

autumn 2003

# interact

## Raising our voices

The power of the media to  
promote development

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Women at Ayaha settlement in Somaliland, where CIIR/ICD works with projects supporting returning refugees.

“Changing minds,  
changing lives. That  
is what makes my  
heart beat faster”  
– CIIR member

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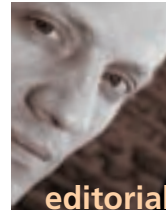
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editorial

## Raising our voices

Opinions don't come out of thin air. If we trace our own opinions back to their source, we often find that they come from the media.

We may not believe everything we read in newspapers or magazines, hear on the radio, or see on TV. But we are certainly influenced by it, and often persuaded by it.

In the battle for people's hearts and minds, the media is a powerful tool. As such it is usually controlled by the rich and powerful. Yet it can also be a tool for people who want to challenge the dominant voices of power.

These people – poor people, people who want change – are learning to use the media to raise their voices, and get their messages across.

This first issue of **Interact** focuses on how the media is being used to promote development. From Peru to the Dominican Republic, people are working out how to tell their stories so that others will listen.

**Interact** also aims to listen to these stories, and to the views and opinions of the people behind them. It deals with issues of concern to CIIR and our partners around the world. But it is not just the voice of CIIR. It aims to let people speak for themselves.

We hope you will join with them and us in raising our voices for a just world free from poverty.

Editor

Have your say – write to the Editor at CIIR or e-mail [Alastair@ciir.org](mailto:Alastair@ciir.org)

Cover picture: A boy in Haiti seizes his chance to talk to the media. Photo by Marc French/PANOS



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In some countries, CIIR operates under the name of International Cooperation for Development (ICD). CIIR/ICD works with local partners and people for sustainable development and the eradication of poverty.



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A large print version of this magazine is available on request.

Lucy Hurn shares her experience of arriving in Lima, Peru, to work with CIIR/ICD partner Latinamerica Press

# Living the dream



Lucy Hurn, pictured in England before she set out for her 'dream job'.

ARRIVED FOUR DAYS AGO and, so far, so very good. I was picked up by Edwin, who works for CIIR/ICD in Lima. As we drove through the city there were fireworks going off in the distance. I asked what they were for and he said that he'd arranged them to welcome me to Peru. The best thing about the joke was that I got it (in Spanish!).

I'm slowly getting to grips with the language. One problem is that I learnt Spanish in Guayaquil (Ecuador) where it was over 35 degrees every day. It's absolutely freezing in Lima, but I don't know any words to do with the cold...

The people in the CIIR/ICD office have been great. As well as being really helpful, they're all lovely people – which is actually quite important when you arrive in a new country and don't know a single person!

As part of my orientation I've visited some CIIR/ICD partner

projects around Lima. They've really made an impression on me. Several of them are in an area called Villa El Salvador.

The story of the area is inspiring. In the 1970s, a group of people from the countryside came to Lima in search of 'a better life'. They were so determined to stay that in the end the government offered them some land.

When they arrived on this new land they formed democratically elected groups to organise themselves. All the land was planned out equally, with space allocated for schools and markets and with a central plaza between each cluster of houses. They also allocated land for an 'industrial park' and for agriculture.

There is an amazing sense of community. I visited a project for the elderly and when we asked them how the area was when they arrived, they all shouted out, 'It was just sand... and now we're living here' – still with a great sense of pride about what they had created from nothing.

I also went to a nearby project that started with just one room in a house. Jerry, the woman who runs the project, said to parents in the area: 'If you want to help your children, donate me a room in your house or whatever you can'. Now, they have a football pitch, classrooms for children to do their homework after school, and workshops where they learn various skills, do handicrafts, art, theatre, music – things these kids would never get a chance to do otherwise.

My job is with Latinamerica Press, which specialises in reporting on the issues that often don't get covered in the mainstream press – issues such as human rights and the

## 'It was just sand... and now we're living here'

environment (see Insight, p8). I'll be helping them increase the sales of their stories to media outlets, and generally increase the profile and impact of their work. My dream job!

I'm now into the second week of my job. There's loads to do – such a wide variety of issues to look at. Tonight there's a vigil in support of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which has been working to tell the truth of what happened during the years of civil war (see News, p7).

The report has been big news – but another national obsession is football. Last night we went to a local bar to watch Peru play Paraguay. Peru won 4-1. After the game we walked to the local park. People were going mad in the streets – cars hooting, people and flags hanging out of windows. It wasn't just young men either. There were as many women as men watching the match, and afterwards whole families came down to celebrate.

And it was all completely good-natured – unlike England. It made me feel miles from home, and completely at home.

Lucy Hurn is a CIIR/ICD development worker.

interactnow

Read Lucy Hurn's internet diary at [www.20six.co.uk/loooccy](http://www.20six.co.uk/loooccy)

Are anti-retroviral drugs really the answer to HIV/AIDS?  
asks Sue Lucas

# Responding to treatment

**O**VER THE LAST TWO YEARS I have travelled to southern Africa several times. Each trip has been shockingly punctuated by deaths. In the early 1990s it was similar here in the UK. Now, here, the deaths have slowed. Not so in Africa.

In the UK, anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs have broken the power of HIV. In Africa, they are largely inaccessible. It is estimated that among the 41 million people living with HIV in developing countries, between five and six million need ARV treatment.<sup>1</sup> According to UNAIDS, fewer than four per cent of people in need of ARV treatment in low- and middle-income countries were receiving the drugs at the end of 2001.<sup>2</sup>

This has led to a new mantra – ‘Three by Five’. Three million people in developing countries on anti-retroviral therapy by 2005: the target from the Declaration of Commitment of the 2001 UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS.

The message is compelling. Poor people have the same rights to life and health as rich people. In poor countries people are dying because they do not have drugs. The answer is to provide drugs.

Or is it? In the haste to respond to the disaster of HIV, campaigns for treatment have become louder, and the approach to solutions correspondingly narrower. But there are lessons from other attempts to right the injustices of the world through narrowly focused strategies.

Primary health care, education for all, debt cancellation – all have attracted campaigns. Each has had a part to play, but none have changed the inequalities that

create ideal conditions for the spread of HIV and make access to treatment so hard.

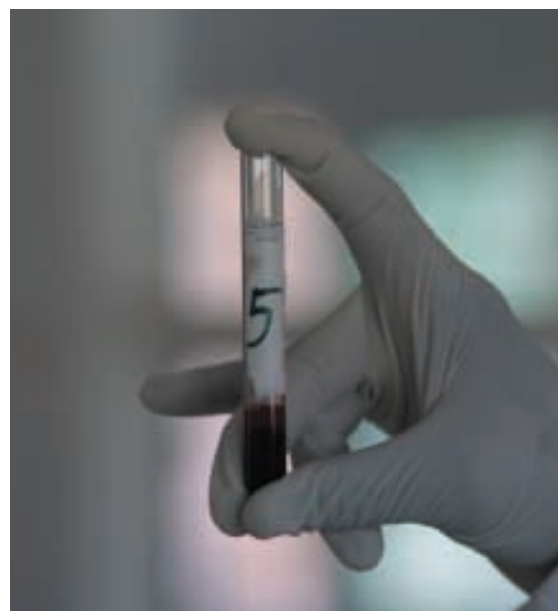
A single approach to HIV is unlikely to overcome the multiple challenges of prevention, care and coping with the effects. Concentrating on treatment alone may detract from addressing the other aspects.

The cost-effectiveness of treatment has been well illustrated in Brazil, a middle income, relatively low-prevalence country, where ARVs are free and people on treatment have remained productively in work. But this is not the whole story.

The target of three million is only half of those who would benefit from this treatment today. By 2005, it will represent an even smaller proportion of total need. The need is cumulative: it increases each year as more people with HIV reach the stage of needing ARV treatment, and continues to grow with the 14,000 new infections each day.

I am not arguing *against* access to ARV treatment but *for* a new approach integrating care, treatment and prevention. Because of the nature of HIV and the way it is transmitted, the answers are tied up as much in human relationships – sexual relationships, family relationships and a sense of belonging – as they are in global policies.

Relationships make up the intricate details of our lives. It is people in the context of their own culture and community who will in the end make the difference between broken communities and strong, healthy ones. Healthy communities respond to HIV, act to care for people in their midst



Nick Sireau/CIIR

*Testing times: blood testing in Somaliland, where CIIR/ICD development workers support a broad-based strategy for tackling HIV/AIDS.*

who are affected, and lead the changes to help stop their young people becoming infected.

A framework of supportive law and policy helps, but choices on how to care, who to treat and what to change need local leadership. This means building human capacity, focusing on strengths within communities as well as assessing needs, and building support for community leadership.

So far HIV has been addressed mostly through short-term interventions and by ‘experts’ bringing in solutions based on external analysis. The result has often been fear and discrimination against people with HIV.

Trying to identify and meet needs for treatment from outside communities may well mean exhausted health personnel, a sense of helplessness and dependency in communities, and increasing numbers of people becoming infected with HIV – leading to ever-increasing demand, finite supply, and failure to narrow the gap between rich and poor that HIV so effectively widens. In contrast, a strategy of supporting community and family strengths makes it possible to imagine sustained access to treatment.

*Sue Lucas is a member of the CIIR Board of Trustees and has been working with NGOs on issues of HIV/AIDS and development since the mid-1980s.*

<sup>1</sup> International HIV Treatment Access Coalition, A commitment to action for expanded access to HIV/AIDS treatment, December 2002.

<sup>2</sup> UNAIDS report on the HIV epidemic, December 2003.

**Christine Allen's Agenda column will return in the next issue of Interact.**

## Poor world flexes muscles as trade talks collapse

**T**HE FIFTH MINISTERIAL MEETING of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in September came to an abrupt end when negotiations reached a stalemate and broke down, writes *Lucy Cathcart*.

Contacto Sur, an Ecuadorian radio station and CIIR/ICD partner that was covering the meeting, called the collapse of the WTO talks 'a triumph for civil society and developing countries because, in effect, they managed to forge a common front against the richer countries like the US and some members of the EU'.

In previous WTO meetings, it has been commonplace for developing countries to be railroaded into opening their markets to cheap imports,

privatising basic services and ending government support for domestic industry. Negotiations frequently take place behind closed doors, with rich countries threatening to cut aid and debt relief in order to force developing countries into unjust and damaging trade agreements.

The issue at the centre of the breakdown at Cancun was agriculture. The rich nations made no commitment to phase out subsidies for their own farmers, while demanding that developing countries, those most in need of protecting their fragile markets, end all subsidies. This time the developing countries refused to back down.

The G21, an alliance of 21 developing countries led by Brazil, India and China, led the way in standing up to the US and EU, and encouraged other developing nations to form similar negotiating blocs. Analysts have commented

that this represents the biggest shift in the power balance of the WTO since its creation in 1995.

However, while the rich nations did not get their way, the collapse of the talks meant that neither were any changes agreed to the existing system. Contacto Sur spoke to Maria Elena Martinez, from the Mexican Campesino Union, about the devastating effects of WTO agricultural policy: 'There's no way to survive here so people migrate. There's no way to survive, so people send their children to work in any job. There's no way to survive here, and people are dying.'

This is the second time that a WTO ministerial meeting has ended in deadlock, and all parties are agreed that something must be done to move forwards. It is a crucial time for supporting developing countries in their efforts to redress the balance in global trade.

### interactnow

Campaign for a change in the rules that govern global trade with the Trade Justice Movement – [www.tjm.org.uk](http://www.tjm.org.uk)

## Role models promote education

**S**UCCESSFUL ROLE MODELS ARE helping to persuade indigenous San youth in Namibia to pursue their education despite stigmatisation and discrimination.

Many San children were dropping out of school due to lack of financial resources, language barriers, and feelings of stigmatisation from teachers and peers, says CIIR/ICD development worker Yvonne Pickering.

Pickering has visited several schools to show students a newsletter about San students successfully pursuing further education. This was 'very effective in capturing the interest of each and every student,' she said.

Older San youth also visited the schools, including Kleofa, a student training in paralegal and human rights at the Legal Assistance Centre in Windhoek, who told the San children: 'Never give up. With dedication, hard work and commitment you can make a difference in your communities.'

## Landmark day for fledgling nation



Nick Sireau/CIIR

**S**TUDENTS COMPARE NOTES in the computer lab at community-based Amoud University in northern Somaliland (above).

The university, established in 1998, held its first graduation ceremony in July this year. Twenty-five graduates were awarded Bachelor of Arts in Business and Public Administration, and seven

students received Bachelor of Arts in Education.

Somaliland vice-president Ahmed Yusuf Yassin presided over the graduation ceremony, which was attended by hundreds of people from all regions of Somaliland, including ministers, leaders of political parties and community leaders.

(See also Viewpoint, p15.)

## Peru faces up to civil war's bitter legacy

**P**ERU HAS TAKEN a major step towards healing the scars of its recent violent history with the publication in August of a report by the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), writes *Rashmi Misra*.

According to the commission, over 69,000 people lost their lives in the 20 years of insurgency and counter-insurgency between 1980 and 2000. The majority of the victims – three-quarters of those who were killed or disappeared – were indigenous quechua people caught between the warring sides.

The TRC spent two years gathering testimonies from 18,000 people affected by and involved in the violence. It found that the armed insurgency of Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) was the direct cause of the tragedy, but that in responding to the threat the State itself perpetrated and

institutionalised human rights abuses.

Gloria Cano, a lawyer working with the Peruvian Pro-Human Rights Organisation (APRODEH), told CIIR: 'The report simply confirms what we have known all along: that the government adopted a systematic policy of forced disappearance and extra-judiciary execution over these two decades.'

The Peruvian armed forces, according to the TRC report, were responsible for 30 per cent of the deaths and disappearances. Shining Path was responsible for 54 per cent of deaths.

Cano said: 'We knew that the Shining Path had committed many crimes, but it is only now that we can see the scale of this horror.'

The TRC's recommendations include legal reforms and improvements in health care,

education and economic rights. It is also pushing for compensation for victims and criminal cases against those identified as being involved.

Rosalía Stark from human rights organisation Alto Huallaga, who has been working with the TRC for two years, told CIIR: 'We now have evidence on the armed groups, terrorists, and former politicians responsible for these atrocities. We are asking president Toledo to see the commission to completion to ensure that all cases, including those against the La Colina death squad and former president Fujimori, are tried.'

She added: 'For the justice of thousands of people, we need to ensure that the commission's recommendations are acted on. We need to repair the trauma and pain of the Peruvian people and give them back their dignity.'

## Political realities hinder struggle for justice

**E**AST TIMOR'S GOVERNMENT IS struggling to balance the country's demands for justice over human rights abuses by the Indonesian military with the need to foster good relations with Indonesia, writes *Catherine Scott*.

East Timor's chief prosecutor, Longuinhos Monteiro, has warned that the country could face a backlash internally if it fails to pursue cases against Indonesian human rights violators. He argued that East Timor has a moral obligation both to the victims and to the world.

However, prime minister Alkatiri prefers to leave the campaign for justice for the victims of human rights violations to the international community, while governments internationally are only too ready to quote the East Timorese official line of looking to the future and putting the past behind them.

Monteiro's comments follow

the damage to the credibility of Indonesia's ad hoc human rights tribunal when it gave a lenient sentence for crimes against humanity to Major General Adam Damiri, who commanded troops in East Timor during the violence that surrounded the country's independence in 1999. Damiri received three years in jail, pending appeal.

Many feel that the tribunal was orchestrated by the Indonesian authorities, who wanted to be seen to investigate accusations of human rights violations without subjecting the accused to the scrutiny of an international tribunal, which the United Nations commission of enquiry recommended in 2000.

This summer the East Timorese Truth and Reconciliation Commission has heard a series of testimonies from victims of the Indonesian army's campaign of rape and terror during its



*Still waiting for justice: the crowd at a rally in East Timor.*

occupation of East Timor. Commissioner Olandina Caeiro summed up by saying that the world must know the truth about the atrocities in East Timor so that they may never happen again.

The onus is now on East Timorese civil society to raise its voice loudly enough and frequently enough to gain a reaction, and on international organisations to keep pressing for justice.

### interactnow

Write to your MP urging action for East Timorese victims of human rights violations – see Amnesty International's website at [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org) for details

Independent journalism in Latin America is giving voice to issues that are overlooked by the mainstream media, writes **Barbara Fraser**

# News from the inside out

**I**T WAS EVERY EDITOR'S NIGHTMARE. Although the news was good – Colombian rebels had just released scores of soldiers who had been captured during a battle – it happened just after Latinamerica Press's (LAP's) weekly bulletin had gone to the printers. The bulletin was going to lag far behind in reporting one of the most significant events of the moment. How could it give its readers a fresh look at what would be, by the time the next issue was published, stale news?

Lucien Chauvin, a journalist and CIIR/ICD development worker with LAP, had heard that a Colombian bishop played a key role in the negotiations that led to the hostages' release. Although LAP is based in Lima, Peru, he decided to track down the lead. Several hours later, he had a fresh perspective and

an exclusive interview with the bishop about the crisis.

In a world of sound bites and big-business media, that's the kind of reporting that makes alternative media like LAP special.

'My years at LAP gave me an opportunity to grasp a wide range of issues from perspectives not often covered by traditional media,' Chauvin says. 'The mainstream media tend to cover hot issues, but not connect the dots, and many of the issues in Latin America have both local nuances and overarching links.'

LAP's grassroots perspective is maintained by correspondents – both Latin Americans and English or US journalists living in the region – who are well-versed in local issues. Because they live in the countries they cover, they are familiar with the complexities of political and

social events. And they're on the scene at times of crisis – like Hurricane Mitch, which devastated much of Central America in 1998 – or triumph – like the achievement of the Shuar people of Ecuador, who successfully blocked a multinational company from drilling for oil on their ancestral lands.

In the spirit of the best alternative journalism, the writers zero in on ordinary people and grassroots movements, telling stories that major media consider unimportant, or telling important stories from a different perspective. Over the years, LAP – now offering a biweekly printed bulletin and a frequently updated website – has built up a loyal readership and a dedicated network of correspondents.

Noticias Aliadas – the Spanish-language equivalent of LAP – was founded in Peru by the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers (the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America) in 1964. Its goal was to inform readers about church events and trends at a key moment in church history in Latin America, when liberation theology was taking root. Four years later, Noticias Aliadas became a non-profit organisation under Peruvian law, and the English-language version was started five years after that.





As church leaders and Christian communities began questioning traditional power structures in Latin America, LAP had to broaden its mandate, branching out to cover other social issues, especially human rights. In the 1970s and 1980s, it covered dictatorships and dirty wars, telling the stories of the people whose voices were most often silenced. Those years left an indelible mark on the publication and its staff.

Raquel Gargatte, director of the organisation and producer since 1999 of its award-winning radio programme, A Viva Voz ('Aloud'), says: 'The importance of our work lies in the fact that we provide independent, objective and thorough analysis of the region, emphasising respect for human rights and never distancing ourselves from the overall context of Latin America.'

The foray into radio was another turning point. The readers of the printed bulletin were mainly college-educated, and many lived outside Latin America, counting on the bulletin to keep them abreast of trends and developments in the region. The radio programme, however, was produced in Spanish and broadcast over a network of community radio stations affiliated with CIIR/ICD partner ALER, the Latin American Association for Radio Education, based in Quito, Ecuador.

A Viva Voz has been important in bringing LAP even closer to the grassroots and building bridges of solidarity among communities, says William Chico, graphic designer and translator with LAP. 'In today's globalised world, the strength of the people in the face of overwhelming political and economic power lies more than ever in their unity and understanding,' he says.

Gargatte agrees. 'We make a constant effort to show, through our information, that in Latin America and the Caribbean, there are more things that unite us than divide us,' she says.

Keeping that perspective is not always easy for an alternative publication. Like many of its ilk, LAP

*Tired of protesting: the issues affecting people like this boy in Ecuador are often sensationalised then forgotten by the mainstream media.*

struggles financially. As a small publication wary of being beholden to advertisers, it depends on subscription income and donations from international agencies. These donations have dropped off in recent years, while the newspaper's relatively small circulation makes it difficult for subscription income to keep up with the rising costs of printing and mailing to readers in 50 countries.

In an effort to capture new readers, two years ago the organisation launched a new website stocked with articles, statistics and an archive of past reports. The stories are often picked up by other alternative news sites, such as OneWorld, as well as mainstream ones like Yahoo. When that happens, visits skyrocket – a boost to staff morale and confirmation that the work, however difficult, is worth doing.

David Shanks, who worked as a CIIR/ICD development worker with LAP, designed and managed the website for two years. 'These days,

### 'the strength of the people lies in their unity and understanding'

when so much of the mainstream media is owned by moguls with political connections or governed by advertising, the kind of truly independent alternative media represented by LAP is invaluable,' he says. 'The number of people who visited the website while I was there and posted comments along those lines is testament to the value of and demand for such media.'

The staff is also aware, however, that more could be done with the trove of information that pours in from correspondents around the region. As associate editor Cecilia Remón says, 'Our information can be used for education, awareness raising, information and advocacy in the public policy arena.'

Gargatte adds: 'Recently we've been aiming our information more toward key audiences who can use it to help change the situation of our region's most disadvantaged people. To this end, we are devising strategies for reaching the people responsible for making public policy decisions.'

## Vintage LAP

One of journalist Lucien Chauvin's favourite memories is of a story he wrote for LAP from Cuba in 1998, when Pope John Paul II made his historic visit to the island nation. A group of Catholic youths invited him to accompany them at 4am for 'mañanitas' – a serenade of wake-up songs for the Pope. Despite the early hour, Chauvin made the two-hour walk.

'The Pope invited the kids in and came down to meet them. I followed and managed to get quotes from top Vatican officials and some amazing close-up photos of the Pope's brief encounter with the kids. No other journalists were present, because of the time and the venue. It was vintage LAP for me, seeing how the visit touched ordinary Cubans.'

Noticias Aliadas will turn 40 next year – a venerable age for an alternative publication that has had to weather social changes in the region, as well as practical concerns like power failures caused by a severe drought in 1992, the danger posed by Peru's subversive groups during the period of political violence or the current economic crunch.

The team, however, has never abandoned its vision. 'We always keep in mind the perspective of the people who are most affected by dominant policy,' Remón says.

That is one of the things that has made the publication such a valuable resource for readers. As former LAP reporter Chauvin says, the staff and correspondents 'are committed not just to journalism, but also to the issues they cover'.

In a world where the airwaves and news-stands are dominated by the mainstream media, it's just such commitment that enables an alternative voice to be heard.

*Barbara J Fraser, a former director and editor of Latin America Press, now works as a freelance writer in Peru.*

**interactnow**

Visit the Latin America Press website:  
[www.latinamericapress.org](http://www.latinamericapress.org)

Too often the media is the mouthpiece of the rich and powerful. Here CIIR/ICD development workers describe how people who are normally unheard and overlooked are successfully raising their voices.

# Unheard voices

## The real price of gold

Peruvian villagers affected by a mercury spill are using the media to tell their side of the story, writes **Stephanie Boyd**

ON 2 JUNE 2000, a truck from the Yanacocha gold mine spilled 151 kgs of mercury through the village of Choropampa and two neighbouring communities in Peru's Andean mountains.

According to the mine's conservative estimates, nearly 1,000 people were affected by mercury poisoning. Three years after the spill, villagers claim they are still suffering from symptoms including renal and kidney damage, eyesight problems, miscarriages and central nervous system disorders.

The mine has paid compensation to some individuals, provided health services, and paid for the upgrade of facilities such as school buildings and roads. But many

villagers feel that the mine has not done enough. There have been demonstrations and confrontations, including a four-day blockade of the road by angry villagers.

Yanacocha is owned by the huge gold mining corporation, Newmont Mining of Colorado. With the public relations resources of a multinational company at its disposal, Yanacocha has produced slick reports and videos to present its version of events to the media.

The mine's view that the problem has been resolved has been countered by a documentary, *Choropampa: The Price of Gold*, produced by CIIR/ICD partner Guarango Cine y Video. Told from the villagers' point of view, the film

graphically portrays the bitterness and division that still linger in the wake of the mercury spill.

Guarango's film has been broadcast on television in Peru and the United States and screened at more than a dozen international film festivals. Five hundred video copies have been distributed to grassroots organisations, educators and media outlets in Peru, including 40 municipal television stations throughout the country.

In addition to film-making, Guarango seeks to reinforce people's ability to transmit their messages through the media by providing media advocacy training for activists, educators and community leaders. It conducts workshops and seminars, and assists groups in real-life situations – people such as the villagers of Choropampa.

The result is that Choropampa's leaders know their message and how to say it. The difficulty is convincing Peru's media elite to listen.

At the beginning of April this year Yanacocha presented its 'Final Report' on the mercury spill. The report insists the environment is mercury free and does not even mention human health in Choropampa.

No-one from the village was invited to the presentation of the report in Lima, the nation's capital. However, community leaders found out about the presentation and decided to attend.

Tall, blond women in black evening gowns handed out glossy summaries of the report at the door. When the time came for questions, little slips of white paper to write down queries were handed out.

But the Choropampinos had not travelled all evening, burdened with



Ernesto Cabellos/Guarango Cine y Video

*Flash point: a Choropampa man tries to calm the crowd after a scuffle with the police during the road blockade.*



*Elsa Martinez, backed up by her husband, makes her point at a village meeting.*

## interactnow

Visit the Guarango Film and Video website:  
[www.guarango.com](http://www.guarango.com)

illness and sick children at home, to remain quiet. Elsa Martinez, mother of five, rose to her feet to speak to the crowded room of government and business elites. Every head turned to listen.

'Yes, Yanacocha built extra rooms in the health clinic, but they're empty,' said Elsa. 'We don't have doctors who can treat us – there is

no medicine.' The flood gates were opened and dozens of questions from the audience followed, many from concerned medical professionals.

The following day two national newspapers covered the story. A month later the Choropampa film was broadcast on Canal N (Peru's version of CNN) and had a three-

week theatrical release in Lima.

The delegation from Choropampa took back a video of Yanacocha's report proceedings to show at a public assembly. Villagers were angered by the mine's report, but were proud of Elsa. She got their message in the newspapers, and even more importantly, she proved that the company's money could not shield it from the people's voices.

Elsa showed them that Choropampa's voices will not remain silent and their story will be heard.

*Stephanie Boyd is a CIIR/ICD development worker working with Guarango Cine y Video. Note: Unfortunately, Elsa's health has since deteriorated and she is now confined to bed, unable to walk or sit up. She suffers from severe liver damage and central nervous system disorders.*

## Shock tactic

**Azahara Villacorta** reports on a new book that challenges the exploitation and discrimination faced by sex workers in El Salvador

**H**OW CAN YOU DISCUSS a taboo topic? How can you sensitise the Salvadorean population to the issue of prostitution and all that goes with it: drugs, misery, exploitation, discrimination, trafficking, infringement of the rights of young people and children, ill-treatment and violence of every kind (from the clients, urban gangs, police officers...)?

Working with the women's organisation Flor de Piedra (Flower of Stone) for two years, I began to get to know and talk with some of the women selling their services in the so-called Red Zone of San Salvador. Their 'dream', they told me, had long been for a book collecting their testimonies, something that would give a permanent account of the lives of these brave women.

So it was that after a year of contacts, interviews, writing and correcting, a collection of 12 testimonies was gathered together and published.

The title of the book attracted attention and generated controversy from the beginning. It was a title that we thought of together, and chose precisely because we wanted to attract attention and generate discussion about a subject which for society, the media, the powerful classes, was at the very least uncomfortable.

The title we chose was 'Historias Putas' (Whores' Stories). Many people asked us why we used the word 'whore' after so many years of trying to raise awareness of the injustice of its use. The women's answer is simple: it is hard for us, they said, to find a word which better expresses

the stigmatisation we suffer, yet shows the harshness of what we see ourselves called to live every day.

When we launched the book, the place was packed: not just with the women from other organisations who, in solidarity, joined our cause which is also their own; but because of the presence of several editors and journalists, suddenly interested in the subject.

The title of the book had given the sex workers and former sex workers a platform to bare their souls and share with others the lives they have to live: to tell their 'Whores' Stories', those stories which, in spite of their crudeness, should not be forgotten, and from which, faced with this blunt reality, we cannot easily turn away.

*Azahara Villacorta completed her contract as a CIIR/ICD development worker with Flor de Piedra in September. Copies of the book (in Spanish) can be ordered from CIIR in London: contact [Alastair@ciir.org](mailto:Alastair@ciir.org) for details.*

# Balancing act

**Mirta Rodríguez Calderón** explains how a network of journalists in the Dominican Republic are raising gender issues in the media

**V**IOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN is not news in the Dominican Republic – except when there is an increase in murders of women. When this happened last year, a network of journalists was already discussing gender violence and how to tackle it. The discussions helped to prompt large numbers of articles, essays, analyses, statements and interviews on the issue. The coverage in the media was unprecedented, raising awareness about the issue in society as a whole.

The network, Red de Periodistas con Perspectiva de Género (Network of Journalists with a Gender Perspective), was set up to show that media professionals have the power to promote social justice and gender

equity through their work. It aims to take up to the higher reaches of the media the affairs, interests, hopes and problems of women, recognising that they have been the most ignored in their actions, silenced in their voices and badly treated in their image.

The network produces an electronic review of gender and communication (we always insist that it is not a magazine by women, or for women, but by and for professionals in communication). The magazine is called *A Primera Plana* (On the Front Page) and can be seen on the website (in Spanish) [www.aprimeraplana.org](http://www.aprimeraplana.org).

A printed copy is also produced to reach the many journalists in the

Dominican Republic who have still not got computers. Recent editions have looked at immigration and emigration, violence, sexism in language, the treatment of images of women, new communications technologies, the power of the word on the radio, maternal mortality, and sexuality.

The network is not an organisation but a kind of convergence. Journalists and other communicators come together to work for gender equity and to present articles and other materials for other professionals working in the mass media to draw on. As an exploration of the potential of 'media advocacy', the network and the magazine are laying down rules and opening new paths to Dominican journalism with a gender perspective.

*Mirta Rodríguez Calderón is a CIIR/ICD development worker with Colectiva Mujer y Salud (Women and Health Collective).*

# Loud and clear

The indigenous people of South America are tuning in to the potential of new communication technologies, writes **Lourdes Barrezueta Barzola**

**E**VER SINCE the Spanish conquest, the indigenous peoples of Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, northern Argentina and Chile have been divided. They are isolated, marginalised, held to be of no account, poor and excluded. For 500 years, their customs, their medicine, their music, their religious beliefs and their vision of the cosmos have been under permanent pressure.

In spite of this marginalisation, these people have not given in. Their age-old struggle has made them organise, and their organisations have made significant advances in the last decade, gaining spaces in civil society, participating in development projects and managing their own communications media.

Radio in particular has long been popular among indigenous people. Of the broadcasters affiliated to CIIR/ICD partner ALER (the Latin American Association for Radio Education), at least 40 have quechua

and kichwa audiences. In all of them, the quechua and kichwa programmes are produced by the indigenous people themselves.

Drawing on this experience, the idea grew for a communications network that would bring together a people who had formerly been divided. The result was the Kiechwa Satellite Network (the name is a combination of 'quechua' and 'kichwa'), under which the quechua people of Bolivia and Peru and the kichwa people of Ecuador joined their voices with the aim of recovering their identity as a single people, building their collective self-esteem, and supporting the development of their communities.

Formed in 1997, the Kiechwa Satellite Network is made up of more than 30 broadcasters in Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia. As well as producing and broadcasting radio programmes – such as *Kuri Kinti'k*, a daily news programme, and *Jatun*

*Llacta*, a weekly cultural magazine programme – it provides training and conducts research.

The network is a genuinely collaborative venture. Every year the production headquarters change, with one of the quechua member broadcasters and one of the kichwa member broadcasters combining to produce the programmes. It relies on new technologies – digital audio, internet and satellite – to gather material and transmit reports between the members.

Among the main demands of the quechua and kichwa people are: respect for their culture; recognition of the countries they live in as pluricultural and plurinational; access to land; bilingual teaching; and protection of their habitat against the threats of oil, mining or pharmaceutical companies. By helping to restore the links between and identity of the quechua and kichwa people, the Kiechwa Satellite Network is making an important contribution to their fight for recognition.

*Lourdes Barrezueta Barzola is a CIIR/ICD development worker working for ALER as coordinator of the Kiechwa Satellite Network.*



*Weighing up their options: the people of Haiti, such as this man selling lemons, face an uncertain future.*

practised during the Duvalier years.

Yet within months Aristide was deposed in a vicious coup which left hundreds dead, and many others fleeing to safety within the arms of the growing Haitian diaspora, mainly based in New York and Montreal. Next followed the tragedy of the Haitian 'boat people' as hundreds took to the seas in rickety boats to escape. Many drowned at sea, forced by their desperation into unsafe crafts. For those that reached the relative safety of the US, most were interned as illegal immigrants and refused refugee status, and eventually returned to Haiti.

Aristide was brought back to power in 1994, yet the curse of violence continues to this day, as the National Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace lamented in an open letter in May this year: 'It is clear that violence is part of people's everyday reality, whether it be lesser incidents of violence suffered by poor people in the street, the verbal harassment, those injured by stray bullets, or those beaten with sticks.

'Nor should the violence of everyday life be ignored. There are those who wake in the morning, unsure of where they will sleep the next night; those who do not know where their next meal will come from; children who are unable to go to school or those sent home because they are unable to pay; and those who are ill and cannot seek treatment.'

Today Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the world, and its development statistics are the lowest in the western hemisphere. According to a 1998 World Bank report, 81 per cent of households in the country's north and north-west regions are 'extremely poor'. Life expectancy is only 52 years. Six per cent of the population are estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS. Environmental degradation is severe, with 97 per cent of the forest depleted.

Crippled by this poverty – and most recently, by an embargo on aid imposed by the Organisation of American States and the European Union – the government has found it impossible to provide the basic services of health, education and social security. Since the

# Chained to poverty

Haiti's people must not be abandoned to an endless cycle of poverty and neglect, argues **Anne Street**

**J**ANUARY 1, 2004, marks the two-hundredth anniversary of the founding of the independent state of Haiti. After a bitter slave revolt, Haiti became the first independent black republic in the world, gaining its freedom from the French colonial rulers.

Although born in glory, Haiti faced massive obstacles from the start. As part of the independence settlement Haiti was forced to pay France the staggering amount of 150 million francs in reparations. Thus Haiti became the first nation state to be trapped into the debt cycle, from which it has never shaken free. The national debt is now US\$1.2 billion.

Despite its early promise, the Haiti of today still faces the legacy of poverty, discrimination and vilification that marked

its birth. Its history since independence has also been a violent one. Up to the time that Papa Doc Duvalier seized power in 1957, 22 of Haiti's 34 presidents were overthrown, and seven were either assassinated or committed suicide during their term of office.

It was not until 1990 that the country was able to elect its first democratically appointed president, Jean Claude Aristide. Elected with great promise, Aristide was a former priest, whose populist style won him millions of followers both inside and outside the country. He seemed to herald a new dawn for Haiti, one in which the needs and aspirations of the poor would be put before the interests of the small and wealthy elite who had become rich through the fraud and deception widely

## interactnow

For more information on Haiti, visit the website of the Haiti Support Group at [www.haitisupport.gn.apc.org](http://www.haitisupport.gn.apc.org)

1950s this vacuum has been largely filled by international NGOs and missionary organisations. Today half of primary health care and curative services are delivered by NGOs, and 80 per cent of primary and secondary schools are run by NGOs or private institutions.

Yet, despite all this, there are positive things happening in Haiti: the untold and unsung stories of many thousands of people who struggle against the odds to provide for their families; to protect their dignity and their community's rights; to work in communal work arrangements for their own and the community's good; and to attempt to make things better for future generations.

But they are struggling against impossible odds. While the government is often accused of corruption and nepotism, international isolation is harming the country's people as much as it is the government.

## Action on Haiti

**International isolation is suffocating Haiti.** It is not the wealthy elite who are affected: it is the millions of poor Haitians who continue to suffer the injustices of poverty, lack of employment, health care and education.

CIIR members and supporters can support the Haitian people by writing to your MPs, calling on them to ask the British government:

- To support international efforts to de-link the political situation in Haiti from access to international humanitarian aid, loans and grants
- To urge the European Union to resume bilateral funding to the Haitian government
- To seek to strengthen processes of good governance and democratic accountability in Haiti – such as by supporting Haitian government efforts to end corruption and train police officers, judges and members of the legal profession.

As the 200th anniversary of Haiti's independence approaches, it is time for the international community to support Haiti's people by providing aid for poverty alleviation programmes, and to end the cycle of violence by supporting

efforts to strengthen good governance and democratic accountability.

*Anne Street is CIIR's advocacy coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean.*

## Cutting edge

**Grassroots voices are starting to be heard in South East Asia as people build their campaigning skills, reports Daphne Villanueva**

**K**NOWING WHAT YOU WANT is one thing. Knowing how to get it is another. Making your voice heard when people in positions of power don't want to listen is even harder.

The South East Asian Committee for Advocacy (SEACA) was set up to provide some answers. It works with organisations across the region, from Burma to Cambodia, Indonesia to Vietnam. Its aim is to help give civil society – the people and the organisations arguing on their behalf – the power to influence government policies and actions.

In February 2003, a three-week-long workshop teaching advocacy strategy and techniques was held for NGO representatives from seven countries in the region. It was hosted by the Institute for Popular Democracy in the Philippines. IPD's executive director, Joel Rocamora, told the participants about the challenges they faced.

'One problem with civil society advocacy is that the usual "winners" of a particular policy being advocated are poor and otherwise disadvantaged people,' he said. 'These are groups who do not normally have a voice in our societies.'

SEACA partners – such as those attending the workshop – are attempting to give marginalised people a voice. In Indonesia, for example, organisations in Yogyakarta have taken up the cause of street children, arguing that their existence and needs must be reflected in local government policies. In the Philippines, partner organisations have brought the agenda of the urban poor to national policy level, inviting government housing officials and business leaders to a 'housing summit', and drafting a bill to create a government housing department.

An obstacle they continually come up against is, said Rocamora, 'that politicians always say they are pro-people but act against them'. Policy makers 'will say they are for changing policy while they are actually opposing it'.

A major task is 'how to expose the anti-people character of existing policy,' he said. In many countries, SEACA partners are dealing with human and other rights issues. In Malaysia, where laws such as the internal security act, the publications act and the assembly law could constrain the potential of campaigning organisations, SEACA

partners are working to educate people about their rights, and support them in claiming their rights – such as for affordable urban housing.

The idea behind SEACA is that together people can achieve more than if they are working in isolation. As such, it works to strengthen regional links. The Asian Coalition for Housing Rights and Eviction Watch, for example, has conducted exchange projects on confrontation methods and savings mobilisation schemes. Future plans include setting up a people's tribunal on housing and eviction, and lobbying the Asian Development Bank on bank-funded projects that result in the displacement of people.

Empowering the people and challenging policies that breed poverty are central to the SEACA programme, according to its chairperson, Malaysian human rights activist Toni Mohammed Kasim. 'We seek to give communities from the diverse regions of South East Asia the ability to challenge policies that mitigate against them and keep them poor,' she told a meeting at CIIR in July. 'We want to return power to the people.'

*Daphne Villanueva is SEACA's programme coordinator.*

**interactnow**

Visit the SEACA website [www.seaca.net](http://www.seaca.net)

**Mohamoud Ahmed's** thirst for education has seen him make the difficult journey from refugee to TV news presenter. Mary Enright met him to hear his story

# Learning curve

Nick Sireau/CIIR



*Mohamoud Ahmed outside the building where Borama TV is based.*

**I**N A CORNER OF BORAMA, a town in western Somaliland, is a television station called Borama TV. It's based in a small house. The newsroom consists of a video camera, two video recording machines, a spotlight, a desk, and a blue cloth as background. In the transmission room nearby, a large fan keeps the transmission device cool. On the roof are satellite dishes to receive international news and an antenna to transmit.

Mohamoud Abdi Sheikh Ahmed, 26, is the manager and news presenter of Borama TV. The station broadcasts from 7pm until midnight every day in the Borama area, translating foreign news into the Somali language and covering events in Somaliland. So far, it has 88 subscribers, each of whom pays US\$10 a month. Mohamoud admits that only half of them pay regularly, but it's just about enough to get by.

Mohamoud's story has always been about overcoming the odds. 'The civil war in Somalia interrupted nearly 10 years of my life. It definitely changed my life, and was bad, but in the end some of the changes were good,' he says.

In 1988, Mohamoud's family moved from Gabiley to Borama in an attempt to escape the inter-clan violence. But in 1991, the fighting came to Borama,

driving out Mohamoud's family to Ethiopia as refugees.

In Gabiley and Borama, says Mohamoud, he 'had no interest at all in education'. This all changed when he started to go to the school at the Awbare refugee camp. 'I discovered that I liked learning very much. In fact, after a short time, I wanted to go to class all day. After normal school finished in the morning, I went to four more classes every afternoon,' he says.

In 1994, his family decided to go back to Borama, but Mohamoud stayed on alone for two years, looking after himself, in order to continue going to

**'The university brought hope and purpose to my life'**

school. When he eventually returned to Borama, his mother was earning income from a small shop she had set up with resettlement money from UNHCR (the United Nations refugee agency). This meant Mohamoud could afford to go to Amoud University, a local institution set up a few months after he returned from Ethiopia.

'To be at Amoud at the beginning

was an exciting time,' says Mohamoud. 'Although there were not many students, we were all involved in setting up the university. We moved in the tables and chairs and furniture, cleared rubbish and generally got the buildings ready for use. There was a great feeling of community effort and support.'

The university, says Mohamoud, 'brought hope and purpose to my life and the lives of the other students. It gave me ideas and confidence and knowledge, and I started writing some things for the newspaper.' Because of the newspaper articles, he was asked to contribute to the recently set up Borama TV. He translated news from English and Arabic into Somali and worked on the station's news programmes. Soon he was also reading the news. In 2002, when the management changed, he was asked to head the station.

'We do all kinds of programmes now – social, political, sports, entertainment,' he says. There is no national TV station in Somaliland, so all stations are local: Borama TV, Hargeisa TV and Burco TV. If he can, he sends a cameraman and a reporter to cover an event. Otherwise, he asks the other stations to send a tape for broadcast in Borama.

Mohamoud hopes he is helping his country progress and recover from years of civil war. 'There are many problems for Somali youth now,' he says. 'There is no employment, no entertainment or sports facilities, nothing to aim for and nothing to do. The university gives the students a purpose.'

'Development for this country is possible only through educated people,' he says. 'Only they have the knowledge and ability to take the country forward.'

*Mary Enright is a CIIR/ICD development worker, working as a librarian at Amoud University. Additional reporting by Nick Sireau, CIIR's communications manager.*

# Healthy respect

**Bahja Abdulla Essa** explains how she has gained recognition as a woman working in health services in Yemen



Pippa Hoyland/CIIR

*Bahja Abdulla Essa.*

I STARTED MY TRAINING as a female primary health care worker (FPHCW) in Hodeidah in 1989. Back then I did not know much about FPHCWs and what they do. I was new to the idea and looked at it as a venture into the unknown.

During my practical training I was sent to a hospital in the city. I was required to single-handedly assist the birth of 20 children before I could qualify. The hardest thing was winning the respect of other medical personnel and the trust of the community.

The doctors in the hospital did not accept the idea of FPHCWs doing deliveries and antenatal care after only nine months of training. When I completed my training and was working in a health centre, visiting mothers did not trust me and my colleagues to handle them during deliveries, as we were all so young – between the ages of 16 and 20.

Gradually, communities started feeling comfortable towards FPHCWs. We started a home visit programme which helped us meet communities in their homes and build better relations.

Since 1990, I have assisted more than 500 deliveries in my community. I once assisted a woman who lives in a one-room cardboard-box house. This woman had experienced three deaths in previous deliveries. Her family was never able to go to health centres because they couldn't afford the fee (200 Yemeni Rials for a delivery – around US\$1). I just happened to be in the area by accident.

Another time I helped a woman who had previously had two stillbirths. This baby was also a stillbirth, due to genetic complications. She had to take a US\$50 injection within 72 hours after delivery in order to save her next child. The woman did not have the money. Neither did I. I borrowed the money to buy her the injection. A year later I delivered her next baby who survived. Her gift to me was that I named the baby.

In the early 1990s, Hodeidah received about 800,000 returnees from the Gulf War, creating squatter settlements around the city of half a million people. CIIR/ICD assisted in developing health facilities in four areas populated mainly by returnees.

Habeeba Othman, a CIIR/ICD development worker from Somalia, prompted me to become a trainer. My first training session – a briefing on home visits in front of many senior medical people – was the most exciting and challenging thing I had done up to then.

I am now head of the training department in the Hodeidah health office. I am still called upon to assist women during deliveries in my neighbourhood, but my main job is to plan and implement training for the Hodeidah area.

It has not always been easy. On one occasion, 18 out of 20 health workers who were being trained in health information systems failed their first exam. I took this as a personal challenge, redoubled my efforts to support them, and continued visiting them regularly until they finished their first year. They finally all passed the exams and are now working.

My family is very proud of my work and they continue to support me. My income has helped us as the cost of living in Yemen is on the increase year after year. Employment of girls is an increasingly important issue for families, as girls tend more than boys to use their incomes to support extended families. Fewer families now stop their daughters from working.

Now I feel I have everybody's respect and recognition. This is a milestone in my life as a Yemeni female.

*Interview conducted and translated from the Arabic by Abdulla A Al Syari, CIIR/ICD's country representative in Yemen.*



*Traditional birth attendants trained by CIIR/ICD in Mensooriyah district, Hodeidah, in 2002.*



# country profile: Yemen

## Republic of Yemen: Statistics

<b>Population:</b>	19,349,881
<b>Gross Domestic Product:</b>	US\$9.3 billion
<b>External debt:</b>	US\$6.2 billion
<b>Unemployment:</b>	30%
<b>Population living with less than US\$2 per day:</b>	45.2%
<b>Life expectancy:</b>	59.4 years
<b>Infant mortality:</b>	79 deaths per 1,000 live births
<b>Literacy rate:</b>	50.2%
<b>Languages:</b>	Arabic
<b>Religions:</b>	Muslim including Shaf'i (Sunni) and Zaydi (Shi'a); small numbers of Jews, Christians, and Hindus.



## Geography

The Republic of Yemen is a semi-arid country on the south-western tip of the Arabian Peninsula. It comprises 555,000 square kms of diverse landscape, such as terraced mountains, deserts and coastal plains. It is one of the world's least developed countries.

## History

Yemen is undergoing rapid change. The past 13 years have seen major political and economic upheavals, beginning with the unification of the two different political systems of the former Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in 1990. The process of unification has been

complex and not always smooth: a three-month civil war broke out in 1994 between the two former states, causing massive destruction of services and infrastructure, and loss of lives.

## Politics

Yemen has a multi-party political system. National elections were held in 1993 and 1997, both of which were won by the General People's Congress Party headed by the president, Ali Abdullah Saleh.

## Human rights

Interest in human rights has grown in recent years through the action of the government, local NGOs and

international development organisations. In April 2001 a new position of minister of human rights was created. The current minister, Amatulem Sousua, is the second woman to hold this post.

## CIIR/ICD's work in Yemen

CIIR/ICD's work in Yemen focuses mainly on strengthening the health system and fighting HIV/AIDS.

The lack of trained health workers, particularly women, is a problem. CIIR/ICD has therefore focused on the training of female health workers and support and supervision for them once they graduate. Trainers such as development worker Aziza Abdulla Hassan carry out formal training over one to two years for community midwives. Other training has increased the number of primary health care workers, midwives, nurses, and laboratory technicians.

On the HIV/AIDS front, CIIR/ICD is supporting both governmental and non-governmental partners to develop the fight against HIV/AIDS. A CIIR/ICD development worker, Aidan Strain, recently started working in Yemen's capital Sana'a as an HIV/AIDS coordinator and trainer with local partner NGOs and the ministry of health's National AIDS Programme.

CIIR/ICD is also developing a new programme supporting NGOs and civil society groups in building their organisations. These organisations have strong links into their target communities and many are actively working on women's issues.

*The Republic of Yemen: Development Challenges in the 21st Century* by Marta Colburn (published by CIIR) traces Yemen's development from ancient times to the present and analyses the social, economic and environmental challenges facing the country today. Price £9.95 from CIIR.

*Mixing the old and the new: a scene from Sana'a, capital of Yemen.*



Judith Gardner/CIIR



Mary Garvey (right) in Botswana with a work colleague, Oteng. Sadly, Oteng died this year, aged 26.

negotiation – one that quite literally was a matter of life and death. As VSO's regional manager for West Africa, she was in the hot seat when two VSO volunteers were taken hostage by rebels in Sierra Leone.

Mary spent the initial weeks negotiating with the rebels by two-way radio. She also had to organise the repatriation of 40 other VSO volunteers from Sierra Leone. 'Getting out quickly was very emotional for them, because they were leaving behind two colleagues – and we didn't know if they were alive or dead at that time,' she says. After five months, the hostages were released.

Another life-or-death situation has also had a big impact on Mary's life: the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa. 'In Botswana there is a 38 per cent prevalence of HIV. It was very difficult because many of my work colleagues were also affected by HIV,' she says.

This experience led Mary to take up her most recent post, as a senior policy adviser for Christian Aid. Here she conducted research into whether or not sex education and HIV education cause promiscuity among young people. Her report, due to be published later this year, will argue that the evidence is that if you provide good HIV and sex education, young people are likely to be more cautious about sex, and therefore more likely to make sensible decisions.

'HIV/AIDS is a huge development problem that we need to tackle,' says Mary. 'Churches have a good record of care and support for those who are sick, but are much less involved in preventative work. One of the things that interests me at CIIR is exploring that untapped potential.'

'Potential' is the key to Mary's new role at CIIR: combining the quality of what CIIR is doing 'on the ground' in terms of skill sharing, with the potential of 'a real recognition that in order to address problems on a broader scale, unfair policies and structures have to be addressed'. In taking on this challenge, Mary will be doing for CIIR what CIIR itself does: drawing on experiences in the field to strengthen arguments for change.

*Mary Garvey started as CIIR's international programmes director in September. Alastair Whitson is CIIR's senior editor.*

# Common ground

**From Bristol to Botswana, from urban poverty to international development, Mary Garvey has worked for positive change. Alastair Whitson finds out what motivates CIIR's new international programmes director**

SHE HAS WORKED with Tibetan refugees in India and with homeless people in Bristol. She has negotiated with rebels for the release of British hostages in Sierra Leone, and with white South African tour operators for the rights of rural people in Botswana. She has managed a volunteer programme for VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas), and researched and advised on policy for Christian Aid.

Mary Garvey's experience is as broad as it is deep, but a common thread runs through it: a desire to work for positive change for marginalised and disadvantaged people.

In Botswana, Mary spent three years setting up a project supporting rural communities, including helping them manage their own natural resources.

'There are still lots of wild animals in Botswana, so safari companies are keen to bring tourists into the area,' she says. 'The government has policies covering this, but local communities can only benefit from those policies if they understand them, and have the skills to

negotiate with the white South African tour operators.' The project aims to build people's skills so that they can negotiate deals with the tour operators – for rights of access to their land, rights to put up lodges on land, and some rights to hunt the animals.

Many of the communities the project works with are San people. (CIIR/ICD also works with the San people in Namibia and across southern Africa.) Until very recently the San were nomadic. 'Their lack of education and lack of wealth means they are discriminated against by other ethnic groups,' says Mary. 'They find it difficult to access services, amenities and rights – for example, often they don't have land rights because they don't register their land.'

The work, says Mary, was 'very challenging', but it was also 'very rewarding to see something that wasn't there in the beginning grow into something that was providing a service to local people'.

Prior to her work in Botswana, Mary had been involved in a different sort of

The challenge to the media is to be a witness to the 'Word of life', writes Rev Dr Steve de Gruchy

# Bearing witness



**J**OHN'S GOSPEL declares that life is the central gift that God gives to us through Jesus Christ. In the fourth verse of the gospel we hear that from the beginning of creation he is the one who brings life into being. Jesus, 'the bread of life' (6:35) and 'the resurrection and the life' (11:25), makes known his mission with these words: 'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly' (10:10).

It should not surprise us, therefore, when John tells us that he wrote his Gospel so that we who read it may have 'life in his name' (20:31). Indeed, there can be no greater desire in writing words than that those who read them may find abundant life in Christ. That, in a nutshell, is the Christian challenge to the media in the field of development.

For we are well aware that there are two basic visions of development. The dominant paradigm, finding expression in such bodies as the IMF, World Bank, WTO and the foreign policies of the USA and Europe, sees development as synonymous with economic growth, the expansion of global capitalism, and the triumph of the West. It is a vision that brings not only abundant life, but super-abundant life, to those who have power.

But it is also a vision that brings death to so many in the South. We have seen the terrible effects of structural adjustment policies and international trade rules on the health, housing and education of the people of countries like Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique. The

dominant paradigm is literally a paradigm of death, and its media moguls who promote and encourage this approach are purveyors of this death.

Against this paradigm lies a whole host of alternative approaches which seek abundant life not just for the rich of the world, but for all people – and particularly for the marginalised for whom Jesus gave his life. From small-scale agricultural schemes through village health programmes and business

**to speak, to write, to publish and break the silence... is an act of life**

cooperatives to alternative think tanks, advocacy groups and people's movements, this approach honours and enhances the life and livelihoods of the poor. There is no doubt in my mind that this is a key part of the *Missio Dei* in our generation, a calling to which the Church must respond.

It is also the calling for those in the media. For we are reminded that in John's Gospel, Jesus is the Word who becomes flesh. He is the 'Word of life', as the opening verse of 1 John puts it. Thus the challenge to the media in the world of development is to be a witness to this word of life amidst the many words of death.

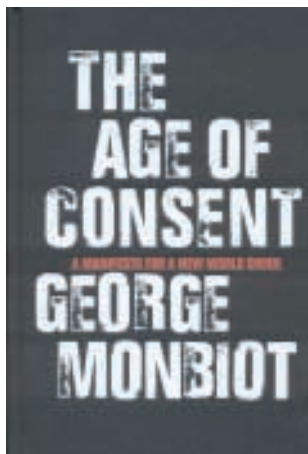
In the first instance this can mean simply the choice to speak in the midst of silence. As John's Gospel sees the link

between life and light, so too there is a link between death and darkness (11:10). The dominant powers that promote death for so many on our globe delight in cover of night. Through the political power of censorship and economic control of the media they ensure that a certain perspective is promoted, and that the 'word' of the poor is not heard. Indeed, the first casualty in development, as in war, is truth. Simply to speak, to write, to publish and break the silence that hides such death is an act of life.

Second, we have to decide what is worth writing about, and how best to write about it. The Christian who works in the development media, and who seeks to share the word of life, is called to constant reflection on the interplay of power and truth, along with attentiveness to the victims and those who suffer, but also to the signs of life that keep bubbling up where God is at work.

For perhaps the greatest challenge of all is, paradoxically, learning to silence one's own voice so that one may become an instrument through which the poor and the marginalised can find their voice, speak their own word, and so shape their world. This truly is to bear witness to the Word who is life and light.

*Steve de Gruchy is director of the Theology and Development Programme at the University of Natal, South Africa.*



### The Age of Consent by George Monbiot

There is a religious intensity about George Monbiot. His ideas take him where others might fear to tread. Like all visionaries, he does not stop to worry that others might treat him with scorn or contempt. He believes, and he wants us to believe.

This book was born out of the growing movement for global justice. Much of the book debunks the instruments of economic globalisation – the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organisation (WTO); multinational corporations; the United States.

It does so with a mixture of clarity and polemic that is both enlightening and persuasive. Countries which have done exactly as the IMF and World Bank prescribed, says Monbiot, have seen

their economies destroyed, their citizens impoverished, and their public services dismantled. The beneficiaries have been foreign banks and corporations, and speculative investors.

In Monbiot's analysis, everything is stacked against what he calls 'the poor world' and in favour of 'the rich world'. The statistics are damning. Between 1980 and 1996, the nations of sub-Saharan Africa paid twice the sum of their total debt in the form of interest, but they still owed three times more in 1996 than they did in 1980. Meanwhile, the rich nations give their farmers nearly US\$1 billion a day – six and a half times what they give the poor nations in the form of aid.

All this is calculated to engage and enrage the reader. Monbiot wants to make us angry, because he wants us to do something about it.

It is, of course, one thing to oppose something; quite another to propose what should take its place. Where this book breaks new ground is in its proposals for what Monbiot himself calls 'a new world order'. The book is unashamedly a manifesto for change.

First on his list is a world parliament. It is a fanciful notion, but he gives it substance, detailing how it will be set up and how it will work.

Next are an International Clearing Union to replace the IMF and the World Bank, and a Fair Trade Organisation to replace the WTO. Together these would eliminate debt, and enable poorer

nations to escape from poverty and compete on equal terms with rich nations.

The rich world would resist it, but, asks Monbiot, what's to stop the poorer nations simply breaking away and establishing such a system?

The whole structure of Monbiot's proposals is based on this startling but simple premise: it may seem improbable, but all it requires for it to happen is the will to do it.

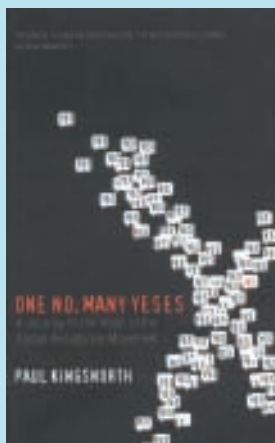
Change requires people – individual people – to act. Why should we? For the privileged citizens of the rich world, Monbiot's answer is not material advancement but spiritual exultation – 'that which Christians call "joy", but which, in the dry discourse of secular politics, has no recognised equivalent'.

This manifesto is far from the dry discourse of politics. Monbiot's proposals are well argued, but they are so radical that we must have imagination, or faith, in order to believe in them.

Even if we do, whether or not it comes to anything depends on our willingness to act. Freedom, says Monbiot, is the ability to act upon our beliefs. It would be a leap of faith, but he ends the book with a simple question: 'What are you waiting for?'

*The Age of Consent: A Manifesto for a New World Order by George Monbiot, Flamingo, £14.99 hardback, ISBN 0 00 715042 3.*

*Reviewed by Alastair Whitson, CIIR's senior editor.*



### One No, Many Yeses by Paul Kingsnorth

What is the 'anti-globalisation' movement all about? Paul Kingsnorth set off on a journey to five continents in an attempt to find out.

In Chiapas, Mexico, he found people turning their backs on their government and going their own way. In Chatsworth, a township near Durban in South Africa, he learned how the government's neo-liberal economic agenda has made conditions worse than they were under apartheid. And in West Papua, he met 'freedom fighters' who are challenging the might of multinational corporations.

Everywhere he went, he found people united by a common threat, and empowered by their individual responses to it. This is the nature of 'one no, many

yeses' – communities and activists getting together to challenge the effects of globalisation, and develop unique responses to fit their circumstances.

The real strength of *One No Many Yeses* is its ability to explain the complex processes of globalisation through their impact on the people Kingsnorth met on his travels. His journey 'to the heart of the global resistance movement' showed him the strength of that movement: the individual people who are fighting back.

*One No, Many Yeses: A Journey to the Heart of the Global Resistance Movement by Paul Kingsnorth, The Free Press, £10 paperback, ISBN 0 7432 2026 9.*

*Reviewed by Graham Freer, CIIR's website officer.*