to follow antiretroviral (ARV) treatment regimes.

Progressio partner organisations are reporting that people are stopping taking ARVs – the medicines essential to manage HIV infection – due, in part, to side effects associated with lack of nutrition and the soaring devaluation of the country's currency.

'In some cases, people on ARVs are having to make a choice between taking their drugs on an empty stomach or just stopping,' said Kevin Ndemera, Progressio's programme director in Harare. 'ARVs are a powerful medicine which require good nutritional

support. If you are without adequate food, it tends to drain you physically.'

The food crisis in Zimbabwe has reached a critical level, with over four million people – approximately a third of the population – currently requiring food aid. Coupled with spiralling inflation that has seen the cost of a month's ARV treatment hit the US\$50 mark, people are struggling to get the drugs they need on an estimated average monthly wage of US 30 cents.

'ARV treatment is a life-long commitment and stopping is not advisable,' said Harry Walsh, Progressio's HIV and AIDS coordinator. 'Due to their particular vulnerability, people on ARVs must be allowed access to food, particularly in rural areas where the situation is most desperate.'

Taking the 'community challenge'

PEOPLE ARE BEING CHALLENGED TO group together to take action in the second phase of the *livesimply* project launched on 30 November. 'Individual actions may seem insignificant but together the small steps of many people can have an astonishing impact,' says the *livesimply* network.

The first phase of *livesimply* asked people to make promises – a way of getting people to themselves take action and encourage others to do the same. More than 18,000 promises were calculated to have taken place in the first year.

At the beginning of Advent this year, *livesimply* moved into a new phase when people were asked collectively – whether as a parish, organisation, church or community group, or just as a group of friends – to respond to 'Community Challenges'. The 'challenges' can be rooted in learning, lobbying, lifestyle change, liturgy and social action. Supporting Progressio's *East Timor: Who Cares?* campaign is one of the actions that groups can collectively take.

Giving her support to the initiative, Progressio executive director Christine Allen said: '*Livesimply* is about thinking and praying about transformation and change and finding ways to live simply, sustainably and in solidarity with our sisters and brothers throughout the world, millions of whom live in terrible poverty.'

Contact Progressio's campaigns officer Brie O'Keefe (brie@progressio.org.uk; 020 7288 8617) for more information about taking the 'Community Challenge' to campaign for justice and reconciliation for East Timor.

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Find out more about *livesimply* 'Community Challenges' at www.livesimply.org.uk

Solidarity with the poor of the world means hearing their stories and supporting their calls for justice, writes **Christine Allen**



No hope without justice

AS PEOPLE IN THE UK make preparations for Christmas celebrations, there is much talk about the 'credit crunch' and the impact of the economic downturn on consumer spending. Perhaps at this time we should spare a thought for the impact that the global recession is having on the world's poor.

A recent report by the Institute of Development Studies (see box) gives some 'snapshot views' of how the financial crisis is affecting developing countries. The authors demonstrate that the poorest countries, despite being less involved in global financial markets, will suffer severe indirect impacts. These include:

- *Rich countries demanding less exports.*
- *A fall in investment* as investors shy away from markets that are perceived to be riskier.
- *Volatility in exchange rates.* Developing countries may see drops in the value of their own currency as foreign capital is withdrawn; costs of

activities may increase; and companies and governments with substantial foreign currency-denominated debts may contract or even collapse as a result.

- *A decline in remittances* from workers in recession-affected countries – which for Somaliland (and other countries) plays a crucial role in the economy.
- *Decline of foreign aid.* Richer countries could reduce aid as governments reassess their priorities.

In all the media frenzy about the economic situation, the voices and stories of those people who are poor around the world has just not figured. Yet, as we see in this edition of *Interact*, people telling their stories, being listened to and supported is central to nurturing and sustaining hope. In East Timor, like elsewhere, the hope of the people is often in their children: we hear from people who are poor (whether overseas or here in the UK) that they want a better future for their children.

That's why long term development matters – development that helps people to exert some level of control over their lives and to determine for themselves what are the solutions to their problems. It's also why advocacy matters – people are poor and kept poor because of policies and structures, not just bad luck.

Seeking justice isn't an easy task. It takes place on all sorts of levels, from international through to personal. We know our personal choices can and do make a difference to the world, and your support for organisations like Progressio is a big part of that. For that we thank you.

In one sense, while not decrying the negative impact of the economic downturn on our own economy, we could see it also as an opportunity: an opportunity to discover ways to live more simply and sustainably, and thus find ways to live in solidarity with many in the world. The *livesimply* project isn't going to tackle the global economic crisis, but it is interesting to see that across the churches, and the population at large in the UK, there is a growing dissatisfaction with consumerism and short-termism.

Finding ways to live as if there is a longer-term agenda can bring hope to more people than just yourself. Actions like buying fair-trade produce may seem like luxuries in economic downturns, but they provide much needed income for people far worse off than ourselves, and are a simple measure to take to show your solidarity.

In 1971 the Synod of Bishops released a letter entitled *Justice in the World*. This powerful document is a statement that calls upon all Christians to be actively engaged in seeking a more just world, and for the theological reasons as to why they should be. For the Christian, it is through acts of justice that his/her salvation is found. For the Church, to seek justice means to practise justice. Or to put it another way, as Gandhi said: 'Be the change you want to see in the world.' Now that's something to put on the Christmas list!

Christine Allen is Progressio's executive director.

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Voices from the South: The impact of the financial crisis on developing countries, published November 2008 by the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, UK, can be viewed and read online: see www.ids.ac.uk/go/research-teams/globalisation-team/research-highlights



The Pereira family in Bairo Pite, Dili, East Timor: throughout the world, people want a better future for their children.

EAST TIMOR: OUT

What does it mean to live in the shadow of injustice and unrest? For the people of one of the world's newest and poorest nations, the legacy of East Timor's violent past merges with the daily struggle to survive and a quiet determination to move forward in peace. We hope these pictures and stories will inspire you to take action and support our campaign for justice for East Timor. Photos by **Marcus Perkins**. Words by Jo Barrett.



When he was a student, Julinho Ximenes saw two of his close friends killed in the massacre at Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili. There, in 1991, Indonesian military forces attacked and killed an estimated 250 unarmed people. Today, in his work for a human rights organisation, Julinho is campaigning for a process of justice in the country.



East Timor's soaring unemployment raises concerns that violence could return to the streets as disaffection grows. With an estimated 80 per cent of young East Timorese finishing school without any job prospects, most now expect to leave their troubled nation – one of the poorest in Asia – in search of work abroad.



OF THE SHADOWS



Student Elsa Araújo Pinto sorts through her washing at the makeshift family home in one of Dili's many camps for internally displaced people. Political unrest two years ago forced more than 150,000 East Timorese to flee their homes. Today, many still wait for government compensation so they can rebuild their houses and their lives.



Children in Liquiçá play with homemade catapults. Half of the East Timorese population is aged below 15, a legacy of years of violence. This means that young children often outnumber adults who struggle to support and educate them.





On the streets of Dili, the East Timorese capital, a group of young boys run a bicycle repair shop. Forty per cent of the population lives on less than \$1 a day, so every extra penny is vital.



UN peacekeepers on patrol in Ermera District. After almost 10 years of independence, the United Nations is still responsible for many aspects of the country's administration. Their presence has artificially inflated the economy and led to political tensions between international staff and local people.





At the height of the political violence in 2006 Sister Guilhermina Marcal helped care for some 23,000 people sheltering in the grounds of the Canossian Convent at Balide in Dili. Today, that number is still 1,400. Sister Guilhermina campaigns for those who have been displaced by violence, saying they will never be able to return home without financial and emotional support.

A salt-worker uses a bamboo tube to pour seawater through a clay filter to make salt crystals. This is the first step in a long and labour intensive process, which brings whole families to the salt flats in Liquiçá province each day from 4am. With unemployment at 50 per cent, many East Timorese have to take what little work they can get.



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These photos were taken in East Timor in September 2008 by Marcus Perkins. They form part of a photo exhibition compiled in support of Progressio's *East Timor: Who Cares?* campaign. For more information please contact Brie O'Keefe, Progressio's campaigns officer, at brie@progressio.org.uk

TRAPPED BY THE PAST

East Timorese MP **Fernanda Borges** explains why justice is so important to her country's future – and why supporting Progressio's *East Timor: Who Cares?* campaign will make a real difference to the people of East Timor

FROM 1974 TO 1999, East Timor suffered a brief but violent civil war and then 25 years of occupation by an Indonesian military regime that perpetrated widespread and systematic human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary detention, sexual violence, sexual slavery, and forced displacement.

The East Timorese Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) – established in 2001 following East Timor's independence – found that a minimum of 102,800 Timorese

died as a result of the conflict and Indonesian occupation. At least 18,600 Timorese civilians were murdered or forcibly disappeared, while over 84,000 people died from displacement-related hunger and illness. One of the displaced, Francisco Soares Pinto, in his testimony to the CAVR, recalled his experiences in late 1975:

'We were not allowed to go more than 1km from the concentration camp. In order to survive, we ate coconuts but they soon ran out. One by one people started to die of starvation. Five to 10 people died each day. In one week

40-50 people would die: children, adults and the elderly. All day and night you could hear people all over the camp crying.'

Almost every East Timorese person who lived through those years suffered some form of displacement, and many were displaced several times. Through its numerous interviews, the CAVR also found systematic and widespread use of rape, sexual torture and humiliation by the Indonesian security forces in their war against the Timorese resistance. Often women would be raped and tortured as a means of indirectly attacking an absent target such as the woman's husband or other male relative who was a suspected resistance member. One woman testified:

'They hit me in the head with a wooden chair until I bled. I was hit in the ribs and kicked in the back with their army boots until I couldn't walk. Then they started raping me. They tortured me like this for a month. They used me as their slave. Every day I had to wash their clothes and cook for them.'

Arbitrary detention, ill-treatment and torture were routinely used to subjugate the population and collect information about the Timorese resistance. Bernardino Ximenes Villanova told of his experiences in 1980:

'They continued to beat me until I couldn't take it any more... I was taken to Balide jail and placed in one of the secret steel cells for 10 days. I wasn't sure when it was day or night. The water that I had to drink was full of chicken faeces and soap. My toilet was just the floor.'

Although the CAVR took close to 8,000 victim statements, many more victims are yet to tell their stories. This represents an important act for the victims – a process of listening to and acknowledging their suffering.



Marcus Perkins

Families sheltering in the grounds of the Canossian Convent at Balide in Dili. At the height of the political violence in 2006 some 23,000 people took refuge here.

'Our hearts cannot heal because those who committed the crimes have still not been punished'
– Luisa Da Jesus

Further investigation needs to be done in order to find the remains of disappeared family members and establish how they died. Truth is the basis upon which justice and reconciliation can occur. Implementing the recommendations of the CAVR report *Chega!* ('Enough!') is critical to completing the truth-seeking process in order for real justice and reconciliation to take place.

The victims' testimonies illustrate how the suffering continues to plague many people and the impact it continues to have on our society. The statements describe the people's suffering and their hopes for the future. These are the victims' own words and it is now time to listen and respond to what they are telling us.

Yet attempts to bring the perpetrators of crimes against humanity in East Timor to justice have so far met with little success. There is a lack of political will on both the East Timorese and Indonesian government sides to deal with this difficult topic. Justice is what the East Timorese victims are calling for louder than anything else, and justice for crimes committed between 1974 and 1999 is a right enshrined in the East Timorese Constitution; yet still the victims wait.

Victims like Esmeralda Dos Santos and Luisa Da Jesus, who continue to suffer the pain and injustice of the past, and continue to ask for justice. On behalf of victims like Luisa, I want to thank Progressio for taking up our challenge for justice and making it yours as



Marcus Perkins

Unemployed with five children to care for, José Menezes Nunes Serrão somehow survived an attempted beheading in April 1999 when pro-Indonesia militiamen attacked the local parish church. Today José campaigns for the Indonesian authorities to reveal the location of the unmarked mass graves of up to 200 people who died in the attack at Liquiçá, East Timor.

well. In doing so, you are helping to strengthen the people in their pursuit for fundamental rights.

'I ask Timor's justice system to punish and imprison those who committed rape'
– Esmeralda Dos Santos

Those rights include reparations for the victims of violations. Under international law, when a violation is committed by a state against its own nationals, reparations must be paid. Successor governments inherit the obligation to provide reparations for victims.

International law uses a broad concept of 'reparations', not confined to monetary compensation. Reparations are understood as redress provided to victims for the harm they have suffered. This can include compensation (for economically assessed damage) but also other types of redress, such as:

- rehabilitation (including medical, psychological, legal or social services);
- 'satisfaction' which encompasses a number of measures including truth seeking, locating disappeared persons, recovering and reburial of bodies, public apologies, commemoration and memorialisation, and steps to prevent future violations;
- restitution: that is, measures to restore victims to their original position (including restoration of human rights, identity, employment, citizenship and return of property).

Stability in East Timor and the region depends on real accountability for past atrocities. Without it there can be no peace, stability, rule of law, good governance, and respect for human rights, democracy and development.

Many victims are asking the question – what was the point of independence? Until East Timor, with the assistance of the international community, implements the recommendations of the *Chega!* report, Mario Bereceu and many others like him will not

cont...



Last year, a motorbike rider killed Gloria Felisidio Acasio's husband in a suspicious accident near her home in Dili, East Timor. Though she knows who killed him, Gloria is still waiting for an arrest. After 25 years of occupation and nearly a decade of fragile independence, justice is notional in East Timor. It is not uncommon for criminals to avoid punishment.

During the Indonesian occupation, the international community to a large extent failed the Timorese people by failing to uphold their right to self-determination. Instead, strategic political interests were given priority over the human rights of the Timorese.

By pressuring the East Timorese government to take action on past crimes, by responding to the recommendations of the CAVR *Chega!* report, and by providing financial and technical support to this new transitional justice centre, countries like the UK can provide their own form of reparations to East Timor's victims and contribute towards a more peaceful and stable East Timor in the future.

have the guarantee that the people will not suffer again.

'I ask the political leaders not to repeat what happened in 1975 because it is the grassroots people that suffer'
 – Mario Bereceu

There has been reluctance to talk about or promote *Chega!* by the international community for fear it will offend the Indonesians or the East Timorese leadership who are set only on reconciliation – the forgive and forget approach. It hasn't worked anywhere else – why should it work in East Timor? Eventually the issue arises again. The recent crisis in 2006 – when widespread violence erupted throughout the country, causing over 100,000 people to be internally displaced – confirms to all of us that the cycle of violence has yet to be broken; and the struggle to protect human rights continues in East Timor.

The investment made by the international community since independence to transform East

Timor into a viable and democratic state will only succeed if democratic principles such as the rule of law and justice are firmly embedded in the country. Institutional reforms and strengthening human rights are a form of victim reparations. These are some of the hardest changes to make: changing the institutional culture of the army or police after years of seeing their role as one of domination and control over the population; changing a climate of impunity which has arisen after years of a dysfunctional legal system.

The Progressio campaign *East Timor: Who Cares?* is important to the East Timorese people because it will help awaken the silence around the findings and recommendations of the *Chega!* report. An important aspect of *Chega!* is that it is not solely focused on the past. It also provides important recommendations that will help build a strong future for the new generation. One of these is for a justice centre in East Timor, that would provide financial reparations, educate people about Timorese history and human rights, and coordinate memorialisation programmes, among other tasks.

'We suffered and were violated but the fire of hope for independence always burned in our hearts. And so we ask the leaders to govern with democracy and not to commit further violations'
 – Maria Da Silva

*This is an edited version of Fernanda Borges's speech at the Progressio AGM on 14 October 2008. Fernanda Borges, formerly East Timor's Minister of Finance, founded the Partido Unidade Nacional in 2005, and led her party in the 2007 parliamentary elections, winning three seats. She is a leading voice in calls for the implementation of the *Chega!* recommendations.*

I WAS SIX YEARS OLD. One day the shooting started and we just ran and bodies were toppling over all around us. They were just shooting at everything that moved. We couldn't be anywhere for more than half a day. The mortars kept coming. They went past with a hissing sound. They wouldn't give us a break to rest. I thought, 'Why are we being shot at like this?'"

The violence of the start of Indonesia's 25-year occupation of East Timor is still etched in the mind of Fernanda Borges. Today, she is seeking a resolution to the years of violence that will enable her country to move forward in peace.

Borges' family – nine children, her parents and two elderly grandmothers – fled the violence in 1975. They first took refuge in Indonesia, moving on to Portugal, the country's former colonial occupier, and finally Australia.

'My mother tried to shelter us from the mortars. If we were lucky, they missed us. If we weren't, we would be gone,' Borges recalls.

'We were on foot, but finally found a truck and thought we could get away quicker. A pregnant woman was there. She must have been about due to give birth. A mortar hit the woman. It broke her open. She was thrown up into the air. We were all screaming. But the truck couldn't stop...'

It is for atrocities like this that today Borges campaigns for justice, both within her own country and abroad. 'Attempts to deny or delay justice will only foster political insecurity and sink the East Timorese people further into poverty,' says Borges. Despite achieving independence in 1999, East Timor is still one of the poorest countries in Asia, with 40 per cent of the population living below the poverty line.

Justice is a bit of a slippery notion in East Timor. Estimates

BOUND TO THE FUTURE

Fernanda Borges tells *Interact* why her personal history is intertwined with her country's history – and future destiny

put the number who died under Indonesian rule as high as 200,000 – around one in five of the population – yet by the end of 2004 only 18 people had been tried for human rights abuses. And only one conviction is left standing.

Many evade trial, with victims' families living alongside their known murderers. It's not uncommon for those who are tried and found guilty to receive presidential pardons and be released before serving their full term.

This, Borges believes, has led to the 'cycle of violence' that dominates the fledgling state. 'You can't have a country like that,' she says. 'You have to have the rule of law. We have to have trials.'

Like in many other East Timorese families, Fernanda Borges knows what it means to lose someone in the family. Her brother Francisco, a young, idealistic member of the pro-independence group, Fretilin, stayed behind when the Indonesians invaded. As a consequence he met a brutal death. He and 10 other youths were tied to the back of jeeps and pulled along until their bodies were torn in pieces. She has since met the man who killed her brother. He remains at large, living in Australia.

Borges returned to East Timor from Australia in 1999, motivated by the desire to bring a better future to East Timor. 'It's not about my



Fernanda Borges pictured with the Progressio East Timor: Who Cares? campaign poster at the Progressio AGM in October.

brother,' she says. 'There were so many others. If I want to lead the people of East Timor to a better life, I have to be a responsible leader; we have to be democratic; we have to have justice implemented; we have to have the rule of law, government, a sovereign parliament. Otherwise, we're a failed state.'

Borges believes that her fight for justice is 'a spiritual calling': 'I have to do this for the people,' she says. 'At times I feel like a lone voice. But when I stand with the people I see that there are lots of us. Then I am hopeful.'

Doses of hope

Progressio's **Catherine Scott** is impressed and inspired by a fresh approach to working with disabled and visually-impaired people in Somaliland

EVER SINCE I LEARNED THE NAME of this particular Somaliland local NGO, I was becoming more and more curious about it. I just loved it – 'Doses of Hope'. In NGO-name terms, it's unusual, yet has an incredibly positive and inviting quality about it. I was looking forward to meeting the people behind it.

Progressio has identified Doses of Hope (DOH) as a replacement partner for our Comic Relief-funded project working on human rights advocacy with human rights organisations, youth, women, and people with disabilities in Somaliland. Unfortunately the Somaliland Human Rights Network (SHURO-Net), which we had previously included in the project, had been eviscerated by government interference, and had to drop out.

Stepping into Fadumo Alin's office with our Somaliland country representative, Dr Adan Abokor, we were given a warm welcome, and served with

tea. Fadumo herself was dressed, like many Somali women who have lived in the Diaspora, with a colourful, light veil pushed back on her head, so you could see her head properly, but otherwise clothed as other local Somali women. A growing number of the younger women, influenced by more conservative forms of Islam, have been dressing in black and veiling their faces too.

Fadumo was among a group of refugees displaced to the Netherlands in the early 1990s due to the conflict back home in Somalia and Somaliland. They found themselves, like many other refugees, struggling, living on social security, bottom of the pile socially in a wealthy western country.

Starting up

One thing they did have, though, was education and creativity. Desperately concerned at the plight of

those they had left behind, the destruction and food shortages, the lack of resources and lack of organisation, they set out to help in any way they could. So a group of them formed an NGO – not at the outset totally set in what it would respond to, only that it would respond to the needs of their community back home, however they presented themselves.

Totally lacking the capital usually needed with which to start a new organisation, the women began approaching donors in the Netherlands. It was tough and initially demoralising. Donor agencies are well networked, and share information with one another. It's hard to break into the circle.

'For a long time,' Fadumo explained, 'we couldn't even get an appointment'. A group of refugees trying to raise funds is nothing unusual. 'We had to counter the "starving African" image and show that we had a coherent vision and, moreover, "a plan",' says Fadumo. There were plenty of setbacks. An officer in one donor organisation wrote: 'We don't fund this sort of activity, and quite frankly, I don't believe that any other organisation in the Netherlands would fund you either!'

Breakthrough

The breakthrough came when a micro-finance proposal they had submitted to RABO-Bank Foundation hit the spot with one of the assessors. They wrote back to say that they found the proposal concrete and water-tight, and they'd like to meet the women. That meeting led to



Nick Sireau/Progressio

the first rural micro-finance project to get started in post-conflict Somaliland. Beginning with only 100 women, between 1999 and 2008 the micro-finance programme reached a total of 6,500 direct beneficiaries and has indirectly benefited another 42,000 (the dependents).

When DOH opened their office in Hargeisa, Somaliland's capital, in 1999, they had one manager and a watchman. A short decade later they have 40 staff in Somaliland, all dedicated to the original vision of responding to community needs.

On their first fact-finding mission to Hargeisa, Fadumo says, they met 'women from all walks of life': 'We wanted them to believe, too, that they had skills and talents. The war had destroyed all the institutions, including the financial ones. So we set up micro-finance projects.' They particularly saw also the need to respond to disabled women.

'Disabled people in Somaliland,' Fadumo explains, 'are just expected to get on with it. There are no services at all. The general attitude to those far-sighted employers who would take on disabled people tended to be, "couldn't you find someone able-bodied?" Mostly they end up literally invisible, stuck at home in darkened rooms, afraid and unable to go out or to live any kind of independent, empowered life of their own.'

Advocacy

At that time not only were there no services, but no associations or support groups with any strength or influence. Even now, with 26 member organisations in the Somaliland National Disabilities Forum (SNDF – also a Progressio partner organisation), quality of life for the disabled remains low and relatively unaddressed at state and even community level.

People with disabilities badly need advocacy for their human rights, Fadumo affirms. There's a great need for community-based activities, and for support and empowerment also for their families. The first decade of DOH's work has been mostly related to building the



Fadumo Alin

capacities of local people and local NGOs. But now Fadumo recognises that more is needed, and that national policies need to be established and strengthened.

She is clear that the advocacy must be done by people with disabilities themselves if it is to be credible and effective, and if they are to move beyond passivity. 'How can we strengthen the capacity of the disabled themselves to make their own assessments, design the policies they need, and then advocate for them effectively? Why should another organisation do it for them? They know their own needs and they can envision their future.' DOH asks them to say for themselves what they need. 'The ideas generated are fantastic,' she enthuses. They want to run their own school, take it all into their own hands, sort it out, get it registered. 'We see our role as supporting their strategies,' says Fadumo.

Progressio's partnership with DOH will be in working with the blind and those with physical disabilities. The Progressio development worker will assist them with building the capacity to lobby for better services and rights for people with disabilities.

Creativity

The beauty of DOH's approach lies in its creative problem-solving. They simply come up with good ideas to solve practical problems, and then implement

them. No fuss. Like a project to make customised shoes for those with foot deformities. They plan to put the equipment on a truck and move it around the country as a mobile workshop – spreading the skills in relation to using the equipment to a wider cross-section of people. Even simple things like networking mothers of children with disabilities so that they can form support groups to help one another has reduced the isolation of those with disabilities and those who care for them.

When I came away from our discussions with Fadumo I felt convinced we were entering into a really rewarding and fruitful new partnership, which would bring with it not just dedication and serious collaboration, but fun and enjoyment too.

Fadumo herself has difficulty sometimes believing what they have achieved. 'It takes a lot of nerve, to start out with no money whatsoever and create something successful out of nothing,' she remarks. They had to have real confidence in their own abilities – a confidence not easily shared by those whose perceptions of her and her friends were of a group of passive, dependent refugees. But, as Fadumo says: 'We must not forget that human capital can be used too!'

Cathy Scott is Progressio's regional manager for Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

Women in Somaliland: Doses of Hope encourages women to play their part in the country's future.

Loud and proud

A groundbreaking video on HIV and AIDS is helping to tackle stigma and discrimination in Nicaragua, writes Progressio development worker **Ernest Cañada**

THE SPREAD of the HIV and AIDS epidemic in Nicaragua is serious. Despite having one of the lowest infection rates in Central America – probably due to significant underreporting – the figures in Nicaragua nevertheless point to a sharp growth in the number of infections. In addition, in recent months the climate in the country surrounding health and sexual and reproductive rights has deteriorated, particularly for women's organisations. The political tension between the government and this area of civil society is not good news for those working to tackle HIV and AIDS.

Nicaragua is also a poor country, and poverty significantly contributes to vulnerability to HIV. At the same time, in a vicious circle, the spread of the epidemic contributes to more poverty. This situation is particularly serious in rural areas, where lack of means adds up to an enormous lack of recognition and stigmatisation of

'It's clear that [the video] will only reach people at the grassroots, poor people. Those are the people it's intended for. It doesn't matter much to rich people. It's clear that in Nicaragua AIDS is a fundamental problem for poor people, and the video brings that out. I definitely feel grateful for it.'

– Julio Mena, Director of ANICP+VIDA

people who are living with HIV and AIDS, thus creating an environment where their rights are put at risk.

That's why Progressio partner organisation Fundación Luciérnaga, in collaboration with the Catalan association Alba Sud, came up with the idea of producing a video to promote awareness about HIV and AIDS. With this video we wanted the Nicaraguan people to know what people with HIV think, and above all, we wanted them to know what their experience of living with HIV has been. But we especially wanted them to learn about this through direct accounts, without mediation by NGOs, state institutions or specialists. The aim was to provide an opportunity for people with HIV to make themselves known to others and to recount their problems and needs in their own words; and at the



Dieter Telemans/Panos

A young couple near the cathedral in Granada, Nicaragua. Young people are among those in Nicaragua most vulnerable to HIV and AIDS.

same time, to show the importance of the role of community organisations in defending the rights of people with HIV.

I worked as a producer and co-scriptwriter for the video. Initially, it was my role to look for funding. Once that was secured, we decided to suggest to ANICP+VIDA, an association made up exclusively of people who are living with HIV and AIDS, the possibility of making a video with them from the point of view of their own experiences.

Bruce Menzies, the president of ANICP+VIDA, thought that this would be very difficult, due to the stigma and discrimination that people with HIV still suffer in Nicaragua. However, he agreed to introduce me at the ANICP+VIDA members' meeting and to support the initiative.

The ANICP+VIDA members reacted positively, once we had clarified the approach we wanted to take and had agreed how the video would be used. Several people decided to take the difficult step of telling their story publicly. This is something that has happened more often in other countries, but not in Nicaragua. We then spoke to each of them, getting to know their stories, their lives, and finally, we selected five people. They all signed an agreement authorising the public screening of the video.

Once the first version of the video was complete, we presented it to the people featured in the video, and the Board of Directors of ANICP+VIDA, so that they could evaluate it and suggest changes. It was a moving moment for the entire team that worked on the production – but especially Mariona Ortiz, producer and editor, and Riders Mejía, cameraman – to see their faces during this first viewing.

The video shows the experiences of five people in Managua: Aura, Oscar René, Bayardo, Luís and Julio. Through their own accounts, the video reveals some of the issues that concern them

'To have a video of this kind, in which people with HIV are the protagonists, is important because it lets people see that those of us living with HIV are still human beings, because it disrupts fixed ways of thinking, and because it makes it clear that it has life and death consequences. The video shows something else that's very important: people living with HIV and AIDS are afraid not just for themselves, but for those close to them. They are afraid of losing their jobs, being rejected by their families or pointed out by their neighbours. The video helps you to identify yourself with the problem, it touches your heart, your soul...'

– Bruce Menzies, President of ANICP+VIDA

the most: the fear that overcomes a person when they receive the news; discrimination in social, work and family situations; the context of poverty in which they endure HIV; the lack of medical care; the need for love and solidarity from family and friends; the importance of forming groups of people with HIV, such as ANICP+VIDA.

Every person tells their story against the backdrop of the places that have been most significant for them. Bayardo, a young artist, speaks in front of Managua Cathedral, where one day he felt sick, which worried him, so he went to a doctor. Oscar René, a cobbler, speaks in Managua, where he works each day. Julio, director of ANICP+VIDA, speaks at the hospital, where he chooses to go every week to be with other people with HIV who are seriously ill. At the end of the video, they are all seen together with other members at an ANICP+VIDA meeting, talking about what grief means for them.

After a public screening in Managua, which was attended by many members of ANICP+VIDA, we began a campaign of public presentations. To date, more than 500 copies of the video have been distributed; and more than 20 public events have been organised throughout Nicaragua, at which some of the protagonists of the video and members of the ANICP+VIDA management team

have appeared. The video has also been screened at events such as the 17th International AIDS Conference held in Mexico in August 2008, and there are plans for the video to be broadcast on local and national television stations in Nicaragua.

Overall, the response has been very positive. Many people have commented that they were surprised by the clarity and determination with which the participants in the video express themselves. For the vast majority of the people who have seen the documentary at public events, the situations described have moved them, and caused them to feel a sense of solidarity with the participants. The discussions that have taken place after screenings of the video have had a significant impact, because the attendees have been able to meet and speak to the people with HIV in person. The stigma around HIV is so strong, that the simple fact of being able to listen to people with HIV in an environment of respect and trust has made a strong impression.

The video was filmed in July 2007 – little more than one year ago. Sadly, two of the video's protagonists have died in this short space of time. Luís and Óscar René are no longer with us. AIDS is a brutal and menacing reality which particularly affects poorer populations. They lack the resources and care to ensure a dignified life.

To continue to tackle stigma and discrimination, we need more coordination among the diverse range of initiatives and approaches – but ultimately, as this video shows, all our efforts should have, as a basic principle, respect for human rights and human dignity in the context of HIV and AIDS.

Ernest Cañada is a Progressio development worker with Fundación Luciérnaga.

'Many people still feel indifferent towards HIV. They deny the epidemic. But AIDS is here, although they believe it doesn't affect them. The video helps to create awareness, because of the way it is made up of different people's testimonies. It's important that those who come to see it know and realise that HIV is not just something that belongs to a particular group, a homosexual thing, but belongs to everyone; it doesn't just affect homosexuals, but heterosexuals too, young men, housewives, children – everybody. Therefore, the video helps us break with that idea, that taboo, that HIV is only of concern to homosexuals.'

– Yanina Miranda Rueda, member of the Executive Committee of ANICP+VIDA

John Bayron Ochoa (third from left) with participants; (pictures to right) scenes from masculinities workshops.



Macho men

Changing ingrained male attitudes is crucial to HIV prevention in El Salvador, writes Progressio development worker **John Bayron Ochoa**

THE LEADING ROLE THAT MEN PLAY in the spread of HIV in Latin America poses questions about masculinity, men's practices and risks. I will share some reflections about my experience in El Salvador on this issue.

The organisation that I work with is called CONTRASIDA: it's a Christian-inspired organisation, made up of people committed to responding to the HIV epidemic in El Salvador. I work with the masculinities team within CONTRASIDA's prevention programme. The masculinities approach seeks to raise the awareness of key men – leaders and role models, from different political, social and cultural backgrounds, aged from 17 to 60 – and of men involved in working on effective responses to HIV. This is so that they continue their transformations towards fairer and more equitable relationships with women, with other men, and with themselves. All this will contribute to an increase in the number of men playing a positive role in HIV prevention.

What does it mean to be a man in El Salvador? Generally, being a man is characterised by domination, control and violence towards women and other men, and innumerable risky practices in exercising his sexuality. To overcome this

– that is, 'to leave behind, defeat, resolve' this – will contribute notably to a clear reduction in the spread of the HIV epidemic in Latin America.

It is for this reason that working on the relationship between masculinities and HIV, in groups made up exclusively of men, has an effect on the knowledge, attitudes and practices related to the virus and its spread.

In the workshops, real life and participatory processes are used, with methods such as theatre, interactive techniques, team games, music therapy and art therapy, amongst others. No distinctions are made between the participants on the basis of age, level of education or knowledge.

The aim is to raise the participants' awareness of the implications, risks and challenges that hegemonic, traditional or *machista* masculinities have, and of the way these represent a large obstacle in the path to HIV prevention.

The following are some myths and practices related to the way of being a man, as identified by many of the participants. You can see the implications that the myths have for the men themselves, the people with whom they have intimate relationships, and at a

social level in the context of risk in which they find themselves.

Myths, practices and the context of risk in the sexuality of Salvadorian men

- Doesn't think about the consequences
- Must have sex
- It's only numbers and more numbers
- When drunk it doesn't matter who you do it with
- Must not be afraid
- It doesn't feel the same with a condom
- Insatiable
- Has sex with many women; likes to be promiscuous
- Does not use a condom
- Does not care for himself sexually, which leads to passing infections to the opposite sex
- Alcohol is an excuse not to remember
- Always ready for a sexual encounter
- Lots of sex with lots of people
- With prostitutes you can do everything
- Is violent
- He decides when he wants it and how he wants it
- Is opportunistic, takes advantage of everything he encounters

The following myths and beliefs often strengthen discrimination against people with HIV.

Myths and beliefs about HIV and AIDS

- It's contagious, it's synonymous with death, and people with HIV or AIDS should be isolated and hospitalised
- People with HIV are dirty
- A punishment from God
- It's a gay disease
- It's their own fault
- Keep away from him (or her) because



they've got AIDS

- It happens because of the people you hang around with
- If only they would die, then they can't infect any more people
- They deserve it
- They are paying for it
- It goes away if you go to church
- You shouldn't touch people
- A punishment for lack of sexual control
- Perverts get it
- It's an illness created in order to reduce the population

This is more evidence that hegemonic or *machista* masculinities generate vulnerability for men and for women, and that they are an obstacle to sustainable and effective prevention campaigns.

What do men say, and in what ways do they change?

The first reactions during the processes or the monitoring days are of shock at the existence of spaces exclusively for men to talk about being a man and HIV. A commitment and willingness to participate in the whole process and similar events emerges.

Three or four months after having begun the process, the male participants begin to express small changes in their lives. In addition, the people with whom they live or work notice significant changes in the men's behaviour. The following are some accounts by some men about changes in their lives, after having participated in the CONTRASIDA Masculinities and HIV Prevention basic processes.

On a personal level

They themselves recognise that they already think a bit more about expressing

aspects related to their personal lives, and in relation to the treatment of women. Looking at what has been their experience of being a man, or their masculine identity, has allowed them to achieve a greater capacity for introspection and self-reflection, which they often said they did not have previously:

- 'It has made me more aware of attitudes and behaviours that I had before, even if I have not managed to make many changes... more than anything it has helped me to do a self-diagnosis of myself...'
- 'It has made me reflect on what I was like when I was young, what I am like now, and what I want to become. Now I have clear aims and I am excited to see what I was missing when I was more *machista*...'
- 'I have realised that I am quite *machista*, despite the fact that I have lived with just women...'

At an interpersonal level

A key aspect of the masculinities approach is that the majority of participants become advocates of the workshops, promoting them and recommending that their friends and family participate in the workshops, or at least making sure that they know what the workshops consist of:

- 'For me it was a shock, as I did NOT consider myself to be *machista*, so I shared it with my friends. The good thing is that my family support me in continuing this process...'
- 'I have had changes with my family, in my attitude towards my son. There have been things that I have changed as I go along, the way I educate my son is one of those things. My wife works, and I take care of the house. I cook... I am happy to be doing what

I am doing. It's going well for me. My oldest daughter is 18 and she says to me: "Dad, what's happened to you? You've changed!" There has been a change...'

At an objective level

This sphere takes into account changes in aspects which are directly related to the projects and themes of HIV prevention:

- 'It has made me want to get an HIV test...'
- 'It will be really useful for me, given that in the gay community *machismo* is also present...'
- 'I like the diversity, the difference in ages. It's never too late to learn. It's really important to be in a group of men...'

Those of us involved in this work strongly believe that the masculinities approach can make a big contribution to effective and sustainable prevention. But it is very important that in the work with men who are looking at their masculine identity and their relationship to the spread of HIV, attention is given to the structural changes in each person: that is, the real changes in the conception and negotiation of daily life. Because in the traditional masculine vision, it has always been that changes and transformations have to be firstly at a structural level so that personal changes can occur.

So perhaps Progressio's slogan could be taken further: changing lives, changing minds, changing structures...

John Bayron Ochoa Holguín is a Progressio development worker with CONTRASIDA, the María Lorena Salvadorian Foundation for the Fight Against AIDS, in El Salvador.



A girl in a village in Honduras, where rural areas have historically suffered from the failure of centralised poverty reduction strategies.

Power to the people

A 'think tank' in Honduras is proposing a new national development plan based on the needs of the people, writes Progressio development worker **Lincoln Villaneuva**

POVERTY AND INEQUITY continue to be the most serious threats to development in Honduras – particularly in rural areas and for women, children and young people, the landless, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.

Honduras has had many opportunities to confront and tackle poverty. Following Hurricane Mitch in 1998, a national plan for reconstruction was drawn up, but the objective of 'national transformation' was not realised. In 2005, the country wrote off 75% of its foreign debt; but the resources freed up were misused or used for other purposes than poverty reduction.

The recent global financial crisis offers a third opportunity to move away from 'crisis management' and come up with a new vision for the country's future. It is into this breach that FOSDEH – Foro Social de Deuda Externa y Desarrollo de Honduras (the Honduras Social Forum for External Debt and Development) – has stepped.

FOSDEH is a civil society organisation which monitors the issues of public debt, poverty reduction, social public spending,

public sector budgeting, corruption, transparency, development and advocacy by local people. It is now working with civil society organisations and groups to draw up a new strategy for development – a plan and vision for development, as proposed by the people of Honduras.

FOSDEH's approach is to highlight the reality of the problems, potentials, expectations and demands of the population in the regions, and use this reality – instead of the centralised, sectorial perspective – to define national and local public policies, strategies, plans, programmes, projects and budgets.

At present, the national budget, being centralised, does not meet the needs of people in rural areas – for example, for schooling, literacy, health, nutrition, drinking water. It's no wonder that 73% of the rural population lives in extreme poverty, compared to 40% of the urban population.

To give a specific example, small-scale farmers lack arable land, technical assistance, credit, capacity-building and marketing assistance; and the prices farmers are paid for their produce often

do not cover the costs of production.

FOSDEH consults with people through regional forums and workshops attended by leaders of community organisations and other community representatives. The forums are examples of citizen advocacy in action: speaking out publicly, sending letters, requests and complaints to government and development organisations, and organising public marches, protests, and public meetings.

The forums have also helped to draw out the expectations of people in the regions: for example, that each region has its own budgets for education, health and water; that authorisation, allocation and land ownership registration programmes are established for small-scale farmers and landless people; that technical assistance and credit are available to small-scale producers; that infrastructure such as roads, markets, electricity and housing are accessible to poor people and not just to the rich and powerful, as at present.

FOSDEH is now drawing these elements together to build a development plan based on a regional, decentralised approach – in contrast to the current sectorial, centralised and non-coordinated state management approach. It is proposing that eight Wide Development Regions (RDA in Spanish) be established with integrated and coordinated management of each region. It further proposes that civil society organisations are 'written in' to the process: for example, that they participate in the preparation, approval and execution of decentralised (by region, community and locality) plans and budgets which address poverty, social inequality and the people's demands.

It is a complex process of planning and national development, but one with the potential for Honduras to have in the near future a plan and vision for development that is proposed and endorsed by civil society.

Lincoln Villaneuva has been a Progressio development worker with FOSDEH since February 2007. He facilitates FOSDEH's working group on poverty reduction and development.